

Report of the NECE Preparatory Workshop 2018

Brave New Worlds?!

The Future of Democracy and Citizenship Education

16-17 May 2018

Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille (France)

The NECE preparatory workshop took place at the Friche la Belle de Mai, an internationally renowned social-cultural centre in the heart of Marseille, France, from 16 to 17 May 2018. Participating were members of the NECE Advisory Board and of NECE Partner organisations, as well as external experts on citizenship education from France and Germany, and representatives of social and cultural organisations from the Marseille region.

The overall aim of the workshop was twofold:

Firstly, to present and discuss the programme of the NECE 2018 conference in order to identify topics that might be over- or underrepresented.

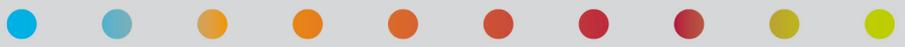
Secondly, to learn more about citizenship education in France, to present NECE to a primarily French audience, and to get to know local initiatives, who will be able to offer field trips during the NECE conference – “Marseille meets NECE meets Marseille”.

The workshop was inaugurated by Alain Arnaudet, the director of the Friche la Belle de Mai and as such the host not only of this workshop but also of the conference, Joachim Umlauf, the director of the Goethe Institut Lyon/Marseille, Christoph Müller-Hofstede, responsible for the coordination of NECE at the bpb, and Sam Khebizi, director of Les Tête de l’Art and facilitator of the workshop as well as of the conference.

The introductory addresses highlighted the importance of an “exchange by culture”, especially on a European level if the idea of Europe, to be united in diversity, is to be kept alive. As Sam Khebizi put it, the aim of this workshop and of the conference will be to connect the “spirit of NECE” and the “spirit of Marseille”, which are both intercultural and diverse. The goal will also be to connect the local and the global, and sometimes someone from the outside is needed to connect local actors. Sam Khebizi pointed out that so far there is little connection between local organisations in Marseille, which is why the NECE conference is also a chance for them to (re)connect and get to know each other.

Presentation of the Transnational Co-operation Group

The first intervention was by Benjamin Kurc from Vote&Vous, who presented the recently created Transnational Co-operation Group (TKG). The TKG is a co-operation between the bpb, the OFAJ-DFJW, and Vote&Vous. Members of these institutions met during the NECE conference in Den Haag in 2013 and decided to create a platform, which would facilitate a Franco-German exchange on the question of how to talk about citizenship education and democracy. Since then, the Zentrum für politisches Bildung from Luxemburg has joined the group – turning the bi-national into a transnational group – and its members are aspiring to broaden the scope to even more countries.



The TKG's approach is project based and cross-sectorial as it includes NGOs, the public sector and academia. The group also aims to include cultural organisations such as Les Têtes de l'Art. A gathering of the TKG at the Friche la Belle de Mai was indeed the incentive for the upcoming NECE conference.

The objectives of the TKG are to create input by sharing best practices and know-how about citizenship education, as well as output by bringing together new actors, developing new projects, and creating transnational tools (e.g. expanding the Vote&Vous application to other countries). An example of their work is the initiation of a dialogue between practitioners and researchers, which was to follow.

Opening Panel and keynote: “Enseigner les valeurs européennes – mais comment?”

In his keynote Alexis Artaud de La Ferrière, University of London, provided a glimpse into a historical chapter that proved decisive for modern-day moral and civic education in the French schooling system. In 1880 two governmental decrees sponsored by Jules Ferry lead to the dissolution of religious congregations and the confessional primary schools they ran. According to de La Ferrière, Ferry defined the core mission of mandatory public schooling as “the generalisation of a moral and civic education, which is not meant to replace religious beliefs but which is meant to constitute a public morality, universal in its scope and acceptable to all irrespective of their private beliefs”. This idea of teaching universal moral values which transcend, without depreciating, individual beliefs, is still very much at the heart of moral and civic education in French schools, but is facing today, de la Ferrière argued, a challenge not unlike the one religion had to face before it: a scepticism, even aversion, to universalisms that marks our hyper-modern age: “Like religion before it, the school has lost its transformative capacity to shape the public sphere. The school is no longer an avant-garde institution that transforms pre-modern subjects into universal citizens. In many respects, it has been overtaken by the atomisation of society due to demographic diversification and by the individualisation of society due to consumer capitalism”.

The task for civic education will thus be to redefine meanings of universalist moral claims in a world that is increasingly suspicious of universalisms, a task that is made even more complicated if we take European values into the equation, as Andrea Szukala, University of Muenster, pointed out in the ensuing round of discussion. She also referred to the emotional tensions the debate, especially on European values, provokes, the anger and aggression many people feel towards seemingly imposed values and morals. This anger steers people's political decisions and has the potential to alter Europe palpably at the next European elections.

Another factor Szukala mentioned is the issue of formal citizenship and how to make people feel included and tempted to participate in society if they are denied citizenship; a problem that has been aggravated by the so-called refugee crisis. Szukala also pointed out that the concepts underlying citizenship education are very different in France and in Germany, amongst other factors due to the countries' different concepts of 'Republic'.

Ingrid Fichter, French Ministry of Education, remarked that currently there is a big divide between formal and non-formal learning especially in France, and new approaches in citizenship education are needed in order to link formal and non-formal education. Especially on the European level organisations from the non-formal sector have little or no chance to be involved. New projects are working to initiate an exchange between the non-formal and the formal sector but more needs to be done.

Another fundamental question, raised by Louisa Slavkova, Sofia Platform, during the discussion was what constitutes a ‘good citizen’ in times of populism and how do you measure the effectiveness of citizenship education – by participation, by the outcome of elections? Citizenship education needs to be very self-reflective and self-critical in this respect, especially when dealing with the question of universal versus local values. Citizenship education is not immune to colonial legacies and (Western) biases, an issue raised by Martin Schiller, bpb. De la Ferrière also raised the question whether democracy is rather a means or an end to citizenship education – a very topical question in times where democracy is under threat in many parts of the world.

This academic/formal-sector discussion was enriched by comments and questions from representatives of local organisation that gave a first impression of possible synergies from which both the formal and the non-formal sector could benefit. Questions mainly referred to concrete methods and good practices in the field of citizenship education, their effectiveness and how projects could be better integrated into formal education schemes.

Culture and Politics in Marseille

To conclude the first day, two organisations from Marseille presented themselves: *La Friche la Belle de Mai*, presented by its director Alain Arnaudet, and *Les Têtes de l’Art*, presented by Sam Khebizi.

La Friche la Belle de Mai: Introducing a social and political project

Arnaudet, who says of himself that he is politic but not a politician, started as director at the Friche with the goal to attract people from all backgrounds, all walks of life. They should go to the Friche like they go to the beach and find what they don’t know, discover new things, because even if nothing is scheduled to happen, there is something happening at the Friche. The Friche houses social and cultural organisations, individual artists, offers space to musicians, dancers, everyone. It is supposed to be like a tree house, where everyone can be themselves without being met by aversions and imagine their world. The Friche is non-partisan and works with politicians and parties from left and right. Arnaudet sees himself as mediator and moderator between projects, artists and politicians on different levels.

The Friche is organised like a cooperative, so organisations can buy shares and be part of the board, and at the same time like a société anonyme. Arnaudet was elected as director, so on the one hand he has a lot of power, but at the other hand he is guided by the cooperative structures.

The Friche already houses a kindergarten and is currently developing a programme for a primary school. Those responsible for the project at the Friche are collaborating with psychologists, teachers, and sociologists to develop a concept, which will have culture and arts at its heart. The idea is to have everything inside the building to create a town within the town with its own rules and own working ethics, which is to work together.

Les Têtes de l’Art

Les Têtes de l’Art is an example of how a primarily cultural organisation can become an important actor in citizenship education. Les Têtes de l’Art uses art to reinforce statements about politics, and democracy. The projects are always designed to be interactive and participative. After the last European elections Les Têtes de l’Art rethought their role as

cultural organisation and asked themselves what they could do to face the developments in Europe, what art could do for citizenship education and to teach democracy.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of simplification they decided to engage people via emotions, to debate Europe on an emotional level rather than only with rational arguments in the style of classic academic debates. Born was the idea to take Europe to trial. In the performance “Europe à la Barre” professional and lay actors together with experts and real politicians accuse and defend Europe before a court. People shall not be taught, but their perceptions challenged. This performance reaches people who usually are not engaged with Europe.

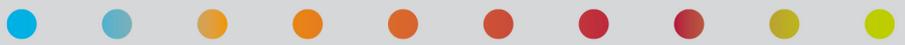
In the spirit of their performances Sam Khebizi asked the participants of the workshop to present Les Têtes de l’Art themselves to each other.

Thinking about the why, what, and how of the NECE conference

After the exchange between practitioners and academics on citizenship education in France and beyond, the first half of the second day was dedicated to presenting and discussing the up-coming NECE conference. At the heart of the idea for this conference topic is a deep concern for the current state of democracy, **Christoph Müller-Hofstede, bpb**, explained. The conference aims to approach the topic from an analytical, intellectual/academic angle and from the angle of practitioners. The first angle will discuss the causes and effects of the democratic recession by focusing on three strands: 1) an analysis of the developments that lead to the current state and of how these threats to democracy need to be understood; 2) addressing the global phenomenon of digitisation and its effects on people’s minds, opinions, working space and social life; 3) dissecting the psychological, emotional, social implications of these developments. The second angle will give space to practitioners who are working on the local level or are connected to wider networks and address issues laid out above on a practical side. The most important aspect and the defining feature of NECE is to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to encourage everybody to look at things differently after the conference.

Niccolò Milanese, European Alternatives, member of the NECE Advisory Board, points out that NECE’s overall aim is to pose and answer questions about citizenship throughout Europe and the world, but this year’s conference will see a strong focus on France, because currently the French experience is a key example for questions about citizenship and citizenship education. In the aftermath of the terror attacks in Paris in 2015, the agenda of education has shifted from being primarily about jobs and (economic) growth to a discussion about morals and values and preventing radicalisation. The discussion started around radicalisation and progressed to a general concern with democracy. One concrete outcome of this discussion might be that civic service becomes compulsory in France from 2019. Interesting, Milanese remarked, that this debate on citizenship should lead us back to compulsory civic service, which is basically an old way of thinking with a slightly new twist – typical of Macron’s political approach. At the conference the keynote by Latifa Ibn Ziaten will address the topic of terrorism and radicalisation.

Regarding the topic of digitisation and technological space, Milanese highlighted two dimensions. Firstly, we have to think about manipulation online and the influence of Facebook & Co. Secondly, there is the problem of loss of jobs due to digitisation. Milanese asked whether France will ultimately turn into a start-up, or is there another way of channelling this development? The loss of jobs due to digitisation also requires us to think and talk about basic income as a means to fund people’s civic participation.



The dimension of emotions will discuss what rationality means and where and how emotions come in. This brings us back to digitisation: we need to ask whether liking something on Facebook really is an experience and how digitisation influences arts, theatre etc.

Milanese also noted two topics, which he thinks are still underrepresented in the conference programme.

Firstly, the Mediterranean dimension, which is vital not only to grasp Marseille, but to understand the current situation in Europe, in Gaza and elsewhere.

Secondly, the dimension of social justice and economic inequality, which is one, if not the important driver of populist tendencies. How does citizenship education act on these difficulties?

In the ensuing discussion, three main topics of interest emerged that had already been touched upon on the first day – which underlines their importance for those present.

1) On European values and what constitutes a good citizen:

The idea to define European values is dangerous, according to Milanese, especially if they are prescribed top down. We should rather have clear what is unacceptable! Coming from a similar angle, Andrea Szukala answered the question on who is a good citizen by remarking that it is not our task to define this; a good citizen might be a person, who is able to define their role as citizen for themselves. Eddy Habben Jansen, Prodemos, made the important point that if we mix the discussion on who is a 'good citizen' with the imperative to defend EU values, a 'good citizen' only votes for pro-EU parties – this is what creates tensions. In some instances it might seem to be a good idea for someone in a particular situation to vote for a populist party.

2) On citizens' participation:

Especially for practitioners the question whether people have enough means of political participation is crucial. Louisa Slavkova explained that in her experience – coming from an Eastern European perspective – there is a very low understanding of the instruments citizens can use to participate (apart from elections). They perceive themselves as objects, as external from government and 70% are expecting the government to act for them. Milanese added that the idea that citizens would and should have a constant say in political decisions, constantly had to decide on policies, would be monstrous. People also need to have the time and means to participate, as active democracy needs time and space, which brings us back to economic and social inequalities and the discussion on basic income.

3) On the link between formal and non-formal education and political decision makers:

Throughout the workshop it became clear that representatives of both the non-formal and the formal field of education are eager to establish more and tighter links between the two domains and would like to get to know more about the state of citizenship education in other countries in order to learn from different experiences. Emily Helmeid, Cnesco, suggested to produce a paper with an overview of the state of citizenship education in different countries for the participants of the conference. The conference will be a good starting point for such an exchange and also a lobbying opportunity for local organisation.

Speedlab

The active participation of local organisations in the speedlab also proved that incentives to better connect practitioners and experts and politicians in the field of citizenship education on a local, national and transnational level are desperately needed especially in times like these. Fourteen organisations, mainly from Marseille, participated in discussions presenting their organisations, their work and ideas how they could participate in the up-coming NECE conference. The enthusiasm with which the representatives of the organisations participated in the speedlab, filled out their posters and exchanged ideas was overwhelming and the NECE team is looking forward to intensifying this collaboration in the weeks to come.

The following organisations were present:

Ancrages, represented by Samia Chabani

ADEJ, represented by Shanti Kaiser

ARLD PACA, represented by Pierre-Alain Cardona and Lisa Pastor

Bokra Sawa, represented by Catherine Sabry

CAMI, represented by Bertrand Soulcie

Changer Marseille, represented by Adrien Sergent

Chamar, represented by Hanane El Bahraoui and Tahar Rabahi

Electeurs en herbe, represented by Jeremis Chaligné

Eurocircle, represented by Léa Lazic

France Volontaires, represented by Pierre Revel

L'Université du Citoyen, represented by Fabrice Arnaudruz

Ligue de l'Enseignement, represented by Isabelle Charr and Gregory Brandizi

Medias Citoyens PACA, represented by Sebastien Boistel

Unis-Cité, represented by Camille Roux, Ban Abaine Tachirifa, and Noémie Gallard