

Beyond Words - 5th European Collaborative Practice Conference
Amsterdam 26 – 28 may 2016
Report

Generosity and compassion are virtues I never thought to be graspable through the senses. However this is what I have experienced by attending this congress organised by the Dutch Association of Collaborative Professionals (VvCP). One could see it in the faces, hear it in the tune of the voices and smell it in the air of sharing and happiness that surrounded us during the whole event.

As a practising lawyer I have never experienced anything similar along my career. In all the workshops I took part and in the talks we listened to, the main question was, what do we need to change in the exercise of our profession to favour people (in this case our clients) The main concern was about how to develop the best strategies to be able to identify client's real needs, how to be able to really listen to them, and pay careful attention to be able to help them throughout their process of divorce or in negotiations of any kind.

One of the key aspects that was highlighted to be very satisfactory for all the parts involved in such processes, was the collaboration between professionals from different backgrounds such as lawyers, psychologists, coaches and financial advisors. Collaboration offers support not only to the clients but also to the professionals themselves. This way they get to see the case from another perspective. For the collaborative professionals, the clients play the main role. The professionals see themselves as a guide, a companion who support the clients to find the way towards the most appropriate and satisfactory solution. Every case, every solution is unique as so human beings are.

Another key aspect was the active search for other fields and other practices to complement and nourish professionals in the development of their daily work. In the case of the lawyers, we are known for our systematic, analytical and rational way of thinking. This approach was left aside to give way to imagination, emotions and the understanding of our body as a system, seeing it as a whole to come to new insights and understandings. We were introduced to some aspects of Eastern philosophy and we used some Kung fu techniques in order to transform the energy within a negotiation. We were also invited to experience meditation as a way of being able to transmit a peaceful and balanced attitude during negotiation but also to recover from difficult or blocking situations.

We were introduced to fascinating approaches such as The Integrative Law Movement which places different ways to practise the legal profession under the same umbrella; ways which are emerging worldwide such as Collaborative Law, Conscious Contracts, Therapeutic Jurisprudence, Earth Law, among others.

We were also introduced to very innovative interdisciplinary academic approaches to Legal Studies such as the one presented by Prof. Dr. Jeanne Gaakeer from the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, who is working on Law and Literature.

The sharing of all these different attitudes, strategies and approaches together with the fact that professionals from many different countries from all over the world were taking part in the congress and, of course, the impeccable organisation of the Dutch team, made this event to an incredibly valuable experience.

I should believe that anyone who attended the congress is truly looking forward to the next one and so am I!