

The Anholt Project

The informal island adventure that makes
young people grow



Table of Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	5
Background	6
Evolution of an Idea – 2008-2011	8
SALTO Euromed “Tool Fair” (La Palma, Spain, Nov. 2008)	8
The “Visico” Seminar (Luetjensee, Germany, Sept. 2009)	9
Pilot youth exchange – “Me, Myself and Others in Nature” (Luetjensee, Germany, Sept. 2010)	11
The “Strategies for Anholt 2011” Seminar (Oeiras, Portugal, Sept. 2010)	15
The Anholt Project	16
Aims and objectives	16
Participating organisations	17
Profile of the participants	17
How was the Anholt Project different from other youth exchanges?	20
Open structure? Yes... but one with rules	22
What actually happened?	23
The Methods	34
Creating an Environment of Freedom and Self-Responsibility	38
Research Elements of the Anholt Project	41
The Scientific Field Research	41
The Video Documentation	46
Main Challenges in the Project	53
Feedback from Participants & Project Leaders	56
Early Conclusions & Open Questions	59
Final Remarks	62
Annex 1 –The Anholt Project Partner Organisations	63
Annex 2 –List of Participants	65
Editorial Information	67

Foreword

Close your eyes and think back to what you remember from all the lessons you had in high school. Nothing special? Then you are no different from most of the world's population. But it is likely that every day at recess you experienced a lot of unintended learning and you met schoolmates who you remained close to throughout your life. This is what we are talking about in the Anholt Project – self-determination and self-motivation as the basis of a sustainable education.

Is a project about informal learning not just “old wine in a new skin” (as we say in German)? Well, old wine can sometimes be delicious but sometimes it's just vinegar, so is there a bigger sense to taking this informal learning stuff seriously? We think there is.

Informal learning is the oldest and most natural way humans have of learning. Discussions about informal learning are “old wine” in the sense that they have been going on for a long time. Yet in spite of this, informal learning still seems impossible to bottle. We are still trying to catch the idea of informal learning and as we discovered in the Anholt Project, this is very difficult to do.

Informal knowledge is street knowledge. Everyone can participate and in an atmosphere free of stress we can be teacher and learner at the same time. So how can it be that 70% of what we learn is learned informally... and yet no one pays attention to it? This is a question we have been asking for years. And how can it be that, as one of the Anholt participants said, *“My teacher is not a person to whom you can talk to about learning...”* After several decades of experience in youth education and training, I and my fellow Anholt partners wonder what stakeholders in the formal sector are thinking when they talk about visions for future education... and we ask ourselves why the recognition of youth work is still so underestimated today.

So what makes a youth exchange on informal learning like Anholt so special? Isn't it more or less the same as, for instance, what the Scouts are doing every week? We don't think so. Our approach to informal learning is more inclusive. We bring together people from urban and rural areas, with or without alternative skills, in a special educational frame of freedom and self-determination.

We wanted to put our thoughts into practice because we are not just philosophers - we are working and living with youth. And we want the results of our project to be shared all over the world. We need more fans of informal learning.

Because as Goethe said: “Life is too short to drink bad wine!”

*Ansgar Bueter-Menke
Kreisjugendring Stormarn e.V, Germany
Partner in the Anholt Project*

Introduction

The Anholt Project (Denmark, August 2011) was an experiment in creating a unique informal learning setting for young people and documenting the informal learning processes which took place as a result. This booklet describes the development, implementation, challenges and early conclusions of that experiment.

The project was carried out within the framework of a European multilateral youth exchange financed through the European “Youth in Action” programme. In many respects, Anholt was a typical youth exchange, bringing young people from different countries together to meet, to learn from each other and to discover different social and cultural realities. Yet it was also different in that this project aimed to stimulate *informal* learning processes among the participants rather than the usual *non-formal* learning processes.

Informal learning is the most natural of all our learning processes and it is particularly important for those young people who may not cope well with traditional formal or institutional forms of learning. The Anholt youth exchange was designed to be as open as possible – with no set daily programme, no outside distractions and no interference from the group leaders. Participants were placed on a small island, relieved of their mobile phones and all electronic devices, and left to self-organise and determine their own activities over a period of nine days. The organisers adopted this approach in the belief that the more informal the setting, the more space there would be for informal learning.

While this is certainly not the first example in the history of youth work of an activity with an open learning environment, it is unique in the sense that it went one important step further. During this project attention was focused on the challenge of improving the visibility of informal learning processes in order to help the young people and their group leaders to better understand what was being learned and how. To do this, the project included two research elements: a scientific field research and a video documentation.

Early indications show that the Anholt project was indeed highly successful at stimulating and documenting informal learning but the experiment has raised as many questions as it has answered. Therefore this booklet should not be seen as marking the end of a project but rather as a step into a wider reflection and discussion on what is now needed in youth work activities to continue to maximise the informal learning processes of young people.

The organisers would like to express their deep thanks to the Anholt partners and participants for their enthusiasm and commitment to making this project a reality. Sincere thanks also go to the European Commission for their financial support of the long-term development and implementation of this project as well as of the research elements and this booklet.

Background

To fully understand the aims and methodology of the Anholt project, it is important to first understand what is meant by “informal learning”.

The term **informal learning** includes anything we do outside of organized courses to gain significant knowledge, skill or understanding. It occurs either on our own or with other people. (Livingstone, 2002) Informal learning is sometimes called “natural learning” or “learning by doing” because it happens any time it needs to happen – at home, on the street, between friends, at work... any time or any place we need or want to spontaneously learn something new.

Informal learning is different from the learning we gain in school. Informal learning has no structure – it has no set learning objectives or time frame and it does not lead to any kind of certification. When we first learn to speak as babies, we are learning informally. When we learn as children not to touch a red stove because it is hot, we are learning informally. When a friend shows us how to use the latest app on our mobile phone, this is informal learning, too. We don’t take a training course to learn not to touch a red-hot stove and we do not receive a diploma for learning how to use a new app on our phone.

An interesting aspect of informal learning is that although it can be intentional, in most cases it is non-intentional, “incidental”, “random” or “ad hoc”. Because of this, we are not always aware of *what* or *when* or *where* we learn informally.

In recent years scientific studies have been carried out to analyse the extent to which people learn informally in the workplace. A number of these studies agree in their estimates that that the majority of learning on the job takes place informally – ranging anywhere from 70 up to an astonishing 90 percent. (Livingstone, 1999; Dobbs 2000, Raybould, 2000)¹.

Researcher Allen Tough discovered that informal learning processes are not just dominant in the workplace but in all aspects of our lives. During a presentation at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (University of Toronto, 1999) he said:

“It doesn’t seem to matter where you are or what group you study, you get a very similar picture of informal adult learning... informal learning just seems to be a very normal, very natural human activity... (but) it is so invisible, people just don’t seem to be aware of their own learning. They’re not aware of other people’s learning, educators don’t take it into account and so on... it’s not talked about, it’s not recognized, it’s sort of ignored... You could forget it’s there unless you keep reminding yourself...”²

This is an interesting contradiction. Informal learning clearly forms a significant part of our total learning processes... yet it is invisible to such an extent that we ourselves aren’t aware of it and educators don’t pay attention to it.

The importance of informal learning for young people

At this moment the situation of young people in Europe is both complex and challenging. The reality for many young people, and particularly those from fewer-opportunity backgrounds, is far from promising. Every young person, regardless of their background, has competences and skills (after all, everyone is good at something) but in today's highly competitive job market an individual won't get far if they do not have some kind of approved paper confirming those skills. Without this, it is becoming more and more difficult for young people to take part in any kind of normal adult life in Europe.

In response to this problem, youth organisations are being encouraged to improve the recognition of both the non-formal as well as informal learning of young people. The "Youth in Action" programme has designed the Youthpass for this purpose and many other similar national-level recognition tools are in use across the European Union. In practice, however, the majority of these tools seem to concentrate *de facto* on non-formal learning. There are very few tools which focus specifically on the recognition of informal learning.

Taken all together, it appears that there is a disconnect between the significance and importance of informal learning on one hand (particularly for young people from fewer-opportunity backgrounds) and a lack of understanding, visibility and recognition of this type of learning on the other.

What can be done to address this situation? That was the question a group of youth workers asked themselves during a lunch break in 2008. They wondered...

What if we could make a project based on the value of informal and non-formal learning methods, tools, pedagogies and anthropological and social pedagogic fieldwork and that could document the values and importance of these learning methods?

This question was the genesis of the Anholt Project.

¹ The findings of various studies on the total percentage of an individual's informal learning are listed in *Informal Learning – Rediscovering the Natural Pathways That Inspire Innovation and Performance*. Jay Cross, 2007

² Excerpt taken from NALL (The Research Network for New Approaches to Lifelong Learning) Working Paper #08 – 1999 "Reflections on the Study of Adult Learning".

Evolution of an Idea – 2008-2011

“SALTO Euromed “Tool Fair” (La Palma, Spain, Nov. 2008)”

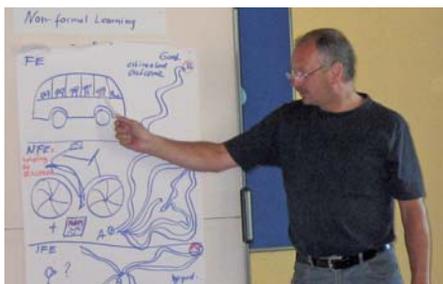
The first time the idea was put forward to carry out an experiment on informal learning was during a lunch break at the SALTO Euromed “Tool Fair” 2008. A group of youth workers sat together and began to talk about the many obstacles facing young people from fewer opportunity backgrounds, like those in their organisations. Too many of these youngsters were falling out of formal education, losing faith in the system at a very young age. Without an education, these young people had little chance of finding jobs and as a result they suffered from low self-esteem.

The youth workers’ discussion turned to the under-estimated power of informal learning. The group knew of only two examples of institutions (in England and in Denmark) which provide tools specifically to recognise the informal learning of young people from fewer-opportunity backgrounds, despite the fact that such tools have been shown to concretely support young people in finding jobs and improving their self-image.

The members of the group began to ask themselves: would it be possible to create a new pedagogical method... a method based on informal learning which would show young people that they are good at something and a part of something... which would show them that they are useful... which would offer them opportunities instead of limitations... and which would show them that they are learning because they want to learn and not because they are being forced to learn?

The group became very enthusiastic as the discussion went on. By the end of the Tool Fair, they had put together a first draft project description. Yet the group knew they had to be realistic. As youth workers and trainers, they each had a lot of field experience with youth and their informal competences but they lacked the theoretical background about the informal learning processes of young people. If they wanted to create a viable method, the group needed to learn to walk before it could run.

The “Visico” Seminar (Luetjensee, Germany, Sept. 2009)



To address the gaps in their knowledge, the project partners decided to organise a 5-day starter seminar called “Visico – Visibility of Informal Competences (in the field of youth work)”. The seminar was an opportunity to become better acquainted with the different definitions, theories and practices of informal learning. In these 5 days, the partners aimed to gain more background knowledge about informal learning, how it works in practice, and how it might possibly be documented.

The seminar was also a chance for the partners to further develop their original project idea. The partners believed that the more open a setting they could create for the young people, the more space there would be for informal learning processes to take place. To create this open framework, much thought had to be given to practical aspects like the physical location of the project, the expectations towards the young people, the role of the group leaders, etc.

The partners also wanted to give the young people a high degree of freedom. In daily life, young people are often put into the role of passive consumers. For instance, young people go to school, take part in free time activities, etc, but they are not often in a position to influence those activities or to voice what they would like to see, learn or do. The partners strongly believed that the chance to determine their own programme - in their own way and in their own time - would have a very positive effect on the participants. They argued that the youngsters would be more open for learning if they were put in a setting where they could do what they wanted to do rather than have to follow the ideas of someone else (usually an adult). While this was an exciting idea in theory, it posed a considerable challenge in practice because with more freedom comes more responsibility (for the participants as well as for the organisers) so it was important to find the proper balance.

After extensive discussions, a more defined vision of the project began to take shape:

- An international group of young people would stay together for two weeks on a small Danish island.
- The young people would be totally self-sufficient and self-responsible – in charge of organising themselves, their daily needs, determining their own programme and learning from one another.
- The group leaders would adopt a “no interference” approach, reinforcing the self-responsibility of the participants.
- The group leaders would document the informal learning processes taking place in order to better understand what was being learned and to make the learning more visible and to highlight the value of peer-to-peer learning.
- A parallel field study or research would complement the results of this documentation.

With this the main lines of the project were agreed. What proved much more difficult, however, was deciding on the *degree* of openness of the project setting. Would the vision of a “no interference” approach be realistic? Would it in fact contribute to more informal learning? Would it be safe for the youngsters?

Another problem for the partners was trying to reach a common understanding of informal learning, what it is and what it is not. How does informal learning differ from non-formal learning? To what extent can (or should) the informal learning of young people be encouraged or steered externally? These are complex questions and the partners did not come up with all the answers.

As there were some doubts within the group about the project concept, it was suggested to first test the idea on a smaller scale during a youth exchange in Germany, to learn from that experience and then decide on which further steps to take towards the real “island adventure”.

***Pilot youth exchange – “Me, Myself and Others in Nature”
(Luetjensee, Germany, Sept. 2010)***



The aim of this youth exchange was to give the participants an opportunity to learn how to live in very basic conditions, without any modern technical equipment, and “get closer to nature”. The project was a typical youth exchange, offering the participants a range of non-formal workshops and activities and encouraging informal learning within the group on a peer-to-peer basis.

However, the project also contained one important experimental element. The programme was structured so as to include a 24-hour period (one day and one overnight) at the end of the youth exchange called “Your Day”. This day was to be completely informal - the young people would be on their own in the forest, free to do whatever activities they wanted, responsible for building their own shelters, doing their own cooking, establishing their own leadership, and so on. To prepare the group for this, the first days of the youth exchange were devoted in part to workshops specifically designed so as to give the young people the knowledge and experience they would need to feel comfortable spending a night on their own out of doors (for example, learning how to build a shelter, etc.)

It was not easy for the partners to agree on this methodology. For some it was too dangerous while for others it was not adventurous enough. There were also many specific concerns regarding the organiser’s professional obligations towards minors in the group (young people under the age of 18). In the end, the partners reached a compromise and the decision was made to place one adult observer with the group in the forest to act as a contact person in case of emergency.

The project partners struggled with other questions as well. Would creating an open unstructured environment actually lead to more informal learning opportunities? Would the young people respond positively to having such a degree of freedom? Could the young people be trusted to behave responsibly if they were not regularly monitored and guided by a fixed programme? These were important questions as the answers would give a strong indication whether a longer 12-day version of the experiment was viable or not.



To try to find answers, the organisers decided to monitor and document what the young people thought, felt and learned throughout the youth exchange. Different methods were used for this, including before-and-after questionnaires, regular observation of the group and daily reflection/evaluation tools. The outcomes from these methods showed that the young people felt that:

- they became more aware of their informal learning processes,
- their learning had improved over the 10 days of the youth exchange, particularly in the areas of their attitudes towards other people and cultures, communication skills, and outdoor activities.
- they had learned more life skills in the 10 days than they remembered learning in the past year in school



Most remarkably, the final evaluation showed that the activity the young people had enjoyed most during the youth exchange was “Your Day”. Some of their comments included:

- *“The “Your Day” experience was not as bad as had I thought - I expected it would be much harder.”*
- *“Staying out in the forest at night... felt like a stimulus-confrontation, a stimulus-flooding”*
- *“It actually was less adventurous than I had expected”*
- *“Most surprising for me was the good teamwork, the time without problems and a certain easiness of being.”*
- *“No risk, no fun!”*



The "Strategies for Anholt 2011" Seminar (Oeiras, Portugal, Sept. 2010)



The purpose of this seminar was to build on the results of the Luetjensee youth exchange and to begin planning the many details involved with the 12-day island experiment.

Key inputs during the seminar included:

- Reviewing the concepts of formal, non-formal and informal learning
- SMART methods of project planning
- Connecting with different forms of learning and outdoor activities
- How to document learning processes?

By the end of the 3-day seminar, most of the practical aspects of the Anholt project were agreed (i.e. in terms of the location of the project, the length of stay on the island, profile of the participants, arrangements for accommodation, rules for the project, sharing of responsibilities between the partners, etc).

Yet even at the end of the Oeiras seminar, and despite the experience gained from the Luetjensee youth exchange, there still remained many different views and a general lack of clarity between the partners on the meaning of non-formal vs. informal learning, on which specific aspects of the project should be regulated and which should be kept as informal as possible, and on how to allow the documentation and research groups to report on informal learning moments and results. This lack of a clear common vision between the partners would later also prove problematic during the actual project itself.



The Anholt Project

“ *What if we could make a project based on the value of informal and non-formal learning methods, tools, pedagogies and anthropological and social pedagogic fieldwork and that could document the values and importance of these learning methods?* ”

On August 1, 2011, after three years of planning and preparation, the moment had arrived and the Anholt project began.

Aims and objectives

The Anholt Project aimed to create an informal process, through the creation and participation of young people in a micro-society in an adventurous and reserved natural environment, in order to try to document and evaluate the impact of informal learning across various cultures.

The specific objectives of the project included:

- To foster a sense of self-management and the development of skills and attitudes, through peer-to-peer communication and learning

- To enhance the sense of group and peer-to-peer co-operation (by trading skills, helping, advising, etc.) and the awareness of social co-operation for the construction of a society scheme
- To raise the awareness of the necessity of active citizenship
- To foster intercultural knowledge and tolerance
- To foster an empowerment of the project by promoting its transferability to other settings and timeframes, in a long-scale project where this youth exchange is the third leg of this co-operation

Participating organisations

Many organisations and individuals contributed to the development and planning of Anholt Island over the three-year period but a final group of seven partners saw the project through to fruition.

Austria	Verein Sozialmanagement Steiermark
Denmark	Syddjurs Ungdomsskole
Germany	Kreisjugendring Stormarn e.V.
Italy	Eurodesk Nicholino
Portugal	Camara Municipal de Oeiras
Spain	Centre d'Estudis de l'Esplai
Sweden	Hässelhus Youth Club

See the Annex for a description of the participating partner organisations and their contact details.

Profile of the participants



The Anholt project consisted of 28 young people, seven group leaders, seven observers, one field researcher and a two-member film team.

The project partners wanted the group of participants to be as varied as possible. In practice, this took the form of a mix of so-called

“well-functioning” youngsters, young people from fewer-opportunity backgrounds and young people from an immigrant background.

Within these three groups there were again differences in the backgrounds of the participants. For instance:

- some came from small villages, some from small cities and some from large urban centres
- some had been raised in foster families
- some were from families with alcohol problems
- some had problems with drugs or alcohol themselves, and
- some had not finished primary school.

Despite their many differences, the young people shared some important similarities as well:

- all were aged from 14-18 years
- all could communicate in English
- all joined the project on their own initiative (i.e. they joined because they wanted to join)
- no one else in the project knew any details about their background or personal situation (except perhaps one other member of their national group)

Some project partners choose their participants on the basis of a selection process where the young people had to write a kind of “application” explaining why they were the right person to join the project, what they believed they could contribute and what they expected to learn. Other participants were hand-picked by their group leaders based on a close personal knowledge of the young person’s background and a belief that this experience would provide a good opportunity for self-reflection and to “mirror” themselves with other youngsters their own age.





How was the Anholt Project different from other youth exchanges?

There are several key differences which distinguish Anholt from a “regular” multilateral youth exchange:

- The Anholt Project was in fact **two projects in one** - a youth exchange and a scientific experiment in exploring and documenting situations where informal learning takes place.
- The **participants were expected to completely self-organise**. The group was put in charge of making their own decisions and sorting out their own daily routine including tasks like shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc. It was also left up to the group to decide what they wanted to do each day in terms of activities. The group leaders were present at all times but had strict instructions not to interfere in the young people’s group processes.





- There was **no official day-to-day programme**. Since it would be up to the participants to decide for themselves what they wanted to do each day, there was no programme defined in advance. Normally the funding requirements of the European Commission for a project of this kind require a high level of involvement of youngsters in the planning phase but in the Anholt project this was not possible as the youngsters were not allowed to know the plans for the activities and the setting in advance.
- Having no official programme also meant that there was **no official timetable**. There were no set times at all concerning when the young people should get up in the morning, when they should cook, when they should eat, sleep, shower, etc. All initiative was left to the youngsters under the slogan “Do *what* you want, *when* you want and *how* you want... but only *if* you want.”

The young people were prepared in advance for some aspects of the project – for instance, they were all encouraged to start practicing their English, they spent time learning about Denmark and Danish culture, they discussed ways to assess and avoid risks during the exchange, and they were told what to bring with them to the island (clothes, sleeping bags, shoes, etc.) However, they were not told anything in advance about what would happen when they arrived on the island. They knew nothing about how the daily programme or daily logistics would be arranged during those nine days. They only knew that “this will be different from a usual youth exchange”.

Open structure? Yes... but one with rules

Although the aim of this project was to create an open environment and allow the participants to self-organise and self-determine their own programme, this did not mean that there was no structure at all or that there were no rules for managing the group.

As in any youth activity, the safety of the participants is always a top concern. The Anholt project partners came up with the following list of rules to ensure the comfort and well-being of the young people:

- **Alcohol** – the consumption of alcohol was not allowed.
- **Behaviour** – good behaviour was expected from participants at all times as Anholt is both a tourist destination as well as home to a small permanent community of residents.
- **Drugs and illegal substances** – a no tolerance policy applied to the consumption, dealing and possession of all kinds of illegal drugs and substances. Participants found in breach of this policy would be asked to leave the project at their own personal expense
- **Electronic equipment** – participants were not allowed to use electronic equipment (such as mobile phones, MP3 players, laptops, etc,) on the island. A public phone booth was available for their use at the island harbour. Participants' parents were given a Danish mobile number to make contact in case of emergency.
- **Health & hygiene** – each member of the group was expected to play a role in maintaining cleanliness within the camp. The group was responsible for defining an agreement and system as to how to do this in practice.
- **Leaving camp premises** – participants were not allowed to leave the campsite after 23:00.
- **Participation** – participants were asked to respect punctuality at all times and were requested to take part in every common activity within the programme (e.g. common meals, reflection times, group excursions...)
- **Private property** – participants were responsible for their own private belongings and were asked to avoid bringing any expensive or "luxury" items with them. Important items and documents could be handed to the team leaders for safe-keeping in a secure location within the school.
- **Smoking** – smoking was not allowed inside the camp or in the forest. A designated smoker's corner was set up outside the camp (with a minimum age limit of 16 yrs. in accordance with Danish law).
- **Swimming** – if participants wanted to go swimming they were obliged to ask a group leader to attend them or their group.

What actually happened?

It would take many pages to describe everything that happened during the group's stay on the island, but here below is a summary of the main events.

DAY 1 Arrival and preparing for the island

Arrival of the seven national country groups in Aarhus... transfer to overnight accommodation in Grenaa... division into sleeping rooms (decided by the young people)... evening informal time for young people... team meeting for group leaders.

DAY 2 Leaving for Anholt

Early morning live interview by Danish National Radio P4 (with Danish participants)... cleaning out the bungalows...handing in all electronic devices...boarding the sailing ship for the journey to Anholt Island... stop underway to jump from the ship and swim in the sea... arrival at the island... distribution of maps and bicycles... finding own way by bicycle to the campsite... information meeting (group given responsibility for organising itself)... First set of tasks: setting up tents, assigning sleeping places, shopping for food, cooking dinner on camp stove and/or barbecue.





DAY 3

Building up camp & getting to know the local area

A.M.: trip to the beach and/or sightseeing by bicycle...P.M.: guided tour of the local village...Evening: request from local farmer for help next day.



DAY 4

Building up camp, bringing in the hay & introduction to "intern positions"

08:00: Helping Farmer Morten collect and store 1200 hay bales... Lunch with Farmer Morten and family... continuing haying until 15:00... P.M.: beach time or nap time... Evening: local resident Marlene presents possibilities for activities including a 25 km trekking tour to the seal colony and the chance to become "interns" (job-shadowing) to assist the local community and get to know the local residents and everyday life on Anholt.



DAY 5

Trekking tour, a dinner invitation, organising cleaning duties and a birthday party!

07:00: Start of trekking tour to old lighthouse and seal colony with Marlene... lunch... return to camp 13:30...invitation to sign up for Italian spaghetti pomodoro... invitation to join clean-up of toilets and showers...organising surprise midnight birthday party and disco.



DAY 6

Intern positions begin & the “marmalade workshop”

Seven participants start their day as interns (one with local fishermen, one with the carpenter, one at the campsite, two at the grocery store and two at the tourist office)...PM: Marmalade workshop with Marlene (collecting fruit, seeding the berries, cooking and bottling marmalade)... interns return home and talk about their experiences... evening football match: Leaders vs. Participants.



DAY 7

More intern positions & pottery workshop

Sixteen participants start their day as interns (two with carpenter and bricklayer, two at the kindergarten, two at the grocery store, two at the nursery, two in the tourist office, two at the local transport service, one at the tavern, one at the harbour restaurant, one at the harbour rescue station, two at the power station)...P.M: pottery workshop with Marlene...Evening: interns talk about their experiences.



DAY 8

Still more intern positions, second phase of pottery workshop & a call from Danish T.V.

Small number of participants leave for a day as interns...trip to the beach...P.M.: continuation of pottery workshop... invitation sent out to the Anholt residents for a barbecue...Danish TV (DR1) invites the Danish participants to appear on television to discuss what it is like to go 10 days without mobile phones.



DAY 9

Breaking down the camp, farewell barbecue, a football match and a broken leg

Taking down and packing up tents...preparing food for evening barbecue... preparing a book of individual and personal thank-you letters to the Anholt island residents... 18:00: 80 guests arrive for farewell dinner...presentation of thank-you book to Marlene... evening football match: Anholt Project vs. Anholt United... game-time accident resulting in a broken leg... transport of victim to hospital in Randers by helicopter.



DAY 10

Leaving Anholt, evaluation of project at Roende, Danish participants on national T.V.

05:30: out of bed to finish packing up equipment, cleaning campsite and school...07:00: returning bicycles to harbour, loading luggage on ferry...08:00 depart from Anholt Island... arrival at Grenaa and transfer to Roende youth hostel by bus... P.M.: debriefing of participants and group evaluation... departure of Danish participants to Copenhagen to appear in national T.V. show "Aftenshowet".

DAY 11

Sightseeing day in Aarhus

A.M.: Sightseeing tour for participants in Aarhus...evaluation by leader team...
P.M.: free time in Aarhus for participants...final debriefing meeting of leader team... Evening: all night farewell disco party.



DAY 12

Departures



In keeping with the theme of the project, **all of the proposals for activities were 100% optional**, meaning the young people took part only if they wanted to. Many of these activities were first-time experiences for the young people (for instance riding a bike, reading a map, setting up a tent, doing their own cooking, doing their own shopping, making ceramics, acting as “interns” and gaining hands-on work experience, collecting ingredients from nature to make their own food, giving a radio or television interview, etc).

The Anholt project was not just a world onto itself. As can be seen from the description of activities, there were many opportunities for the participants to **meet and spend time with the island residents**. This allowed for a special two-way learning process; not just the young people learning from the residents but residents learning from the young people as well.



The **intercultural learning aspect** was very strong throughout this project. Seven different countries took part in the project but even more nationalities were present when the immigrant and/or mixed backgrounds of some of the participants were also taken into account. Interestingly, many of the most striking intercultural learning moments were less linked to issues of nationality and more to issues of gender, generational or socio-cultural differences within the group. For example:

- Being given a guided tour of the village by the island’s oldest resident (92 years young)
- Some of the boys expecting that the girls would cook for them (and some of the girls actually doing so...)

- The boys needing help from the girls to set up their tents
- The participants from “cities” having their first chance to do nature activities like on the local farm, on a fishing boat, or on the nature reserve.
- Etc.



The Methods

A scene taken from the Anholt video documentation:

Group leader: "So you don't know where you are?"

Participant: "No, I don't know."

Group leader: "Aha."

Participant (trying to read map): "Oh my God.... Do you know where we are?"

Group leader: "Yes."

Participant: "Can you show me on the map?"

Group leader: "No."

Participant: "Why?"

Group leader: "It's part of the game."



It is not easy to describe “the game” or to speak of “methods” in a project which had no pre-defined programme or daily structure. It is tempting to think that if there is no programme, then there is no need for methods, but this was not the case. In this project, a number of elements were so vital that they can be considered the true Anholt “methodology”.

The open learning environment. The idea of an open learning environment was the first and most important pillar of the project. The Anholt partners wanted to create a setting where the young people had as much freedom as possible to determine their own programme, their own rules, their own schedule and their own responsibilities. The partners believed that the more informal the setting (with as few rules and as little interference from the group leaders as possible) the more “informally” the youngsters would have to act and learn in order to exist within the frame that was given to them.



Self-determination. Self-determination was the second pillar of the project. The process began as soon as the participants arrived on the island and were told that from that moment on they would have to organise all aspects of the project themselves. This process was quite complicated and it took time for the group to adapt. At first the young people did not recognise or understand their authority to solve problems by themselves. Initially some of the participants addressed their group leaders for help or to ask how to solve specific problems, but this improved over time.

What the project partners did not expect was that this self-determination process would have a flip side. It was not only the young people who had to confront their old patterns of thinking and doing - the group leaders had to do so as well. Some leaders found it difficult to step away from their usual role as youth workers and stay truly “hands off” - for instance, to stop themselves from instructing their youngsters, telling them what to do, intervening to solve conflicts, etc. As the project went on, it was a surprise to discover that in some ways it was easier for the young people to cope with the self-determination approach than it was for the group leaders.

Regular reflection. Because informal learning is often unintentional and “invisible”, there was a need to provide opportunities and tools to help the participants reflect and discuss about their learning.

- The first of these was the **personal learning diary**. Each young person was given a small notebook at the start of the project and told that these were meant to be used – if they chose to do so - as a private personal space to keep track of their personal learning in any way they wanted (i.e. through daily diary entries, drawings, noting of key words, etc.)
- Next were the **daily breakfast meetings**. Breakfast was a good moment of the day to bring everyone together and the meetings proved to be a good space for people to comment and share their ideas, observations, doubts and criticisms with the rest of the group.
- There were also **daily one-on-one evening interviews with the observers**. In these interviews the observers would present their impressions of learning moments they had seen throughout the day and discuss them together with the young person, who could then consider whether they had learned something new and how.
- Finally, there was also the **video documentation** which allowed the participants and the group leaders to actually look back and see themselves as they went through different learning experiences (although this tool was primarily intended for use after the young people had returned home).

Observers. The observers played a key role in identifying moments of informal learning and in helping the young people to recognise and understand them. The observers’ mission was to document examples of informal learning throughout the day using an observation chart. At the end of the day, they would then review these observations and discuss them with the individual young people. The results were then delivered to the field researcher together with a personal reflection.

The observers had a difficult and sometimes contradictory role. They were expected to be “anonymous and invisible” while the participants were going about their daily activities but at the same time they were part of the group – they were continually present and had to stay close enough to the participants to be able to detect as many learning moments as possible. It was also a challenge for the observers to decide at any given moment where they should be and which settings were the most interesting to observe... on an island 11 km long and 6 km wide where some of the young people decide to go to the beach, others to go on a nature walk, others into town and still others to stay in bed.

Activities in and with the local community. The interaction between the Anholt participants and the island residents turned out to be a major contributor to the informal learning process. Thanks largely to the initiative of the residents, the

young people had many opportunities for learning through getting to know the daily life and work of the island (e.g. on a farm, in a nature reserve, in small businesses, in an artist's home, etc.)

This interaction also served as a huge positive boost to the young people's self-esteem. Some of the participants in the project came from difficult backgrounds and had had few opportunities to actively contribute to the life of their local community back home. The "internships" with the island residents were a powerful learning moment for these young people, not just because they learned work-related skills but because they gained a real sense of participation, purpose and achievement. ("The people need my help!")

"Deadly dullness". One unexpected method which had a dramatic impact on the project was what the group leaders came to call "the deadly dullness". By this they meant the phenomena of individuals having the freedom to do whatever they wanted to do but failing (or not wanting or not being able) to do so... with the result that they sometimes ended up doing nothing at all.

The deadly dullness was intensified by the fact that the young people had none of their usual "escape routes". All their electronic devices had been handed in, so it was not possible to contact friends at home, check their Facebook page, etc. The campsite also had no T.V. or music players. None of the usual ways the young people used to occupy themselves were available and this proved difficult for some individuals to deal with. They were not used to finding alternative ways of filling in their time.

Doing nothing for a few hours may be manageable...but doing nothing for a full day or for days at a time is something else again. This "deadly dullness" could have had a seriously negative impact on the project but it in fact turned out to be a valuable learning opportunity.

The group leaders felt that the young people benefitted from learning to "just be"- to be present and live in the moment. A certain degree of emptiness and concentration is necessary for self-reflection and the deadly dullness helped provide that. As well, the group leaders observed that although it took some time, individuals would eventually reach their dullness limit. When that limit was reached, it was as though a mental line was crossed - as though the brain could not tolerate the dullness any longer - and the young people were suddenly sparked into action to come up with something, anything, to occupy themselves. This suggests that deadly dullness can be a spring into creativity and also, therefore, into learning.



Creating an Environment of Freedom and Self-Responsibility

” Human resources are like natural resources; they’re often buried deep. You have to go looking for them. They’re not just lying around on the surface. You have to create the circumstances where they show themselves.

Sir Ken Robinson (taken from his speech “Bring on the Learning Revolution!” - TED Conference, Feb. 2010)



What is involved in setting up an open informal learning context? Which aspects need to be considered? In the Anholt project special attention was paid to the following areas:

Selecting the right location. The project partners wanted to find a relatively isolated location where the youth exchange could take place – one where the young people would be mostly reliant on themselves and where individual and peer-to-peer learning processes could take place without too much disturbance from “outside”. One early suggestion was to find a remote island with no electricity, services or any people living there. It was felt that such a location could offer a world of informal learning potential. This first suggestion was later modified as the partners felt that for a nine-day period at least some basic facilities had to be in place (for instance sufficient shower and toilet facilities, shelter in case of bad



weather and access to provisions for a group of this size). In the end the island of Anholt was chosen with a small population of 150 people, a grocery store, a campsite and a school which could be used as a base during the exchange (with showers and toilets).

Maximising the participants' presence. The partners all agreed that it was very important for the young people to be fully "present" and focused on the environment of the island and its possibilities throughout their stay (as demonstrated by the choice of an isolated location where outside influences would be minimal). To take this a step further, it was decided to ban all computer and communication devices - no I-Pods, MP3 players or mobile phones could be used on the island. The partners believed that by letting go of their gadgets, the participants would gain the freedom to focus on themselves in a way which they would normally not have the possibility to do in their regular daily lives. In a sense, the young people would be "free", without any pre-determined roles to play.

Handling the group-building process. Normally a well-planned youth exchange takes time for group-building, often in the form of icebreaking games on the first day, to make the participants feel at home and a part of the group as quickly as possible. The Anholt partners left this process entirely up to the young people themselves. The young people did not organise anything like a "traditional" group-building session but as it turned out some of the project's basic activities served as good substitutes. For instance, to reach the island on the first day of the project, the group travelled on a sailing boat, which give the participants the chance to work together by helping the boat crew to rig sails, etc. The first hours on the island when the group had the task to sort out cooking and sleeping arrangements allowed for more group-building as the participants had to talk to each other in order to get organised, but again only according to their own initiative.

Organising daily practicalities. In keeping with the philosophy that the young people should "self-determine" as much as possible, the project partners had to decide how far they would (or would not) become involved in organising the daily practicalities (like the food, accommodation, etc.) A general strategy was adopted to provide the group with the basic necessities but to leave the actual organisation strictly up to the participants with the aim of facilitating more initiative-taking within the group and of stimulating more informal learning processes. For example, the leaders provided the group with tents but left it to the group to decide how to divide the sleeping places. Similarly, the leaders provided cooking gear and demonstrated how to use it but left the choice of what to cook, when to cook and with whom to cook up to the group to decide.

Providing for mobility. The island offered many simple possibilities for activities, excursions and discoveries (e.g. the beach, the town, the local sights, etc.) but it would be up to the participants, not the group leaders, to decide if and how they wished to take advantage of these. In order to motivate the participants to

challenge themselves and take initiative on this level, it was necessary to provide the participants with some form of mobility, so it was decided to rent bicycles for each individual in the group.

Ensuring proper leadership. In an experimental project of this kind, the right leadership is essential. One aspect of this is the ratio of adult leaders to participants. As in most youth exchanges, the Anholt project required one group leader per country group (seven persons in total) but also an additional one observer per country group (another seven) plus additional support for the research elements (a two-person film team and a one-man field research staff). Of course much more important than the numbers is the group leaders' attitude. A great deal of self-confidence is required of the group leaders to be able to maintain the "no interference" approach and a considerable amount of trust in the young people's ability to self-organise. In a project of this kind, group leaders must understand that although they may be "hands off", they are not removed from the informal learning process. Rather, they are an integral part of it and it is very likely that they will go through unexpected informal learning processes of their own. In addition, it must always be kept in mind that informal settings can be fragile so group leaders need to know how to recognise when they should intervene and when they need to stay in the background.



Research Elements of the Anholt Project

“Not only are we as a society (or as educators) oblivious to informal learning, we don't even notice our own. That's right - people don't even notice their own informal learning.”

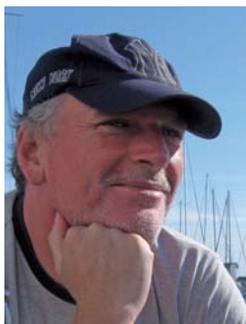
Allen Tough, *“The Iceberg of Informal Adult Learning”* (1999)



The statement above suggests that to a large extent informal learning is hidden in the mind of the learner at the moment of the actual learning. Therefore a big challenge throughout the Anholt project was the question of how to overcome the “invisibleness” of informal learning and make it more obvious, for both the learners as well as for those trying to guide them.

The Anholt project needed to find ways to “see” or “recognise” informal learning. However, just “seeing” the learning was not enough – there was also a need to demonstrate or “prove” what the young people had learned.

The project used two methods to try to achieve this: the first was a scientific field research, the second a video documentation.



The Scientific Field Research

The full version of the Anholt scientific field research compiled by FH-Prof. Mag. Dr. Hubert Höllmüller can be found at www.learning-competence.eu.

If informal learning makes up 70-90% of our total learning, then informal processes must be taking place regularly throughout our everyday lives... but is there a way to “prove” that an individual has learned informally?

To explore this and other questions it was decided to include a scientific field research within the Anholt project. The partners hoped that this research would produce some evidence-based outcomes of informal learning which would, in turn, play an important role in improving the visibility and recognition of informal processes – both for the learner as well as for youth workers and other educators.

While there were obvious benefits to this approach, the idea of introducing a formal research aspect into the project was not without its problems. The project partners wondered:

- Can a scientific approach be combined with the culture of youth work?

- Will the introduction of scientific (formal) methodologies have a negative impact on the informal setting of the project?

The methodology

FH-Prof. Mag. Dr. Hubert Höllmüller of the Fachhochschule Kärnten (Austria) joined the Anholt project in the role of field researcher and as part of the overall project concept was given the task of answering two central questions:

1. Is it possible to make informal learning processes visible?
2. How can informal learning be supported by a non-formal setting?

To find the answers, a research method was designed based on **participative observation** (where observers existed, lived, cooked, ate, played, etc, together with the individuals they were observing). This method involved using a variety of different tools with both qualitative and quantitative aspects, including:

- Observation charts
- Reflection charts
- Daily questionnaires (for the participants – in their own language)
- Daily questionnaires (for the observers)
- A final evaluation (designed by the youth workers)

The research itself was carried out by a group of seven youth workers acting as field observers. Rather than being assigned a small specific group, the observers shared responsibility for monitoring all of the participants for the duration of the stay on the island. It was left up to each observer to decide for themselves who they would specifically observe and at which moments. In theory, this observation was full-time and continuous (as it went on at all moments of the day as well as the night) but of course in practice it was not physically possible (nor necessary) for the observers to monitor the participants 24 hours per day.

The observers' task was to watch the young people as they went about their daily routine. They would fill in an **observation chart** each time they noticed a moment of informal learning taking place (one separate chart for each instance of learning). At the end of each day, the observers would seek out the individual participants they had observed to share with them what they had seen, to discuss whether the participant agreed that this had been a moment of informal learning and whether they had been aware that they were learning at that specific moment. These outcomes were then recorded on the **reflection charts**.

Obviously, there were far more moments of informal learning occurring than could possibly all be documented or discussed. It was clear to the team that at a certain moment too much discussion of people's learning might become irritating for the participants and may even disturb the learning process itself, so as a general guideline the observers were instructed to limit their discussions with the reflection charts to approximately every third instance of learning.

The **daily questionnaires** were used to collect feedback from the young people themselves. The questionnaires asked the participants to describe their day. Then, they went on to deal with issues around the individuals' learning (e.g. "What was new for you today?" and "Was there something you learned today?"). Finally, they gave the participants an opportunity to share how they were feeling (e.g. "What helped you feel good today?", "What made you feel not so good today?", "Did you have enough time by yourself?", etc.) The participants filled in the questionnaires in their mother tongue and the results were then translated by an observer.

What did the field research show?

In quantitative terms, the field research produced a total of 225 observation charts and 89 reflection charts. An overview and an interpretation of their content can be seen in the full report.

The outcomes of the observation charts showed two particularly interesting areas of results:

1. The extent to which participants learned informally **on their own** (25%) compared to the extent to which they learned informally **through interaction with others** (i.e. with 2 or more people – 75%).
2. The amount of informal learning moments which the observers perceived as **intended** by the participants (38%) compared to those which they perceived as **unintended** (62%).



These findings strongly suggest that informal learning often really is “hidden in the mind of the learner” at the moment that the learning is taking place. They also suggest that although an individual can learn informally on their own, more interactive settings (like peer-to-peer or group situations) seem to stimulate informal learning even further.

Further, the observation charts also highlighted

- the different **settings** where informal learning took place (e.g. during the interships, in the kitchen, at the campsite, in the gym, on the football field, etc.)
- the different **processes** where informal learning took place (e.g. during a chat, during a party, while shopping, while hiking, etc.)
- the different **categories** where informal learning took place (according to the system of the eight Key Competences – e.g. communication in foreign languages, social and civic competences, learning to learn, etc.)

It should be kept in mind that the observation charts were filled in by the observers. The results were then discussed with the individual young person at the end of the day. The outcomes of that discussion were collected in the reflection charts which allowed for some comparison and contrast between the observer’s and the individual’s points of view.

The **reflection charts** also provided interesting information in their own right. They showed:

- whether the individual felt there was **something new** in what they saw/learned
- whether the individual learned **something they wanted** to learn
- whether the individual was **aware** that they were learning at a particular moment
- whether the individual **felt accepted** during the process
- in which **category** the individual felt their learning belonged (again according to the system of the eight Key Competences)

The responses filled in by the young people on their **daily questionnaires** revealed much about what the young people felt was new, what exactly they learned, what factors made them feel good and which did not on a daily basis. A total of **941 specific examples of learning** were collected through these questionnaires. A detailed overview of these results (as well as from the daily questionnaires filled in by the observers) can be seen in the full field research report.

Challenges in implementing the field research

Organising and implementing a field research of this kind, and in the context of a youth exchange, was a first-time experience for the Anholt project partners and several challenges were encountered along the way.

- During the preparation phase of the project there was a lack of clarity surrounding many of the details and the division of tasks around the field research which ultimately lead to difficulties (like too little communication,

agreements not being followed up, tools being designed late, etc). Looking back, it is evident that more time, planning and preparation were needed.

- The group leaders also noted that not all of the young people responded positively to being observed and regularly approached to talk about “their learning”. Although the observers did their best to keep a low profile, the process nonetheless became disturbing for some individuals over the course of the project.

Initial conclusions

Is it possible to make informal learning processes visible? The combined collected results of the observation charts, reflection charts and daily questionnaires show that the Anholt project succeeded in making a considerable number of informal learning processes more visible.

In quantitative terms, it can be said that a large number of specific informal learning moments were identified over the nine-day period on the island. However, these are probably just the tip of the iceberg. It is likely that much more informal learning took place than could ever be fully documented and recorded.

How can informal learning be supported by a non-formal setting? The outcomes of the field research suggest that the open setting and the self-determination approach of the Anholt project were important supports to the informal learning process. Informal settings by definition automatically leave more room for informal processes than formal settings do. What is not known, however, is whether the same level of informal learning would have occurred, for instance, in a different setting or at a different location or with a different participant profile, etc. More research is needed in this area before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Can a scientific approach be combined with the culture of youth work? Will the introduction of scientific (formal) methodologies have a negative impact on the informal setting of the project? The Anholt project demonstrated that it is definitely possible to combine the cultures of science and youth work. By and large, the project was successful in carrying out a formal field research in a relatively unobtrusive way and without interfering in the young people’s informal learning processes. The Anholt experience shows that including a scientific element in a project of this kind requires thorough preparation, an open, positive attitude as well as a common vision among the members of the project team and, most importantly, an atmosphere of trust and respect within the group of participants.

It should be kept in mind that while most of the young people seemed to accept the methodology of participative observation, for some individuals it did become disturbing over time, so this approach may need to be adapted and improved. This raises many interesting questions about what other kinds of evidence-based methodologies could be developed and applied to similar projects in future.

The Video Documentation

To see the full version of the video documentation, go to www.learning-competence.eu.



It is one thing to talk about the informal learning processes of young people... but it is something completely different to be able to actually see these processes taking place.

The video documentation was another attempt to overcome the “invisibleness” of informal learning – this time by making use of visual media. The concept was to regularly film the participants during their stay on the island in the hope of capturing a wide variety of informal learning moments on film. These learning moments could then be shown back to the participants to make them more aware of their own learning. They could also be shown to “external parties” outside the project (like group leaders, educators, funders and even other young people) to raise more awareness and understanding of what informal learning can look like as well as of when and how it can take place.



The methodology

The documentation consisted of two parts:

1. Regular (largely unstructured) filming of the participants - following them through their various daily activities with the aim of capturing impressions of the youth exchange in different settings,
2. A series of structured qualitative interviews – one series with a young person from each country, another with a group leader/observer from each country – filmed at the beginning, middle and end of the project.

The actual task of filming was shared by two persons: Ansgar Bueter-Menke (media educator and youth worker) and Ute Sauerwein-Weber (education officer). These two were supported by Nora Weber who was also a group leader and member of the team of observers in the field research.

While the Anholt partners were enthusiastic about the possibilities offered by the video documentation, they also had some concerns:

- How could a 12-day youth exchange without any programme defined in advance effectively be filmed? Without knowing what was going to happen day to day, how could it be determined what and when to film?
- How would the participants react to being filmed? Would the act of filming disturb the group process or possibly even interfere with potential learning situations?
- Could a team of just three persons realistically film 24 hours a day over the entire length of the project?

In practice, the video team did their best to keep a certain distance from the participants and to be as subtle as possible but, like the observers carrying out the field research, it was not possible for them to remain completely in the background. The film team was obliged to interact directly with the participants to some extent (e.g. asking the young people to describe for the camera what they were doing, how they did it, what they were feeling, etc).

To cope with this, the team developed a strategy which they jokingly called “the undercover mole”. Nora Weber was quite close in age and status to the group of participants. Because of this, it was easier for her to get close to the participants than for the other two older film team members. Nora learned to use the camera discreetly, in a way that it became a matter of course to the participants to be filmed. This allowed for a more intimate access to the participants’ informal learning processes.

Clearly it was not possible to film every hour of the day and night but in practice it was not necessary to do so. The team of three managed to divide the hours of the day roughly between them. Beyond this, it was a matter of instinct and personal choice as to which moments would be interesting to film.



What did the video documentation show?

The video documentation provided valuable insight into how the project's vision of an open learning setting was put into practice and how this impacted the participants in a variety of ways. The video also proved to be a means for giving both the participants and the group leaders a voice and a way to express their own views about the processes they were going through in a way that a field research (and also this booklet!) cannot.

The video documentation shows examples of:

- the wide **range of informal learning moments and contexts**. Some examples of the young people's learning were "simple" (like learning how to cook, how to set up a tent, how to do the grocery shopping, how to juggle, how to sculpt, etc.) while other learning moments were more "complex" (like learning to be patient, dealing with interpersonal conflicts, taking initiative, group bonding, etc.)
- the **interaction with the local residents** of Anholt island (through the internships but also through the artistic activities, etc.) and the positive influence this had on the participants and the learning process
- the **activities and informal learning processes involved in the internships** and how this impacted on different individuals
- the young people expressing **how they felt about not having their electronic gadgets**.
- Etc.





One particularly interesting segment of the video involves the young people reflecting on how they see informal learning in relation to the learning they have experienced in school and their reactions to the freedom they experienced in the Anholt project. Their comments (taken from the film):

- *Interviewer:* "What if you come back to school and meet your teacher – what would you like to tell him about learning?" *Participant:* "Nothing, because my teacher is not a person that you tell about learning".
- "We stay at school and the teacher says something and you must learn and you must get it in your head. And here you talk with other people, and you want to know something."
- "This way we are free to do what we want and we learn things. In the other way we have to do what they say to us."
- "In school it's just in your head but now you can see it, you can feel it... It's better with this project because in school you're just sitting and listening to a teacher but in this project it's how you see it, not how the teacher sees it or the book sees it... here you can see it on your own."
- "I would treat the pupils better than I was treated. I would give them a lot more freedom in the hope that they would learn some more and feel more comfortable, maybe make some other results than I did because I didn't have the freedom that I wanted. I just want to give the kids the freedom they need to make a good work."

Outcomes of the video documentation

By the end of the project, the team had collected more than 15 hours of video footage. This was edited down to make the final version of the documentation, a film of approximately 27 minutes. Naturally, many informal learning moments which took place during the project were not caught on camera as it was not possible for a team of three persons to be present in all places at all times. As the film team members put it:

“Informal learning takes place where and when it wants to. It is spontaneous; it can’t be initiated or planned. Learning to let go and accept that as a film team we had no way to predict or control these processes was our own specific informal learning experience.”

The video documentation demonstrated that the visibility of informal learning can be improved by using visual media. The documentation was particularly successful in showing the wide diversity of learning that can take place in a project of this kind.

As a tool, the video was also very effective in capturing the human dimension of the Anholt project. Perhaps the most important (and most unexpected) contribution of the video was its ability to show the power and the personal impact of informal learning in a way which can never fully be expressed in words – for example, the joy of learning to ride a bike, the frustration at having no mobile phone or the pride in being able to help other people.



Main challenges in the Project

The Anholt project was the first time that the project partners had experimented with this type of informal learning environment for this length of time and as a result there were many unexpected challenges to be dealt with. Surprisingly, many of the main difficulties seemed to stem from the group leaders rather than from the group of young people.

- The most difficult challenge at all stages of the Anholt project was **the lack of clear understanding of the meaning of informal learning**. Informal learning is a complex idea at the best of times. Although the partners invested three years into the preparation of this project (including numerous discussions, meetings, seminars, advanced planning visits and a pilot youth exchange) there were still different perceptions about informal learning and how it should be facilitated in practice. In addition, the group of observers joined the project very late and so were also unfamiliar with the concept of informal learning. These two factors lead to a lack of a common understanding within the team which expressed itself on the island in the form of disagreements, misunderstandings and hard discussions within the leader group.
- There was a **high degree of uncertainty about how the young people would react** to the open informal setting of the project. No matter what the theory of informal learning might say, it was simply not possible to predict in advance how the young people would react to the freedom they would be given on the island and this was very worrying for some of the project partners.
- The **observers taking part in the field research were not properly prepared**. The original intention was to have a group of university students with experience in field observation form the observer group but due to a lack of time and miscommunication, this did not happen. Instead, young youth workers were recruited from among the project partner organisations at the last minute to take on the task. Although this group was very interested in the project and the experimental processes taking place, they unfortunately were not adequately prepared in advance. Their only real instruction took the form of a quick briefing by the field researcher when they arrived on the island. Another problem was the fact that this group did not have enough grounding in the topic of informal learning. As a result, they were give the task asked of looking for, documenting and discussing something which they themselves did not fully understand.
- On some levels it was **difficult for the group leaders to adjust to their role as facilitators in this project**. Youth educators, youth workers, animators, etc, often feel they need to tell their youngsters how to manage each situation, to take decisions for them, to solve their conflicts or to plan their activities down to the last detail leaving little for the young people to do themselves. In the Anholt

project, the group leaders had to change this usual role and understand that they were facilitators of the learning process but not in charge of the learning process. Their role was to prepare and maintain the setting, not to get involved in the reflections, analysis or doubts of the participants, because to do so would be to influence the young people's own initiative, creativity and self-reflection.

- One re-occurring question was **what are the limitations of the “no interference” approach?** In both the preparation phase as well as the project phase it was difficult for the group leaders not to steer their young people (as this is usually the essence of their job). It was also difficult to recognise when “creating an informal environment” crossed the line and became “interfering”. For example: was providing bicycles for the young people to get around on the island simply providing them with a mobility tool... or was it already suggesting a possible activity for them? Similarly, if the young people sat around and did nothing for several days, would it be acceptable for the group leaders to suggest some activities or would this qualify as “interfering” in the informal learning and self-determination process?



- It was also a source of much debate between the partners (with their different cultural and youth work backgrounds) as to **when “no rules” or “no interference” might become “no safety”**. The general rule was that leaders were not to interfere with the group or its decisions unless there was a risk to the young people's safety... but there were many practical cases which showed how difficult it was to recognize just where this boundary lay. For example, at what moment should the leaders interfere and insist that the group clean the toilets – from the very beginning of the project or only when there is a risk of a serious health hazard? As the project went on, the leaders learned that in fact there is a limit to the “no rules” concept. It is obviously unacceptable to jeopardise the safety of young people in the interest of a methodology but this in turn raises another question: If the leaders are obliged to interfere, at what point does the self-determination method become polluted? After just one case of interference? After five cases? After 10, 15, or 20 cases...?

- There was criticism from the group of participants regarding **the lack of agreement about (and consistency in applying) the basic rules of the project**. Although the rules had been discussed and agreed by all the partners in the preparation phase, in practice they were not observed or applied in the same way by all the group leaders. For instance:
 - Some group leaders decided not to inform their young people in advance about the ban on electronic devices while on the island (due to their fear that the young people would then refuse to participate). It was then a big shock to those participants to have to give up their devices and caused hard discussions and tension in the group.
 - Some leaders followed the same rules as the participants (e.g. no using electronic equipment, no consumption of alcohol, etc.) but others did not. This was seen by the young people as an unfair double standard and created resentment towards certain individuals.
 - There was also a lack of clear agreements in the leader team about the consequences of breaking rules. As a result, some participants who broke a rule were dealt with in one way, while others, who broke the same rule, were dealt with differently.



Feedback from participants & Project leaders

The following list of points was compiled from the comments made during each group's final evaluation session.

Participants' comments

Positive points

- The "no rules" aspect of the project meant that we had to grow up, to learn for ourselves, to help one another. Having no rules helped us to be independent from the group leaders.
- Freedom and self-responsibility were two of the aspects we liked most about the project; freedom in the sense of having the space to make our own experiences in things like making our own timetable, shopping for food, controlling our own budgets, etc.
- We discovered that to survive as a group, we needed some rules (e.g. to ensure cleanliness in the bathroom, etc.)
- We feel we all did our best to learn from the difficult moments and to find solutions to problems.
- In general we will remember that this project has been a great time.

Negative points

- We needed more group moments. This final evaluation is the first moment when everyone has been present to sit together and talk about things.
- The group was not really a group – this might have been because of the lack of a clear structure but also because there were no group-building games and no common space to be together. Perhaps we needed one more week to come together.
- It was a problem not having more people to turn to for information. Only a small number of the group leaders seemed to be really informed about what was going on and they did not always share what they knew with the whole group.
- Some of the basic rules were not observed (e.g. using mobile phones – obviously not referring to the emergency mobile phone). This was more a problem among the leaders than in our group. Some leaders followed the same rules as we did, but others did not.
- Some participants did not behave properly. We didn't like this. Again, the leaders reacted to different people in different ways. There should have been more consistency.



Project Leaders' Comments

- As youth workers, we know that in general young people want rules and they need rules - otherwise they don't know how to break them. Yet we consciously put them in a situation where there were practically no rules.
- From what we could see, it was very useful for some of the young people to take part in this project but for others it was too easy (like a holiday and nothing more). The difference seemed to lie mostly in the ages and in the individuals' daily situation back home. If you have no freedom in your daily situation, then an experience like this is a useful way to grow up but some of the youngsters in this project actually experienced too much freedom (for instance those whose families neglect them). These individuals may have benefitted from having a bit more structure.
- After our first experience in the "Me, Myself and Nature" youth exchange (2010), we had an idea of where we were going and what we wanted to try in the Anholt project. We wanted to go deeper into methods of informal learning. We wanted to create an easy environment where the youngsters stay more in the "stretch zone" so that they would learn more. We have succeeded with this and created a very good learning frame but we have not yet gone "all the way". We seem to be at the beginning of a process of learning about how to steer informal learning from within our non-formal context.
- While we were successful in creating the frame, we must also be critical of our own behaviour at certain moments in the project. We created some frustration among the youngsters. They lost trust in us when we broke the rules and when

we interfered despite telling them that they were the ones in charge. We created a nice learning environment but we also damaged it with our attitude. At the same time, we must also remember that we are humans, not machines, and in moments of stress even the most professional and experienced youth workers don't always manage to keep their cool or to react in the right way. We need to learn from this experience and remember that the wrong reaction from the leaders can negatively affect the group and the learning process.

- It was a very good experience for the younger youth workers (observers) to be present in this project and see with their own eyes what is possible in terms of informal learning, but it is important to have a minimum number of experienced youth workers present in the leader team to keep the project processes on track and to intervene in the right way when necessary.
- Contrary to all our fears in the preparation phase, the biggest problem with this project was not the openness or the young people's ability to self-organise. The biggest problem was the lack of clarity, unity and agreement within the team about what we were trying to achieve and how we were going to do it. We need to solidify our team by defining a tighter common frame. We need to communicate better and work in closer partnership. The biggest problem we had in selling this project was ourselves.
- What the real outcome of Anholt Island is in terms of what the youngsters have actually *learned* is impossible to say at this time. We have to wait and see.



Early conclusions & open questions

Looking back, what conclusions can be drawn from the Anholt experiment? What lessons can be learned and which questions still need to be explored?

Early conclusions

As it was said, the Anholt project was in fact two projects in one – a youth exchange and a scientific experiment. Because of this, it is important to see the project from each of these perspectives.

From the perspective of the youth exchange:

- The Anholt project showed how difficult it is, even for professionals, to grasp the concept of “informal learning” - what it is, what is involved, how the process can be supported and how the process can be blocked. Despite a deep conviction about the importance of informal learning, it still proved difficult for the partners to catch the full meaning and implications of informal learning. The process of understanding is still going on today.
- The project achieved its aims of creating an informal learning environment, fostering a sense of self-management among the participants, developing their skills and attitudes, raising their awareness of active citizenship and promoting intercultural knowledge and tolerance.
- Despite some partners’ original fears regarding the open environment, the participants managed to cope quite well with the self-determination approach. Some of the young people expressed a need and a preference for a similar level of freedom in other future learning contexts as well. It was in fact the group leaders who had the greatest difficulty dealing with the open informal learning environment. For some it was a big step to let go of their usual role as youth workers/animations and accept that their task was to facilitate the young people’s learning process rather than to lead it.
- The feedback from the participants’ daily evaluations indicates that all of the young people experienced a variety of informal learning moments throughout their stay on the island. Given the mix of profiles within the group, it can be concluded that this methodology can be beneficial to young people of many different profiles (not just those from fewer-opportunity backgrounds). At the same time, it should be kept in mind that while some participants were challenged by the open approach, for others it was too easy. As well, the group leaders observed that for those individuals who came from an already highly unstructured background (e.g. families in crisis, situations of neglect, etc.) the open setting is actually less suited to their specific needs. Young people with such profiles may in fact benefit from having more structure rather than less

From the perspective of the scientific experiment:

- The informal setting of the Anholt project and the element of self-determination did stimulate informal learning processes... but to what extent is not yet fully known or understood. This is an area which would be interesting to explore in more depth in future.
- The project demonstrated that by using different methods (participative observation, self-reflection, video documentation, etc.) it is possible to make informal learning processes more visible. This increased visibility is important as informal learning is, by definition, largely “hidden” and therefore difficult to recognise or value. The Anholt project was the partners’ first attempt at using (and combining) these methods, but there is still considerable room for further experimentation and the development of new methods.
- The Anholt project showed that it is possible to combine a scientific approach with the culture of youth work, but to do this successfully requires thorough preparation, an open, positive attitude as well as a common vision among the members of the project team and, most importantly, an atmosphere of trust and respect within the group of participants.

Open questions at this time

What did the young people really learn from the Anholt project... and what value or use does this learning have in their “regular” lives? The real outcome of this project is different for each individual and, as is the case with any youth exchange, it will take time for the participants to fully digest the experience and understand what they have learned. What will the young people concretely do with this learning? Some examples (like learning how to cook or how to speak a foreign language, etc.) may be easy to implement back home. Others (like learning to set up a tent or how to use a gas camp stove) may not transfer so easily to regular daily life... but examples like these may trigger other new forms of learning in their turn. Just what real value the learning from the Anholt project will have for the young people – and how they will use it over the long term – time alone will tell. Monitoring these outcomes will be a long-term process.

How can the outcomes of the Anholt project be disseminated further? The first step in this process will be to take the Anholt concept back to where it began by presenting the project and its outcomes during the SALTO Euromed “Tool Fair” VI (Tallinn, November 2011). The report of the field research, the video documentation and this booklet are all valuable publicity tools and the intention is to share them with a worldwide audience (in hard copy as well as in digital form). Another idea is to develop a series of training courses aimed at youth leaders, animators and multipliers to increase general knowledge about the value of informal learning and to better prepare those in traditional leadership roles for the open and unpredictable nature of informal learning processes.

What needs to happen next? How should the Anholt project be taken forward? If the choice is made to organise another youth exchange, it will need to be considered whether the next project should have the same framework as Anholt (to allow for some comparisons to be drawn) or whether it is more interesting to now go back to the original concept of placing the young people in a completely isolated environment and allowing them to self-determine their own programme without any offers of activities from externals. Whatever the new direction may be, it will be vital for all the project partners to stop and look again at the concept of informal learning and to establish a tighter common working frame.



Final remarks

At the conclusion of the nine days on the island, a member of the video film crew commented that they felt they were always either too late to catch the informal learning moments or that they were in the wrong place when they happened...

Informal learning as a concept can be difficult to understand and as a process it can be difficult to contain. Trying to get a hold of informal learning is a lot like trying to catch a wave in a bottle – you can scoop up the water but as soon as it's inside, the power of the wave disappears.

Informal learning needs freedom – it can be influenced and even steered to some extent, but doing so already takes away much of the “informal” dimension. This has big implications and is something crucial for educators to understand.

Despite our best intentions, we often do not leave enough room in our activities or our programmes for the young people to have their say, to determine what they want to do, what they want to learn and how. Too often we think that we (adults, schools, youth workers, trainers, etc.) know best.

Young people want to learn, but they do not want to be forced to learn. The Anholt project showed that not only are many young people able to handle more freedom and self-determination, they are good at it, they learn from it... and they even enjoy it.

As the questions above indicate, the Anholt project is far from over. Much has been learned but this is still just the beginning of a long-term process of understanding the full potential of informal learning and what it can mean for young people.



ANNEX 1 –The Anholt Project Partner Organisations

If you would like more information about the Anholt Island project, feel free to contact the participating partner organisations at the addresses listed below.



Camara Municipal de Oeiras (Portugal)

The Municipality of Oeiras, whose mission is to promote the welfare of individuals residing in their territory and local development in a balanced and sustainable way, operates on the following levels: planning, housing, public hygiene, environment, social action, education, employment, health, culture and sport.

Rua Monsenhor Ferreira de Melo, 2780-141 Oeiras

Telephone: +351 21 446 75 70

E-mail: nj@cm-oeiras.pt

Contact: Ricardo Júlio Pinho



Centre d'Estudis de l'Esplai (Spain)

The Centre d'Estudis de l'Esplai is a non-profit organisation based in Mallorca. Their main activity is the training of future youth workers, educators and animators in the non-formal field, facilitating activities that promote the integration of young people in society.

Plç. Banc de S'Oli, 6, 07002 Palma de Mallorca

Telephone: +34 971 728 903

E-mail: centreestudis@centreestudis.org

Contact: Toni Pozo



Città di Nicholino – Informagiovani (Italy)

Informagiovani is a service of the Nichelino town administration. Its aim is to provide information to young people about education, work, social life, culture, free time, travel and sport.

Via Galimberti 3, 10042 Nichelino (To), Italy

Telephone: +39 011 6819433

E-mail: informaestero@comune.nichelino.to.it

Contact: Emiliano Iannone

Hässlehus Youth Club (Sweden)



Hässlehus Youth Club is located in a multicultural neighbourhood in the city of Borås. Besides leisure time activities, the youngsters can also meet adults, the youth club workers, and together with them develop different local, national and international projects.

Våglängdsgatan 5, 507 42 Borås

Telephone: +46 33 357 938

E-mail: asa.bergstrand@boras.se

Contact: Åsa Bergstrand

Kreisjugendring Stormarn e.V. (Germany)



The Kreisjugendring Stormarn is a regional youth council with 200 different youth organisations which provides trainings, participation and media projects and youth centres in rural areas.

Grabauerstr. 19, 23843 Bad Oldesloe

Telephone: +49 4541 885 407

E-mail: bueter-menke@kjr-stormarn.de

Contact: Ansgar Bueter-Menke

Syddjurs Ungdomsskole (Denmark)



Syddjurs Ungdomsskole is a non-formal municipal educational offer. Funded by the local community, Syddjurs Ungdomsskole is made up of five separate branches; the youth school, youth clubs, junior clubs, the corps of crime/drug/alcohol prevention street workers and our full-time educational programme.

Rosenholmvej 1, 8543 Hornslet

Telephone: +45 8753 6031

E-mail: asl@syddjurs.dk

Contact: Anders Stenumgaard Lind



Verein Sozialmanagement Steiermark (Austria)

The Social Management Styria Association initiates and operates various projects in the field of youth welfare services.

- Life and social counselling
- "Non-formal educational training" (youth welfare)
- Social coaching

Mariahilferstraße 1, A-8020 Graz,

Telephone: +43 316 82 73 99

E-mail: arthur@longin.co.at

Contact: Arthur Longin, BA

ANNEX 2 – List of Participants

Austria

Mathias Fekonja
Lisa Fizko
Christian Müller
Steffi Steiner
Arthur Longin
Hubert Höllmüller

Denmark

Justo Gambula Larsen
Frida Juul
Sara Mayall
Emil Sorensen
Charlotte Persson
Anders Stenumgaard Lind

Germany

Julia Weber
Nora Weber
Steffi Weber
Jelte Porbadnigk
Lena Schutt
Ute Sauerwein-Weber
Ansgar Bueter-Menke

Italy

Giulia Castiglione
Miriam Escoffier
Veronica Pepe Russo
Tommaso Rettegno
Cristina Brunelli

Portugal

Denise Andrade
Ednilson Dos Santos
Tiago Fernandes
Rute Semião
Diogo de Carvalho
Sónia Costa Afonso

Spain

Joana Bordoy
Camí Frau
Margarita Moger Moranta
Antonio Pozo Rodriguez
Jesus Pozo
Camilo Ros

Sweden

Rebaz Ali
Biken Lam
Bito Lam
Aqsa Lashri
Sonnie Andreasson

*Thanks also to
Susanne Wiking,
Joana Sousa,
Bjarni Gunnarsson,
Janus Hentze,
Ruta Krisjane,
Lucia Barbiera and
Altino Barradas who
were involved in the
early stages of the
Anholt project.*





The Anholt Project

Editorial Information

Published in December 2011 by
 Syddjurs Ungdomsskole
www.ungsyddjurs.dk
 Rosenholmvej 1, 8543 Hornslet, Denmark
 Tel: +45. 8753 5760
ung@syddjurs.dk

Layout: Horst Schalk, Robert Strauß
 Printing: www.flyeralarm.de

Reproduction and use of this text for non-commercial purposes is permitted provided the source is mentioned and ung@syddjurs.dk is notified.

Co-ordination & Editing:
 Anders Stenumgaard Lind (asl@syddjurs.dk)
 Co-Editor: Ansgar Bueter-Menke
 Booklet Author: Kathy Schroeder "Schroeder Intercultural Consulting, kathy.schroeder@quicknet.nl"
 Contributors: Ansgar Bueter-Menke, Prof. Dr. Hubert Höllmüller, Arthur Longin, BA, Toni Pozo, Anders Stenumgaard Lind, Ute Sauerwein-Weber.

This booklet is based on the input and opinions of the organisers and participants of the Anholt project (2011). This document does not necessarily express the official views of the European Commission, Syddjurs Ungdomsskole or the organisations co-operating with them.

