

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead, cultural anthropologist

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When the 2018 CREATE workshop was announced, I instantly knew it would be a unique opportunity to help me determine relevant milestones for my future career. Dedicated to Career Development and hosted by Prof Dr Pilvikki Absetz and Prof Dr Brian Oldenburg, the 20th CREATE workshop took place on 19-21 August in Galway, Ireland. *“What do I want to be when I grow up – and how to get there?”*; as a third-year PhD Candidate I was eager to answer those questions for my future. My thesis defense is slowly but steadily approaching and will mark the beginning of a new chapter bringing up many new windows of opportunity. Overwhelmed by the vast variety of interesting career paths, making a choice seems even scarier than defending my PhD.

A few minutes into the networking exercises, I discovered that everyone seemed to have similar questions and uncertainties buzzing around in our little researcher brains and we all quickly realized – ‘I am not alone’. And more surprisingly, the facilitators stated: It is OK, to have ‘no idea’. As a matter of fact, they acknowledge that career paths often are shaped through ‘serendipity’, which means to stumble unintentionally over valuable things or fortunate discoveries. Of course, having a plan that we pursue with focus and persistence is essential for success, but we should remain flexible, reviewing our goals every few years and be

prepared for opportunities ‘out of the blue’.

From another group activity, we learnt to identify and reflect on our strengths, which was a struggle for most of us. We realized, we do not often talk about our strengths and tend to emphasize what we do not know instead. However, acknowledging our own skills and competencies is crucial. What was a supposedly homogenous group of researchers in ‘health psychology’ turned out to be heterogeneous, covering a great range of abilities and know-how. When bringing those skill sets together and forming collaborations, we can achieve great things. The facilitators highlighted another key factor for success: *“Without cross-disciplinary teams, collaborations and partnerships, we can never make a difference.”* Furthermore, the facilitators emphasized the value of mentoring and encouraged us to reach out to our role models, inviting them to be our mentors.

Equipped with the diverse knowledge and cultural backgrounds of the workshop group, we then tackled the challenges of the next task: ‘brand yourself’. The aim was to teach us how to translate our vision into a strategic plan: From skills and capabilities to PRODUCTS. How can we sell and raise awareness of our product, e.g. a counselling service, a prevention program, a new policy, ...? This hands-on exercise helped us to become more concrete about our plans, including who to involve and what to expect realistically. It helped us resolve a lot of our uncertainties raised before and in previous exercises. Here, Pilvikki and Brian

highlighted how important it is to keep our personal connotation and enthusiasm because many people have great ideas. Therefore, communicating our objectives and vision statement with a positive attitude can make the difference. A quick peer-to-peer coaching apropos social media provided helpful insights into managing and using those outlets for effective communication.

Throughout the workshop, re-connecting with and meeting new peers enabled us to exchange and learn about our fellows' ideas concerning *careering* and their personal strategies, which provided valuable insights into individuals' rationale and processes in decision making. It was truly inspiring to hear about their plans for the future and to see their dedication, motivation and passion.

Overall, having CREATE organize this workshop on career development was exceptionally beneficial. It was a perfect fit for my background as a health psychologist and with my aspirations as an early career researcher. It helped me identify my core strengths and weaknesses that need further development, as well as important measures of success and strategic steps to achieve future milestones.

It was a great honour to learn from the personal stories of Prof Oldenburg and Prof Absetz, two leading experts in the real-world implementation of health promotion and disease management. Thank you for sharing your life story, career pathway, '*careering mistakes*', and confidence towards the unknown. It was incredibly encouraging to listen to their advice. Special thanks go out to the CREATE and EHPS Executive Committees for the wonderful organization, which we can count on every year. And last but not least I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the European Health Psychology Society for awarding me the CREATE grant to participate in the 2018 CREATE workshop in Galway, Ireland!

I left Galway feeling empowered by all the support from research fellows who have great ideas and great minds. Being part of the CREATE family,

where everyone can count on everyone and is working in the best interest of everyone – I sensed we are ready to navigate the next steps in our careers to tackle any challenge and change the world!



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