



SIETARINDIA

NEWSLETTER

Dear SIETAR members and friends,

The theme of this newsletter is transitions, starting with some bittersweet news from the Sietar Delhi chapter which has witnessed a transition in leadership. Line Mark Rugholt who so capably started and nurtured the Sietar Delhi chapter has returned to Denmark and handed over her responsibilities to two dynamic interculturalists, Renu Ramakrishnan, now in charge of Sietar Delhi and Divya Arora of AFS, Delhi. Thank you for your stellar contribution, Line. We now feel that Sietar India has a presence in Denmark and we are happy for you as you start the next chapter of your life there! The new Sietar Delhi team already conducted their first event and have shared the the summary of their learning event for your perusal. This newsletter also includes a write up by Sunita Nichani capturing the transitions she observed in the field of intercultural work at the Sietar Europa conference in Valencia, for those of us who could not attend.

LEARNING EVENT - MINI SUMMARY

Sietar Delhi Learning Event: Experiencing a new country and learning to live together

The Sietar Delhi Learning Event on 22nd May 2015, brought together a wonderful group of enthusiastic participants as we discussed Intercultural Learning in India and abroad. Hosted in the warm New Delhi office of AFS Intercultural Programs, Esha Lall from AFS took us through the program they conducted which aimed to help exchange students reflect on their experiences and to help volunteers, host families and teachers to better understand their exchange students better, to empathize with them. We then broke out into groups to discuss the importance of the four concepts discussed in the presentation, viz. Language & Communication, Religious Beliefs, Time and Relationships, and offer suggestions we may have while experiencing a new culture. To see the complete summary and a link to photographs, please click [here](#).

VALENCIA CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

From the Sietar Europa conference on the theme of Refreshing the Cultural Paradigm: by Sunita Nichani

Capturing the experience of this convergence of 350 + interculturalists (seasoned and new) at the beautiful, historical Mediterranean city of Valencia in a short article is a huge challenge and I am acutely aware that what and who I leave out might perhaps be more significant than what I write about. Part of this is because one is unable to split oneself into many parts and attend all concurrent sessions at the same time! In any case, a glass half empty is better than none at all. So here are some of my takeaways on the transitions I observed:

Storytelling: While most of us interculturalists go into our sessions with a personal treasure trove of stories to illustrate significant learning points, speakers at this conference took storytelling to a whole new level by putting the emphasis clearly on greater interactivity and experiential learning. To paraphrase Thiagi's message at his keynote session – "Tell stories if you want to mesmerize and brainwash. If you want your participants to learn, ask them to co-create stories." Catherine Roignon's session "On the road with migrants" was another powerful example of how real-life stories can be used in games to foster empathy.

Models, definitions and metaphors: I loved Dr Stefanie Rathje's metaphor of we are all Michelin men, to illustrate the fact that we belong to many cultures at any given point of time and that when two individuals interact a multitude of cultures are involved and not just national cultures. David Trickey and Nigel Ewington's session on how they focused on asking questions to define and track concrete behaviors of a globally mature organisation in terms of intercultural competence was insightful.

Humor: Heather Robinson and Rita Wuebbeler shared with us this wonderful quote from Victor Borge "Humor is the shortest distance between two people" in their session on exploring the role and power of visual arts, music, somatic methods. This for the purpose of helping others transition from the feeling of "stuckness" to "possibility" while navigating challenging intercultural situations. In another session, Stefan Meister and Piotr Pluta presented their research on the humor profiler (still in progress) which could help speed up the process of humor emergence and increase attractiveness of the cross-cultural workplace.

Virtual work: As more and more of us either support our clients leading teams virtually or deliver virtual trainings ourselves, the transition to virtual is here to stay. Two wonderful resources to look up on the subject. "Live Connections" by Frederik Fogelberg, Jude Tanyavar et al and "Closeness at a Distance" by Dr Marcus Hildebrandt, Line Jehle, Stefan Meister and Susanne Skoruppa.

Kudos to the Sietar Europa conference organising committee and all the wonderful volunteers, sponsors, participants, presenters. Eyes down for your next conference in Dublin in 2017.

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