Hosting Children

An experience from the Hosting Team
at the
'Congress for Integral Politics 2012' in Austria

Background

We as the Art of Hosting process team came in for 3 days, hosting a reflection process to let collective intelligence emerge after each input day of presentations and workshops around integral politics.

Hosting a conference with 80-100 participants for 8 days, the organizers of the Congress had offered to hire a person for a childcare program during the event.

However, only one child (Benjamin, 9 years old) registered for the Congress and thus Stefan, one of our hosting team members, offered to host the child during the day while his parents were attending the Congress.

Stefan is a student to become a primary school teacher in Innsbruck, Austria.

Process

Being linked to the larger process we hosted during the Congress, Stefan took some of our questions and themes into his hosting. For example translating the theme of the Congress "How we really want to live" into a check-in question (What do I want in my in life? And what should be out?) for Benjamin that resulted in this drawing:

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Stefan went with a purpose into this hosting process: "To be conscious to perception at this Congress – from a child perspective. And playing with ones own perception in nature. Inviting nature as a playing and learning field."

Each day, Stefan and Benjamin had fixed time slots to spend time together.

Tools
A lot of their time spent together was in nature. At the beginning of their stay, Stefan gifted a little notebook to Benjamin for his sketches, questions, etc. This is a picture of a frog they saw in the woods:

They played the memory game with objects from nature, collected berries for the participants, admired and buried a dead dragonfly, built houses for dwarfs, and much more. Benjamin also helped in a Congress workshop to build this labyrinth with other participants:

Stefan had brought some activity sheets (for drawings, quizzes) that his mother is using in her work.

During the process days, Benjamin joined Stefan in preparing the different sessions we hosted with the participants. For our two Open Spaces, Benjamin drew the butterfly and bumble bee and parts of the matrix for us.

Benjamin's learnings

For our last process day at the Congress, also Benjamin prepared a harvesting flipchart of his experience at the Congress which was presented to the participants and regional visitors in our meta-harvest session and exhibition at the end of the Congress:

Stefan's learnings

Stefan is currently the student representative for primary school education at his university. He joined this hosting team in order to apply some of the hosting tools in his university context afterwards. Here are some reflections from Stefan:

- His role of being a host and being taught by Benjamin was changing fluently during the time spent together.
- Exploring nature as a classroom: "When I will be head teacher for a first grade class, I will spend the first week in nature outside of the classroom!"
- "Old and young can become one during such a process we went through during the past 7 days. - Some process steps and questions need to be translated into a child's context, though."
- "Life does not have to be complicated, if nature is the learning space."
- "We created here a culture of community and respect that I would like to live at school in the future. Rituals, stories, and myths play an important role in creating this culture."
- Rather than asking children directly what they like to do in their free-time, Stefan observed Benjamin very closely this week to discover his passion and then work with it naturally.
- Stefan's next step after this learning process: hosting with Art of Hosting elements in his university in peer-to-peer learning processes with fellow students: "I don't want to offer solutions to new students but rather a space for co-creation through conversations around our common burning questions."

More questions?
Contact Frauke or Stefan at:

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