

How to facilitate processes of virtual learning and negotiation with active methodologies

Experience in visual collaboration platform among 11 countries in Latin America

Martin R. Carnap and Olga Marta Sánchez ● ● Metaaccion in Costa Rica. The Resilient Food Production (RFP) sector is jointly implemented by GIZ and Expertise France, through eleven projects based in Argentina, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Peru and Uruguay. It involves the public, private and civil society sectors at the local and national level. Faced with the new normal, projects had to adapt their assistance strategies to a context of social distancing.

In view of the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, Expertise France took the initiative of inviting 32 team members of cooperating organizations for rural development involved in the implementation of Euroclima+ projects in Latin America in the agriculture and livestock sector as well as officials from national sectoral institutions such as the ministries of agriculture, livestock, rural development, etc. All these people now face the difficult task of leading remote work teams, motivating groups, conducting effective virtual meetings with various themes and coordinating decisions for collective action between different cultures and contexts at the level of professional groups and organizations. Metaaccion, as a specialist in methods and techniques for active learning, collaboration and negotiation in development settings, was commissioned to provide participants

with a collaborative pedagogical experience to design, implement, document and evaluate active learning and negotiation processes in a virtual setting.

The seminar “Methods and tools for the facilitation of virtual events and processes” was developed in a modular, virtual and synchronous way on the Moodle, MS Teams and Miro platforms in an innovative and fascinating way by the interaction between all the people involved with the virtual andragogic facilitation team, graphic design and development specialists. The successful outcome of this 36-hour intensive

course over two weeks has been formalized and documented in both the handbook and the participants’ materials. This article describes the procedure of the course and its achievements.



Graphic template: Negotiation according to the harvard model

3 EQUIPOS DE TRABAJO.

APRENDIZAJE ACTIVO VIRTUAL EN EL PASADO...



PLENARIA REAFIRMACIÓN...

Cómo me siento? Mensaje a facilitadores...

Me quedó 1 duda o pregunta?

The event started with a session connecting the three platforms Moodle, MS Teams and Miro. After a first individual thematic construction on the subject, the first group exchange about the preceding together with first steps in the new environment initiated the discussion between the participants, most of which had not previously met.

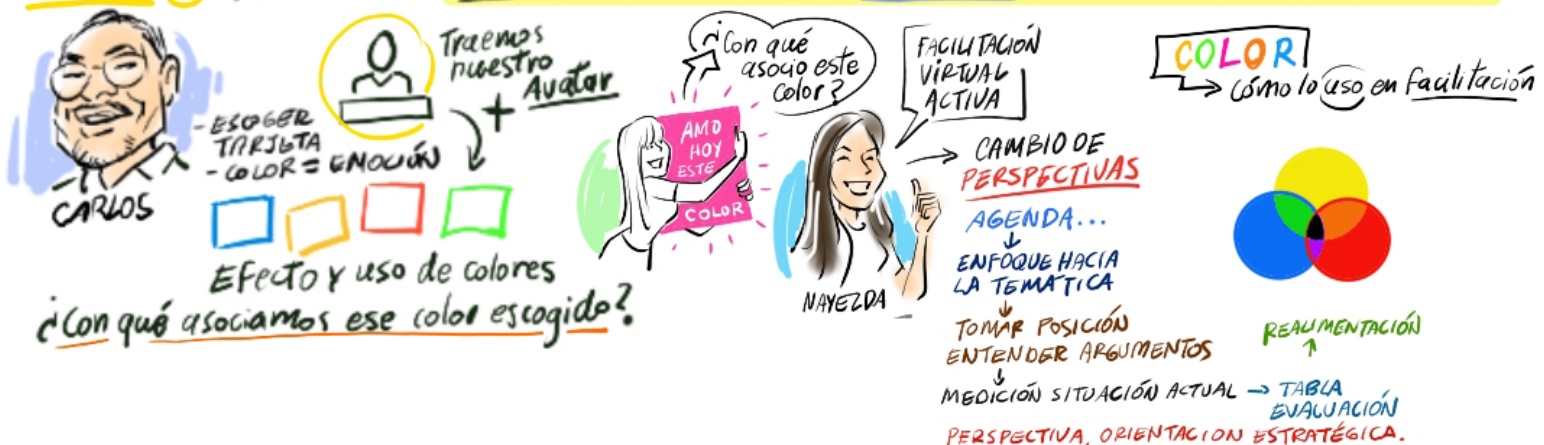
The group was then invited to define the theme of the event, which was the latest step in their long personal journey through digitalization. Sharing stories of personal experiences throughout this journey, set a positive mood and got the ball rolling.

The dialogical interaction was more effective than the traditional passive methodologies. In a first exercise, participants associated their favorite color with typical human emotions and how to make use of the different colors in mind mapping, process facilitation, a thematic trailer and a three-dimensional brainstorming on the quality criteria of virtual facilitation from different perspectives (a. participants, b. facilitators/as and c. donors). The use of graphic metaphors increased imagination and voting tools accelerated the decision-making process about the importance of criteria identified. Unlike traditional training, which does not allow the people involved to develop social skills or to put what they have learned into practice, an alternative based on collaborative and organizational learning was presented to guide, conclude and coordinate collective and participatory action tasks in the course and after it.

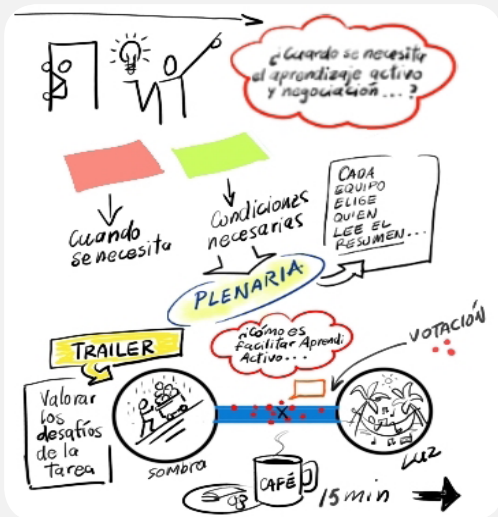
Therefore, active learning methods and instruments are required to achieve an interactive group work that allows participants to develop their creativity, personality and opinions from multiple intelligences (Gardner 2018¹). At the same time, it is important to ensure that such learning is later applied in each participant's work context.

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MÉTODOS E INSTRUMENTOS DE FACILITACIÓN DE EVENTOS Y PROCESOS VIRTUALES.



¹Gardner, H. (2018). "Inteligencias Múltiples" no son igual a "Estilos de Aprendizaje". MetaaccionMagazine (8), 3-5 >>



Practical exercises with active virtual event methodologies present “learning by doing” opportunities that are consolidated with reflections on different learning theories, such as the theories of the differential functioning of the two hemispheres of the brain, multiple intelligences, the roles of facilitation, strategic thinking and the significance of previous design of the learning process. Module 1 closes with an assessment of the progress and limitations experienced and concludes with suggestions for next steps of improvement. The feedback allows for a perspective on the future: what do I take with me, what are my dreams and what do I want to experiment with?

Module 2: | Design, implementation and documentation of a virtual training

The traditional concept of transmitting knowledge is being replaced by cognitive processes based on active learning by people ([Huber 2016²](#)). The internal appropriation in the individual and the experimentation of problem solving, are the ones that generate sustainable changes in the personal effectiveness and in the maturation of competences ([Wiemann and Gilbert 2018³](#)). It is essential to take positions as individual and integrate as a group on

This change of paradigm in vocational training has been titled “The change of the “input” orientation towards “outcome” for the development of competences”. by ([Arnold 2016⁴](#)).

A survey among 8 key areas of the instrument adapted from ([Carnap and Huber 1997⁵](#)) gave priority among the group of participants to 3 key areas: (1) Work and learning processes. This guides the learning design (a) for the adaptation of methodologies and instruments for the development of capacities (facilitator/beneficiary) in (b) the sense of understanding local conditions and creating bimodal processes in alliance with their actors.



Graphic template: Work and learning processes

²Huber, G. L. (2016). El desarrollo de las competencias pedagógicas del profesorado universitario. MetaaccionMagazine (7), 3-4 >>

³Wiemann, C. and Gilbert, S. (2018). Enseñando ciencias científicamente. MetaaccionMagazine (8), 6-9, 19-22. >>

⁴Arnold, R. (2016) Didáctica de facilitación- El cambio de la orientación “input” hacia el “outcome” para el desarrollo de competencias. MetaaccionMagazine (7), 9-12. >>

⁵Carnap, M. and Huber, G. L. (2017): La cultura de aprendizaje- Levantamiento sobre áreas claves y prioridades de innovación Ciclo de entrevistas sobre aprendizaje y diálogo. Metaaccion >>



Graphic template: Performance and process evaluation

The second key area: (2) Performance and process evaluation requires the development of clear and flexible tools for virtual evaluation processes. Participants in this group noted (a) a structure and schedule that includes time and adjustment buffers, (b) inclusion of periodic feedback moods and (c) clarity in the operational process of the evaluation.

By initiating reflection on one's own performance and by cooperatively negotiating evaluation standards, self-management and ownership of projects by the target audiences are encouraged.

The third key area (3): Increasing the role of acquired knowledge requires a strategy of capacity building and knowledge transformation based on active e-learning. According to the group of participants this means (a) having certain basic conditions (connectivity, devices, tools), which are necessary for capacity building in virtual settings and (b) defining clear goals of the capacity building strategy, actors, activities and resources.

As the graphic template shows, the result may be more useful for learners, beyond the learning process. Active learning requires that the subject matter is of great importance to the individual. It is not about teaching the subject, but about facilitating access, thinking and interaction.



Graphic template: The role of acquired knowledge

Module 3: | Design, implementation and documentation of a virtual negotiation process

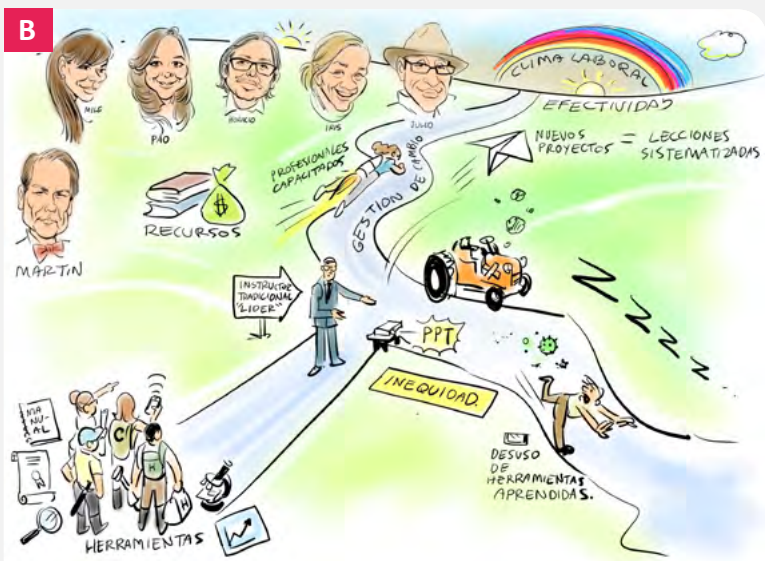
The experienced methodology perspective intensified the group exchange, provided them with experiences that simulated the participation of different stakeholders and encouraged them to seek points of convergence based on the Harvard principles for negotiation. Instruments to encourage collaborative decision-making - such as brainstorming, the dump waiter, the assessment of priorities and the generation of a plan of action focused on the purpose of generating an exchange

of ideas and perspectives between different actors in a context of respect and empathy.

Thus, organized in four groups, they decided to focus their methodological designs and implementation around four complex and suggestive topics with their guiding questions and metaphorical illustration of the related scenario (to the process of the facilitation phases of the event with the target audience).



What are the adaptation and mitigation actions/measures that producers should take to move towards climate-resilient sustainable livestock production?



How to improve the working climate and the effectiveness of the project through the systematization of experiences and change management?



How to raise awareness among local authorities about the impact of climate change on local agricultural production?



How can the synergies identified between the EuroClima+ projects in Central America be made operational?

Summary and conclusion

Each of the groups designed a learning process appropriate to the selected theme, defined who should be involved, the importance of generating synergetic actions, as well as the role, competences and skills of the facilitators. Attention was also paid to the multiple perspectives of the actors involved, including the development workers.

The virtual environment provided allowed for fluid work, intensive learning and finally the handling of virtual tools by the participants, enabling them to replicate similar experiences autonomously, using the methodology and tools they had experienced themselves.

The participants appreciated that the pedagogical experience they had, methodologically supported by metaphors, agile didactics and visualization, allowed them to broaden their knowledge and tools for facilitation in the framework of their work and even in everyday life. Several participants reaffirmed that they were able to get to know and use new tools and strengthen other skills and capacities for facilitation and moderation.

They considered it very pertinent to focus active learning on the formulation of generating questions in order to direct participants towards those aspects that are of interest, as well as pedagogically innovative as well as the pedagogically innovative utilization of images and colors and their significance as didactic resources. They felt that is a good alternative to diversify pedagogical tools beyond the text or an oral presentation, that doesn't have as much potential to attract attention.



They concluded that they strengthened their capacities and tools to design, implement and document innovative, virtually animated learning and negotiation processes. The sustainability of this innovative process requires recognition by the national program authorities (NPMs) of the feasibility and relevance of virtualization of active learning and negotiation work. It is recommended that participants involved in a learning-by-doing process immediately take up the challenge of developing their own plan for adapting and applying what they have learned and experienced. Likewise, given the risk of the limitations of connectivity and the use of virtual tools in local environments, it is advisable to create alliances with national and local authorities to work together in these conditions.

After this experience, it is very convenient, to constitute a network of support and exchange of good practices among the participants of the Seminar. It has also been suggested to call a follow-up seminar with the Metaaccion team to systematize the application experiences in their work environments and to project the perspectives for the articulation between organizations (public, private, civil society) and collaborative skills, as well as to detect new needs in their virtual work.

The Metaaccion team permanently accompanied the practical work of the participants and in the group work - which was very frequent - in all cases a member of the consulting team participated with them, facilitating active learning. Metaaccion is very grateful for this opportunity for learning and innovation. The course is formalized, the facilitation roles, the contents and the technical requirements for the connection to the collaboration platforms are defined. The manual and materials for participants are also available, as well as their documentation, follow-up for the application and consolidation of the articulation processes within and between units involved in development programmes.

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