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Teaching "Concertation" :  
the Acceptance of Conflicts and the Experience of Creativity Using *La Francilienne* Cd Rom

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**« Teaching "Concertation" : the Acceptance of Conflicts and the Experience of  
Creativity Using *La Francilienne* Cd Rom »**

**Laurence de Carlo**

In this paper<sup>1</sup>, I will describe and discuss my use of *La Francilienne* Cd Rom I developed with my colleague Alain Lempereur, Law Professor at ESSEC Business School, Paris. As a Professor in the ESSEC Department of Environment, I use the Cd Rom as the basic tool for my course "Concertation<sup>2</sup>, Decision and Local Democracy". The Cd Rom's simulation of a concertation process on a highway project allows me not only to teach basic concepts and methods of negotiation and mediation, as we will see, but also to enhance two important concepts in public decision processes in planning and environment: conflicts and creativity. The students are given the opportunity to experience then to discuss conflicts and creativity in a quasi-real setting. These experiences and discussions, which come close to an internal change for the students, help them to integrate the negotiation and mediation concepts and methods taught. This internal change will be conceptualized using transitional thinking theory and experiential learning theory. A narrative will show the students' internal change occurrence along the course. We will see that *La Francilienne* Cd Rom offers a relevant context and tool for it.

After a presentation of the course, I will continue with a detailed narrative of how I use the Cd Rom and will finish with a discussion on several important choices made in my pedagogical approach.

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<sup>1</sup> A first version of this paper received the very useful comments of Larry Susskind. It has also benefited from the stimulating discussions we had in the Program On Negotiation's Psychoanalysis and Negotiation working group led by Kimberly Leary. The research received the financial support of the ESSEC Research Center. Thank you all.

<sup>2</sup> « Concertations » are sort of negotiations occurring in public decisions processes in planning and environment in France. In concertations, the State takes the final decision taking into account the stakes put into light and possibly the proposal made through a dialogue between the parties. Negotiation and mediation approaches and techniques are appropriate and useful to deal with concertations.

## **I- A general description of the course “Concertation, Decision and Local Democracy”**

### **1- Course format**

The core of the course is the simulation offered by the CD Rom *La Francilienne*. It simulates a concertation on a highway project that lasted six years in real life, from 1990 to 1995. This concertation involves various actors taking part in the decision-making process. The final aim is to provide advice to the Ministry of Equipment concerning the layout of a highway connecting two cities northwest of Paris 20 km from each other. It is neither pure negotiation nor mediation but rather a complex decision-making process.

The sections have 22 to 30 students, depending on the program (an elected course in the MBA program, open to a maximum of 30 students; compulsory for all the students of the Master in Urban Management, Environment and Services, that is between 22 and 30 students). The students work more often by groups of two on a computer and on a same role.

The simulation has four phases. The first three contain the consultation of information on the Cd Rom, a meeting between the students, a debriefing, and personal work after the class on the student’s logbook. The fourth phase replaces the meeting by a press conference organized by the students. In each phase there are six roles. Students change roles two or three times during the simulation.

The course «Concertation, Decision and Local Democracy » has ten sessions of three hours each. I don’t have teaching assistants. I follow the students in their learning process during the entire course.

The Cd Rom itself is used in seven sessions, after three sessions treating the history of public decision processes in regional and urban planning in France from the 60s, given a comparison with the Quebec situation in the 90s<sup>3</sup>. Two paper cases are used during these sessions.

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<sup>3</sup> The Quebec procedure of concertation in public decision processes in environment and planning served as a model for the current French one

During the first session, I present the pedagogical and administrative framework of the course. I introduce key-concepts to the students: limited rationality (Simon, 1974) and double-loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978). I tell them that they will work in a context of limited rationality like in a real setting: they won't have all the information they would like to have, nor all the time, to take their decisions.

I add also a brief definition, illustrated by an example, of the concept of double-loop learning<sup>4</sup>, telling them that their capacity to adopt a double-loop learning is one of the pedagogical aims of the course. They usually don't really understand the concept at that time, because it is too abstract. They will understand it while experiencing and discussing it later.

## **2- Structure of the information given on the CD Rom**

On the first CD Rom screen, we have: a place to look at videos, a place to write the logbook, the central part of the screen where will appear texts and maps and photos when requested, and icons on the top.

There are ten icons: archives, role, role summary, context, context summary, instructions, parties, information support for the debate, logbook, methodological forms. Clicking on one of the icons, one finds information which appears at the center of the screen.

Some information is confidential, other isn't. Students are given codes at the beginning of each phase to get access to their given role's information. At that moment, they are informed by the computer of the State's decisions concerning the last phase. These decisions depend on the success of the previous phase but not on its precise results, as we will see.

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<sup>4</sup> Argyris C. and Schön D. (1978) defined two different learning processes. In the single-loop learning, the actors deepen their knowledge founding their learning process on a wellknown basis and framework of reflexion (arguing, being rational, defending their position, etc). In a double-loop learning, the complexity of the situation requires them to change their behaviors and framework of reflexion to be able to cope with it and to solve the problems they face (listening to the others, being empathetic, recognizing their own motivations and those of the others, etc).

After each debriefing, students get access to the corresponding methodological forms. They include useful negotiation and mediation concepts and methods. Students also have access to all the information concerning a phase while working on the next one. These two points encourage the students to actively engage in a reflexive thinking while writing their logbook. They can use the concepts and methods they prefer to analyze their past experience and they are informed of its whole context.

### **3- Freedom and constraints**

At all phases, students are restricted by their given roles and the information they receive through the CD Rom. But they are less restricted than in paper simulations, because, as they have to open icons to see the information given to them, and as this information is more abundant than in paper simulations, they have to organize and rank this information themselves. So they take more initiatives, they are considered more as actors than in paper simulations.

There is no best way of finishing the simulation. So, students are less restricted than usual in role plays or paper cases. Using simulations that propose a best solution could prevent the students from inventing new options. In these simulations, they have to « invent » the solutions that are considered as the best ones by the professor and her negotiation model. There are good reasons to use these simulations. The best solutions proposed really allow a joint agreement that satisfy all the parties. So these solutions can be considered as good ones. But, in their learning process, the students know that there is a best solution to find, so their motivation tends to be their performance in the framework of the course, more than really a search for new adapted ways of understanding and resolving a complex problem. These classroom frameworks push them to perform and satisfy the professor, to be « good students ». Doing so, they can reach a satisfying agreement in class, even though they won't

be able to find one in real settings, where the context and their motivations will be different and they won't have the capacity to recognize these differences.

Moreover, there are many more concepts and methods offered in the Cd Rom than can be discussed in the debriefings. So, the students can choose to learn some that haven't been discussed, depending on their own experience. And the professor can adapt herself to the students' learning process in choosing to highlight corresponding concepts and methods. She could also choose to privilege her preferred concepts and methods, depending on her way of teaching. I usually do both, basing the debriefing on emergent concepts and methods and, at the same time or afterwards, introducing some concepts and methods that seem specially relevant to me, meaning helpful for the students.

## **II- The simulation's scenario**

### **1- Phase 1**

Who with whom: The first phase brings together six actors, each representing a particular party: the pre-selected construction company, an association for the defense of the environment, the bordering residents' association, the State, the local elected officials and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The six parties enter into a concertation together.

What: In 1990, in the first phase, the Prime Minister Michel Rocard decided to put the northwest of Paris highway project on the agenda once more. A company was named and should have the contract if it succeeds in convincing the parties. The company representative's aim is to convince other participants of the many merits of his project.

The meeting is the last one in the "concertation" process held by the company. The technical studies given to the parties were done by the company. They are of poor quality, difficult to

read. This difficulty has been translated in the Cd Rom by presenting the studies on crumpled paper.

Preparation: Before entering into the simulation, I present its context : the links with the real concertation process. I inform the students that, in the real setting, no decision has been made. Consequently, they are free to find a solution. There is no one best way of doing the simulation.

After that, the students go and search for information about the first phase in the CD Rom. They don't receive any conceptual neither methodological help related to consultation nor negotiation.

Process and result: Because of the important constraints given at that phase to the participants by their role definition, the meetings are very conflictual, violent, emotional, positioning, with no listening. The parties don't agree on the project.

Debriefing: there are different theories that can be used for this debriefing. They are included in the CD Rom, and the participants can look at them after the debriefing.

- Simmel's theory of conflict<sup>5</sup> :

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<sup>5</sup> For Simmel (1992), conflict can be defined by three elements: a relationship, individuals, and an object.

Human relations can be separated in two categories: Unitarian relationships in which individuals form a unity, centrifugal relationships in which they don't.

There are two approaches of the individuals: from a psychological point of view (the point of view of the individual) and from a sociological point of view (the point of view of the unity, of the group)

- The psychological approach: hatred and aggressiveness are natural tendencies of any individual as are love and sympathy; relationships with others only exist through the tension between contradictory feelings that join and separate people; conflict is not negative; it is a way of recognizing the other, and, for that reason, a form of socialization better than indifference.
- The sociological approach: conflicts between individuals have great consequences on the structure of their group; two different structures admit internal conflicts: structure with strong internal solidarity that allows to repair the problems caused by internal conflicts, and structure strongly compartmented which allows that one of its element can be damaged without putting into danger the other members of the structure.

As a summary, the vitality of a group depends on the tension it has between unitarian relationships and conflicts.

Developing Simmel's theory of conflict allows the students to accept their experience of conflict as a legitimate one. They don't have to be guilty about it nor to deny it. So it allows them to analyze their experience, and to be able, in the future, to consider a conflict as a basis to build a constructive process, sustained by reflexive work. This is a way of implementing a frame coherent with double-loop learning (no denying, reflexivity).

So this debriefing is, in part, one of problem setting.

I always present Simmel's theory of conflict, pointing out that conflict in itself is not the problem. It is interesting to understand it in order to resolve it in a satisfying way for the parties. More, a conflict is a good base to understand a problematic situation. This presentation contributes to create a safe place in the classroom. Afterwards, the students feel more at ease with their emotions, especially with their «bad » emotions (hate, angryness). As Kisfalvi (1993, p.17) writes : « Clearly feelings of being threatened and feelings of mistrust are related. The sense of danger is enhanced if the students do not trust that the teacher or the situation is able to contain potentially explosive (disintegrative) elements. And this would lead directly to much less of a willingness to risk, to put one's ego on the line, to a reticence to become involved. »

- The worlds of justification, Boltanski and Thévenot<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Boltanski L. and Thévenot L. (1991) developed a theoretical model, namely the model of "worlds of justification". "Worlds" are structures of thoughts and actions where common good takes on a different meaning. Each "world" represents a specific value scale according to which the actors define the "prominent figures" of the world, that is the people who will enact its principles. According to Boltanski and Thévenot, one can identify six worlds: the merchant world, the domestic world, the world of opinion, the civic world, the world of inspiration and the industrial world. In the merchant world, needs and interests drive the actors. These individuals interact on a market. They are able to overcome their individuality in order to "agree on widely identified goods toward which their material needs converge and meet" (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991, p. 45). In the domestic world, family values prevail, showing respect toward hierarchy, tradition and older generations (the father image). In the world of opinion, people are driven by self-esteem; they are looking for fame and the prominent figures are opinion-leaders (p. 231). The leaders of the civic world have a collective conscience subordinating their own will and particular interests to the General Interest and will. In the world of inspiration, the state of "prominence" is a spontaneous external enlightenment. In this world, emotions and passions drive people. "The order of the industrial world depends on the people's efficiency, performance, productivity, ability to take on a normal function and to answer needs usefully" (p.254). (translated by the author)



This model can be presented here or at another moment, largely or not, depending on the students learning process. It helps students to understand their own motivations and interests, and those of other parties, naming the several worlds to which they and others belong.

- Fisher, Ury and Patton's prescriptions (1991) to prepare and deal negotiations : the seven elements (communication, interests, options, legitimacy, relationship, alternatives and BATNA, commitments) and the five principles (separate the people from the problem, focus on interests and not positions, invent options for mutual gain; insist on using objective criteria, develop your BATNA)

- The mutual gains approach, Susskind and Field (1996, pp.37-38) : « acknowledge the concerns of the other sides ; encourage joint fact finding; offer contingent commitments to minimize impacts if they do occur, promise to compensate knowable but unintended impacts; accept responsibility, admit mistakes, and share power; act in a trustworthy fashion at all times ; focus on building long-term relationships. »

These are wellknown prescriptive approaches in negotiation and mediation .

Many times, students complain about information they didn't have. Often, they had the information but didn't pay enough attention to it. Sometimes, the information is not available on the CD Rom. I answer them making a comparison with the real setting, saying that, in that case, they wouldn't have had access to all the information they would have liked to.

## **2- Phase 2**

What: there are two internal "médiations à la française " (with mediators involved in the process in another role too) to prepare phase 3.

At the beginning of phase 2, students all learn that the Prime Minister withdrew the project after the pre-selected construction company made an attempt at concertation and failed. Later on, the State enforced a regional concertation process led by a « préfet »<sup>7</sup>.

The parties will enter into a new concertation procedure conceived by the Minister of Transportation in December 1992 to improve public decision processes in the field of transportation.

According to the procedure, in phase 3, the parties will have to discuss the different options proposed by the Regional Direction of Infrastructures.

Who with whom: All participants change characters.

Two internal “mediations” between the people in favor of the highway on one side, and those against it on the other. For the former, the préfet becomes a “mediator” between the Regional Direction of Infrastructures and the Chamber of Commerce. He discusses the toll policy as well as the access roads to the highway. For the latter, a local elected official becomes the “mediator” in a debate between the local residents and the SNCF (French National Railway Company). The debate focuses on the possible replacement of the highway by the railway, and more particularly on the ticket pricing policy and the needed frequency of trains.

Preparation: Students receive information through the CD Rom. At this moment, they are usually more aware of the importance of reading well the information they have.

As they don't want to experiment another conflict without end like in the phase 1, participants are open to discuss with the professor about preparing the “mediation”.

They begin to prepare phase 2 using the seven elements and the five principles given in the methodological forms of the CD Rom. But usually they don't use them in a systematic way.

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<sup>7</sup> France is divided in "départements". A département is, at the same time, an administrative circumscription headed by a "préfet" (high-ranking official whose services are located in the "préfecture"), as well as a territorial collectivity administered by the "Conseil Général" made of elected representatives.

More and more, throughout the simulation, I discuss with each group during the preparation phases and enter into their learning process. I ask them questions to understand the way they are preparing the mediations and to help them in doing it (Schön, 1991).

Process and results: During the “mediations”, like in paper simulations, the participants can share or not their information with the other party, which will enable them to find a Zone Of Possible Agreement or not.

There is a Zone Of Possible Agreement for the préfet’s “mediation” (highway solution). There is no Zone Of Possible Agreement for the local elected official’s “mediation” (railway solution).

Usually, participants find an agreement in the préfet’s “mediation”, but not always one of the best ones. They do or don’t find an agreement in the local elected official’s “mediation”.

Debriefing: Theories that can be used in phases 2 and 3 debriefings (plus those given before):

- Mediators’ typology (Salzer and Stimec): they don’t impose decisions, they can be “delivers of solutions” or advisers.
- Mediator’s qualities (Six): is creative, has no moral recipe, has an ethic perspective, unique and flexible; has three duties: courage, prudence, accuracy.
- The mediation process (Lempereur): 1- to introduce, 2- to identify the problem, 3- to define the needs, 4- to explore the options, 5- to obtain an commitment, 5- to conclude.
- The negotiator dilemma (Lax and Sebenius): cooperation versus competition, value creation versus value distribution, information exchange.
- The balance between experience and expertise (de Carlo): parties have different legitimacies: experience or expertise; how to deal with them: introducing a third party; understanding experiences (empathy); considering expertise in their capacity to explain problems.

The negotiator dilemma and the information exchange are always discussed in phase 2 debriefing.

The role of the “mediator” is also discussed.

For example, depending on the courses: Would it be better if the “mediators” were not neither representatives of the State nor elected officials? In that case, they would be more «neutral».

What should be the role of the State? The role of the elected officials in public decision processes? What about the General Interest in these different cases? How to evolve from a Rousseauist definition of the General Interest to a definition adapted to the disputes we are confronted with? Rousseau’s definition of the General Interest (XVIIIth century) was given in the first session of the course : it is qualitative (not necessarily the interest of the most numerous); transcendent (not the sum of particular interests) and abstract (comes from reason).

### **3- Phase 3**

Who with whom: For the third phase, the students keep the same characters, except the SNCF representative who becomes a member of the monitoring commission set up by the State to guarantee debate transparency and equal opportunity for all to express and access information. Thus, we have six actors together.

What: Following their given instructions, the students have to choose between four options of the project: two options without building a new highway, but linking two roads to ensure the desired junction; two options proposing each a different “large layout”, that is a 300-meter wide strip of land for the highway. In reality, the final layout would be chosen in the second part of the official procedure. The Cd Rom stops before.

Preparation: Often, at this time, the participants ask for more time to prepare the meeting. They are now aware of the importance of the preparation. And I give them more time if they ask for it. It is more important that they well prepare this phase than the next one, especially if they feel they need it.

They can build alliances from their own initiative, or after a discussion with me.

The préfet(s) and the members(s) of the monitoring commission usually try to define their own zone of intervention. First, they try to do it alone, but finally, they usually realize they can talk to each other as a preparation.

During the preparation phase, the participants follow the constraints of the CD Rom: they will only discuss the four options indicated in the CD Rom, each one having a preference, according to her role. I don't advise them to create another option, and they don't create one by themselves.

At this point, students use the methodological forms: those about the mediators, about the different worlds of justification, in particular.

Process and results: The meetings are usually well structured, participants listen to each other. But none of the four options can be adopted, if all are aware of their interests. Nevertheless, a few groups of six end with one of them. Other groups don't reach an agreement. Others, between one and three in classes of four groups, create another option, totally new, or one that is an addition of two defined options. This moment is particularly important because those who create a new option experience a double-loop learning. They challenge the assumption that they have to choose between the four proposed options. This behavior is also challenging the professor's advice to enter into their given roles, and the professor's authority, i.e. their reflexion framework.

Debriefing: One of the themes discussed is the role of the two “third parties”: what does guarantying equal access to information and transparency mean for the monitoring commission members? (The official procedure is not explicit on those subjects). What should be the role of the préfet?

But the main subject discussed here is value creation. The debriefing is usually as interesting as the meeting itself, because some students who didn't create a new option realize themselves, during the debriefing, that they could have done it. They are helped by the discussion group in their challenging of the four proposed options. At that moment, students are usually very impressed by their own freedom, freedom they discover whereas they thought they only had constraints. Retracing their reflexion process, I conceptualize it using the double-loop learning concept. This experience helps them a lot in the understanding of the concept, and beyond, of its interest and importance in concertations and negotiations and in management in general.

#### **4- Phase 4:**

What: Phase 4 begins with the information of the government decision to choose one of the large layouts proposed in phase 3 (like in the real setting). Students know that there are 3 possible final layouts in this large layout. They receive information on each of them. They have to prepare and act out a press conference which will precede the last phase of the concertation procedure, in which this final layout will be chosen (this last phase is not included in the simulation).

It is a phase highlighting communication.

Who with whom: All students change role.

The students have to prepare a speech in front of the other parties and journalists and expose their choice and other considerations they think can be useful. Other parties and journalists (the other students and the professor) ask them questions after their speech.

Preparation: Students prepare slides, some add banners and find strong slogans.

They try to make the information understandable and clear, using diagrams and figures.

Process and results: Usually, students express themselves in a clear way, using understandable information.

But there is a point they often forget. Many students don't think about the journalists who haven't participated into the entire process and who need a historical introduction to it.

Debriefing: The debriefing revolves around positioning approaches, tension between empathy and self assertion, and the relevance of the concertation process history.

We discuss the point that even when they are involved in a speaking process, which is not an obviously interactive one as a meeting is, they have to think about the others' "worlds" to be understood. The journalists need more information to make up their mind. This conclusion is coherent with Argyris and Schön's model II theory-in-use: "advocate your position and combine it with inquiry and self-reflection . (...) Advocate your principles, values and beliefs in a way that invites inquiry into them and encourages other people to do the same." Opposed to model I theory-in-use: "Advocate your position in order to win. Hold your position in the face of advocacy. (...) Stick to your principles, values, and beliefs." (Argyris and Schön, 1996, p. 120).

The second part of the debriefing is a global one, referring to the entire course.

The methodological forms propose information that sum up important things learned during the course:

- The three tensions (Mnookin) : value creation versus value distribution, empathy versus assertiveness, principals versus agents.
- From negotiation to mediation (Lempereur): the mediator facilitates the dealing with stakes, emotions and process.
- From concertation to decision in planning (de Carlo): dealing with concertation processes implies considering three dimensions: political will, methods (procedures) and behaviors.

### **III- Discussion**

#### **1- The Cd Rom's status**

Reading this course format, one can be surprised by the status given to the Cd Rom : it is a source of information for the students. They learn general information about the concertation process and confidential instructions for their roles through the Cd Rom. It doesn't replace one or several parties, so it is not used to assist communication. Neither does it give any solution after a meeting.

The Cd Rom, as used here, can be considered as a tool which facilitates students' playing. It presents information in a lively way, through videos simulating news programs, including real actors' interviews, showing real maps and diagrams in colors. Consulting the Cd Rom's information, students begin to enter into a transitional space (Winnicott, 1986, 2001)<sup>8</sup> : at the same time «real », because of the link between the given information and the real setting, and

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<sup>8</sup> Winnicott's transitional space is created by the baby's mother. First, she gives him the illusion of omnipotence and then she helps him to accept desillusion without despair. She helps him to confront himself progressively to the external reality, that is to the world around him. Winnicott (1986) calls such a mother, who adapts herself to her baby's needs, a "good-enough" mother. In the transitional space, the baby can become creative by playing. He plays with reality, i.e. he does as if he were omnipotent knowing that he is not. So he can creates his environment, that is seeing it in a new way. Creativity, as defined by Winnicott (2001), is a general phenomenon each baby can experience in certain "good-enough" mothering conditions. More generally, the transitional space is the space situated between someone's inner reality and the surrounding world. So, the transitional space and creativity concern not only babies but also adults (Amado and Ambrose, 2001).



because of the way information is presented ; and at the same time imaginary, because of it being a simulation played in a classroom. Students enter into their roles as if they were these persons in a given context, knowing they are themselves external from this environment. During the first debriefings, many students will describe their experience in a very «united way », «being » their roles and respecting their given context. At the same time, and more and more throughout the course, they will be able to detach themselves from their roles and to analyze their experience.

In fact, they unconsciously play their roles according to their own personality too. And their own participation into their playing will be more and more conscious.

And sometimes, in phase 3, they will be able to detach themselves from the constraints they are given in order to invent a new option. Some other students will be reluctant to enter into their roles, despite the Cd Rom. By progressively entering into them, playing, they will be able to detach themselves from their roles, which seems paradoxical.

The course format offers the students to be successively insiders and outsiders of the simulation: being different insiders at each phase, and progressively more autonomous, more consciously outsiders.

That's why the use of the Cd Rom helps students entering into a transitional thinking, defined as a « passage from a state of union with the environment to a state in which the subject relates to it as something external and separate » (Kaës, in Amado and Ambrose, 2001, p.64).

This transitional thinking offers the conditions of creativity (Winnicott, 2001).

## **2- The contextualisation of the students'experience**

This « passage from a state of union with the environment to a state in which the subject relates to it as something external and separate » (Kaës, in Amado and Ambrose, 2001, p.64) is facilitated by another element of the course framework : the given historical perspective of

the concertation process in which students are involved. This historical perspective appears at three levels in the course. The first level is the content of the three first sessions. The second one is the possibility offered to the students of consulting all information concerning the past phases of the simulation while they are playing. The third level is the content of the press conference and its debriefing. For Kaës, these references to history constitute «the common reference to the *other* reality, the one which fantasy ignores » (1997, p.72). They allow the learning process to occur avoiding the fusional illusion. In defining his «progressive » model of pedagogy, Dewey gives importance to «the "objective conditions", or the environment – both physical and social- within which experiences occurred and through which they were filtered. For Dewey, the objective conditions included everything from the physical conditions in the classroom to the learner’s social and economic class.(...) The result is a constant interplay between the learner’s internal (individual) and objective (external) conditions - the sorting out of which contributes significantly to Dewey’s idea of learning. » (Susskind and Coburn, 2000, p.293). Dewey too acknowledges the role of the confrontation to the objective conditions for the learning process to occur. Knowing historical perspectives, students will be more able to think by themselves and to form their own vision of the situations than if they don’t. It is a way of allowing them to be more autonomous, idea which is conceptualized by both Kaës’transitional thinking theory (based on Winnicott's concept of transitional space) and Dewey’s experiential learning theory.

### **3- An experiential learning**

The entire students’ experience in this simulation can be conceptualized using experiential learning concept, defined as a learning in « which an experience is followed by reflection leading to alter views of subsequent experience » (Susskind and Coburn, 2000, p.308). For Susskind and Coburn (2000), simulations used in teaching negotiation are based on the experiential model of learning. They define it linking the theories of three researchers,

Dewey, Lewin and Piaget : « The first, from Dewey (1938), stresses the interaction between the learner and his or her social environment. The second, from Lewin (1951), emphasizes the cyclical process of such experience (i.e., reflection allows abstract principles to form and these are tested in subsequent experiences). The third, drawn from cognitive psychology and epistemology, sees the learner « creating knowledge » by resolving « cognitive conflicts » which arise through challenging experiences. » (Susskind and Coburn, 2000, p.291).

The transitional thinking approach allows to complement this conceptualization, deepening our understanding of the students learning experience. This approach recognizes unconscious internal processes and defensive behaviors, which are very important when talking about change in general, and learning in particular, and learning negotiation more specifically. It points out the difficulties of internal change. And it gives importance to the professor-students relationship and to the framework of the learning experience offered in order to allow students to begin a significative process of internal change.

#### **4- The central place given to creativity**

The Cd Rom doesn't pretend to offer a complete training experience in concertation, negotiation and mediation. It reflects pedagogical choices made that give importance to specific aspects of teaching concertation. In particular, the Cd Rom itself, and the way I use it, give a large space for creativity, or creating value in negotiation theory' s terms, which I think is one of the most important stakes in concertation, especially in complex decision processes like the ones I teach.

So, in the simulation, phase 3 is central. It gives the students the opportunity to create a new option for the highway project. But this creation of value depends on the whole student learning process during the entire course, and not only on their experience at this specific phase. From the beginning of the course, considering its framework, the relationships between the professor and the students, the structure of the Cd Rom and the way it is used, students are

encouraged to be autonomous, so potentially creative. Being creative can be considered as a result of students' implication : a result of their growing self-confidence, and at the same time, their growing frustration during the simulation (they don't have all the data they would like to, they don't succeed in reaching an agreement each time). Based on their self-confidence, they can take the risk of being creative in order to reduce their frustration.

This learning process can be referred to the transitional change defined by Amado and Amato in opposition to regressive change and with differentiation with transitive change : « Regressive change is the opposite of transitional change. Whereas transitional processes aim at further integration and mature development, regressive processes leave the system in a higher state of dependency, with diminished feelings of responsibility ; with lower levels of confidence in experimenting, exploring, and taking risks ; and sometimes with a climate of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty for individuals, which stifles initiatives and reduces commitment(...). Unlike transitional change, transitive change is a process that involves no development or contribution to learning by individuals in the community but simply a change of state in a particular feature from A to B. (...) Driving a car is transitive to the extent that it involves operating the machinery with learned skills. It is transitional when it involves working one's way through unfamiliar territory, processing contradictory or ambiguous information, deliberating, exploring options, making choices. » (2001, pp. 109-110).

The way the course is conceived seems to allow a transitional change from the students.

But, as a course, it also involves transitive elements.

## **5- What about manipulation ?**

Manipulation is not absent from the course, even if efforts are made to reduce it. Can a manipulative experience be considered as a transitional one ? These two approaches seem to be contradictory, if we think at an abstract level only. Amado and Amato (2001) distinguish two types of transitive change : the open transitive mode and the manipulative transitive one.

While, in the former, the initiator of change is clear about her own influence (in terms of explanation of the process, the methods used and her aims), in the latter, participants are not aware of her influence. For the authors, «the teaching-learning situation is the best illustration of (..) a positive use of a transitive manipulative mode. » (2001, p.112). Knowledge which the students will acquire is not known by them from the beginning. So, the teaching-learning situation can be considered as manipulative in itself. This transitive manipulative mode can be positive if the teacher, at some times, expresses her «manipulations ». If not, students won't change at a deep level and won't be aware of their changing process. We can add that, in this case, their capacity of being committed successfully to another change process afterwards is put into question.

Here, the pedagogical aims are defined during the first session of the course. And creativity takes a large place in it. So, it can be considered as a mix of transitional and transitive manipulative approach.

## **6- The link between simulation and reality**

Referring to what happens in France in public decision processes in planning, the simulation is realistic. Conflicts are omnipresent, before and parallel to concertations, and they are somehow useful. Mediators can be neutral or not, with a task defined at large. The results of concertations are more or less taken into account by the public Authorities in their decisions. Counterexpertise is difficult to develop. The interests of inhabitants are considered a priori as personal and defensive ones by planners. French people want to be involved in concertations, sharing power, and, at the same time, they want the Public Authorities to assert their visions and decisions, recognizing their specific power. I think this paradox allows French decision processes to deal with the recognition of the parties' interests and, at the same time, with the coherence of policies around the country, i.e. the General Interest. But this is another debate.

Compared to the real decision process from which it is inspired, the simulation is also realistic. We (the conceptors) attended meetings, read almost all the information available on the decision process, and interviewed the parties. These interviews and part of the information are available in the CD Rom.

There are nonetheless some differences, included for pedagogical reasons:

- In the first phase: the SNCF (present until the second phase) and the environmentalists have been added ;
- In the second phase: internal “mediations” have been added ;
- In the third phase: participants find sometimes a common proposal of a layout, it hasn't been the case in reality.
- In the fourth phase: there was no press conference, but, at different moments, the parties presented their positions to the press.

These differences and their justifications are discussed in the debriefings.

The simulation proximity to the real setting has been chosen for several reasons, presented now without hierarchy. First, to diminish the artificial dimension involved in short simulations and role plays designed specifically to learn a concept or method, in a context far from real ones. Here, discussions about the link with the real setting can take place at every moment in the course. Second, to take into account the historical dimension of such concertations, which is pregnant in their success, and important to know for the students. Third, to create dynamics in the classroom which can favor a long learning process, through playing in particular. Fourth, to offer the students the opportunity to experience several roles in the same concertation process, in order to enrich their capacity of understanding and being empathetic.

Susskind and Coburn (2000) recommend, when using simulations, to begin with simple exercises. For them, these ones are more efficient to teach key negotiation concepts because they emphasize behavioral matters. The choice made in the Cd Rom design to begin with a

complex conflictual concertation can be seen as opposed to this view. The first phase involves six parties with different and strong positions. So, it could be considered as too difficult for a first concertation lesson.

It is partially, if we consider the first phase as separated from the others. I usually notice, during the second phase, that some students have understood all the concepts discussed in the first debriefing, others have understood only some of them. So, I reintroduce these concepts discussing with the students individually, or in small groups, and in the second debriefing and other ones. The learning process here seems to be less linear than when using simple exercises to begin a course. And this non-linear learning process offered is pursued during the entire simulation.

From another point of view, the choice of beginning with a complex conflictual concertation can be seen as emphasizing a key negotiation concept : the concept of conflict, which is very often put into practice in France. And, for French students, it is an interesting « ah-hah ! » experience when discovering that they can have legitimate reasons to enter into a conflict and that it is possible to rely on it to understand and then to solve the problem at stake. Moreover, the recognition of conflicts as part of social interactions facilitates the recognition of internal conflicts, which is an opening for an internal change process.

## **Conclusion**

The way of teaching concertation based on *La Francilienne* Cd Rom I described here acknowledges two different visions of teaching. One is a strategic vision, wanting to «put something into the students», that is to teach them usefull concepts and methods of negotiation and mediation. The other is an authentic way of teaching, wanting to «pull something out from the students », that is to offer them an opportunity to make an internal change. These two visions are balanced, linked and reconciled together as far as possible, in the aim of providing a constructive learning experience for the students which can help them

in real settings. In particular, the students are accompanied in a process of accepting conflicts and being creative. This process helps them to integrate the concepts and methods learned. The Cd Rom shows its capacity of being a valid support for this way of teaching, at the same time creating a playing environment which helps internal changes and offering the opportunity and the resources of learning usefull concepts and methods. But this tool doesn't replace the important relationship between the professor and her students. Moreover, it helps the professor to offer a richer learning environment in which she can reach deeper pedagogical aims.



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