

## ONCE UPON A TIME...

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I wrote this article after my participation in the **"Design Thinking in the Classroom" training programme** which took place in **Oslo, Norway, on November 22-24, 2022**. The programme was provided by **NEWSCHOOL AS**. This mobility has been entirely financed by the **Financial Mechanism of the EEA 2014-2021, "Ways to build a democratic and inclusive culture in school", 2021-EY-PMIP-0005** project, implemented on **01.08.2018-31.10.2019** by **Casa Corpului Didactic Braşov as beneficiary**.

I remember from my childhood how every wonderful story, which our grandparents read to us sitting on their knees, began with... "Once upon a time". I never thought that now, in adulthood, I would experience what seemed to me unreal then, and even more so I could not even think that I could write a story that I really lived and that I will tell you next:

We've all heard about Santa Claus Land. Hidden among fjords and deep valleys, adorned here and there snow-powdered forests, Norway is the magical land where you expect to meet the kind old man with his elves and reindeer at every step. In a tab of this fairy tale I also stopped thanks to the training program "Design Thinking in the Classroom" within the project "Ways to build a democratic and inclusive culture in school" whose beneficiary is the Teachers' Training House Braşov. It was great joy and happiness when I found out, after submitting my application, that I'll be one of the participants together with three other colleagues, in the country loved by a lot of people. So, at the end of November, we packed our luggage and went across seas and countries to find out what "Design Thinking" means and during the few moments that we could spare, to discover Santa Claus.

Here's what I learned: The concept of Design Thinking appeared in 1987, by Peter Rowe, professor of architecture and urban design at Harvard, in his book "Design Thinking". Interest began to emerge in the 1990s with the promotion of the method by David Kelley, professor at the Stanford Design School and co-founder of IDEO, a design and consulting company. At that time, design thinking was a method for practical and creative problem solving used by designers during the design process. In a short time, Design Thinking also became an approach to solving problems outside of professional design practices, such as social and business contexts, and not at least, in educational contexts.

Today Design Thinking is a mindset, not just a method. It is actually a process by which we arrive at relevant solutions to a problem by going through and experimenting with intermediate solutions. Design Thinking starts from deep empathy and understanding the needs and motivations of students, teachers, and parents, those who make up our everyday world. Design Thinking greatly benefits from the opinions of multiple perspectives, and the creativity of the others supports your own creativity. More minds are always stronger than one when solving a challenge.

Design Thinking supports the fundamental belief that we can all create change – no matter how big is the problem, how short is the time, or how small is the budget. No matter what constraints exist around the learner, designing can be an enjoyable process. And very importantly, it is experimental. Design Thinking offers permission to fail and learn from mistakes, because you work with new ideas, get feedback on them, then iterate.

As teachers we have a duty to design ways to interact with students around the content we want to convey every day. We need to follow a design process to be more intentional about connecting this content to the interests and desires of today's students by learning more about what they do outside the school, plus connecting them to the real issues of the planet in nowadays.

I have laid out some ideas about this new paradigm of "Design Thinking" and without false modesty I can say that I worked hard, together with the other participants, for three days to discover it. It wasn't easy for us, but when you actively participate in your own training you see things from a different perspective and much more clearly. Colleagues from Greece, Estonia and others from Romania (Covasna and Tulcea counties) joined us in the great adventure of acquiring new skills.



As far as Santa Claus is concerned, there are other beautiful things to tell. Knowing that the Nordic countries claim the supremacy of the "Old Saint" and that there are many legends woven around him, we hit the road. We were not surprised when, a few kilometers from Oslo, along the fjord, in the small town of Drøbak, we discovered a place where reality



intertwines with fairy tales, a place where elves, globes, bells and glass figurines sit beautifully arranged on shelves, or in baskets, tempting you to buy them. In a corner of one of the rooms, Santa's Post Office is waiting for the smallest and biggest senders to express their wishes, which mostly come true on Christmas Eve. We charged ourselves with positive energy and relived our childhood years in this miraculous laboratory of Santa Claus.



Everything was magic; I combined the useful with the pleasant so that a kind of nostalgic joy returns to my mind, a miracle that begins with "once upon a time..."

P.S. It is so wonderful to live the experience of such a training programme that I hope that through the thoughts I have written I have convinced you to participate in such mobilities.