

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Rethinking Citizenship Education in European Migration Societies

Political Strategies - Social Changes - Educational Concepts

CONCLUSION

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My Conclusions up front

The Lisbon conference raised the most important issues relating to immigration and integration in European Societies. Most of the key speeches were excellent, state-of-the-art contributions to the European debate that is just beginning to take off on a supranational level. They provided very good material for the workshops' debates. Some of them took up the opportunity to discuss the new challenges for European societies.

However, sometimes the conference schedule undercut the inspiring contributions. José Casanova should have been one of the first speakers – so the other participants would have had the chance to respond to his provocative theses. Rita Süßmuth on the other hand – who restricted herself to rather abstract pleas for more tolerance and cosmopolitanism – should better have had the last word. Her contribution slowed down the debate by drawing it back to a rather moralistic approach that is no longer suitable for the advanced phase of the European debate about immigration and integration.

The workshops - for my taste - had way too much time on their own. I think one of the three sessions should have been substituted with something else – maybe a discussion forum with one of the keynote speakers to delve deeper into the implications of their theses for the practical projects of the participants. This would have been a chance to bridge the gap between the insights the speeches offered and the pragmatic problems that were addressed by the participants when they talked about their day-to-day work in the field of civic education. This confrontation did sometimes happen – as with Prof. Casanova in the workshop 4 about religious identities. There was a fruitful exchange about the

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meaning of secularism on the basis of Prof. Casanova's concept of non-secular public religions. But this was rather a coincidence because Prof Casanova happened to attend the first session of the workshop. There should have been more in-depth-discussion of this kind to keep the conference from falling apart in two distinct categories of events – the expert speeches and the presentations from the field. The latter ones should have been more related to the big topics raised in the contributions by the speakers and panellists.

I am not sure if the „laboratory“ aspect of the conference programme worked out: the awkward situation on Saturday morning - with nobody really wanting to report from the workshop sessions - seems to indicate otherwise. The function of the workshops could have been a chance to reconceptualize civic education through controversial debate with fellow educators and experts. The manpower (and womanpower) for this was absolutely there. One could not expect the workshops, I would say, to come up with completely new ideas and projects - rather with a new look at what is already happening through conceptual challenges and comparison with other good practices.

There should have been more opportunities for spontaneous changes of schedule as for the „Leitkultur“-discussion in workshop 1. In this group there was no consensus about the concept of Leitkultur, but the lively debate showed that the underlying topic – creating cohesion in an era of increasing diversity- was perceived as crucial.

One question – or rather a set of questions – emerged as the most interesting candidate for a follow-up conference: Is secularism the way to integrate Islam? And what exactly does secularism mean in Europe – when even in a strongly laicistic state like France the minority of Maghrebiniian origin seems to be identifying themselves more and more with Muslims? Can Europeans learn from the American model of secularism, which shows a clear attitude towards church-state-relations without being anti-religious? How do we preserve a neutral public sphere without confining religion to a mere private affair? Or should we aim for total privatization of religion? Can religion – meaning Islam – be a contributor to civic discourse, instead of being a force that undermines the public sphere by imposing the laws of identity politics upon it? These issues were raised in the main contributions by the speakers and panellists – and they deserve to be taken up once more in depth as the ensuing discussions showed.

Highlights of the conference

I would like to sum up the most interesting ideas presented in Lisbon in a systematic fashion.

The president of BpB, Thomas Krüger, mentioned the central issues in his short opening remarks: the growing number of failing immigrant students in European schools, their „double alienation“ as „strangers here and in their country of origin“, unemployment among immigrant youths on the one hand and fear of Islamist terrorism on the other hand are in the focus of a fear-ridden-debate. This debate is

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no longer a national affair, Thomas Krüger stated. All European societies are affected by the problems, none has come up with a convincing solution yet. The debate therefore has to be Europeanized, which is the goal of the conference. Thomas Krüger sees the European models in competition with the US about a new model for an immigration society.

The challenge for civic education is not just how best to convey the message to a new audience. It is the message itself that is in question: What keeps our increasingly diverse societies together? Which values, rules, principles should be obligatory for everyone? Is there a „clear set of rules“ (Krüger), on which majority and minority, old and new citizens, can agree? Does the de facto multicultural society need a „Leitkultur“ as common ground – or is the constitution sufficient to keep it all together? Does Europe need a civil religion like the US – with memorials and rituals, hymns and songs? Or will these issues be restrained to the level of the nation-state?

In her keynote speech, Rita Süßmuth remembered the audience of the receiving countries' duties towards migrants. To critics of multiculturalism she responded: “Are we really practising multiculturalism? She called for an “inclusive” concept of citizenship to replace the “exclusive” one: “Why do we hesitate to give them full citizenship rights?”

Immigrants should not be seen as representing a certain religion or ethnicity, but as individuals with special abilities and needs. The national approach towards immigration, Mrs. Süßmuth stated, has failed. We need to give the UN more authority in this field, she concluded. Immigrants should also not be seen as a threat to civil society, but as an enrichment to it. We have to include them and let them participate on all levels, she pleaded.

Also, we should not just look at the necessary adaptation on the side of the newcomers. “What about the changes that the 'old populations' must face?” Homogeneity of our societies, Mrs. Süßmuth added, is a myth that should be discarded. Maybe it is not even right to use the term “integration”. We should not focus on what seems to be a refusal to integrate on the part of the migrants. We should rather ask ourselves: “What have we done to make them refuse integration?” Instead of integration, we could also, Mrs Süßmuth suggested, speak of “navigating between cultures”.

With all due respect, I would like to argue that these suggestions by Mrs. Süßmuth were shaped by an abstract moralism which – I believe - is part of the problem, not the solution.

Many of these suggestions have already been tried, and they are among the reasons why we are in such a miserable state. The whole perspective - “we” have got to give “them” full citizenship, “we” have got to give “them” full recognition – is very paternalistic. Migrants in this perspective are either the victims of racism or the recipients of good deeds, but not as actors and agents of civil society. In my opinion, the current debate on integration and multiculturalism has left this kind of reasoning already behind.

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Abdullah Waberi in his rather literary talk mentioned a motive that changed the perspective: With some irony, the author said, it was in the secular french environment that he first thought of himself as a Muslim. The self-perception of an immigrant is due to changes that he cannot control entirely, as is the self-perception of the receiving society. The immigrant may accept or reject the “Muslim”-label, and this in turn will have repercussions on the majority. What Waberi was saying in his tongue-in-cheek-way: France may be not as secular as it sees itself, when it feels the need to identify the foreigners in her midst in religious terms. Accepting this categorization for him would mean to re-evaluate his own identity: Am I as secular as I see myself? And if yes, am I probably more French than the French?

Kenan Malik picked up this thread of the debate. He described the integration debate as a contest between assimilationists and multiculturalists. Both suppose that there is a natural tension between diversity and cohesion. Both sides have been surprised by the French riots and the Birmingham riots. The debate between the two camps, Malik said, had not been helpful, because both sides confuse the diversity of people with the diversity of values - and project the one onto the other. Value conflicts are a perfectly natural and healthy thing in an open society. Only when they are clad into the terminology of ethnic-religious identity issues, they tend to become problematic. Today, the term “secular Muslims” sounds like an oxymoron – but this is a recent phenomenon.

Civil solidarity has been reframed in religious-ethnic terms in the last 15 years. From the politics of ideology we have turned to the politics of identity, with cultural differences achieving unprecedented importance. This, again, is due to political decisions: “These movements have been encouraged to cultivate their cultural identities, and the resulting lack of common values has been presented as a new social model – that is *laissez-faire-multiculturalism*.”

This model, Malik added, attributes the right to be treated with respect to groups instead of individuals. This undermines the living experience of a diverse, multicultural society. The governments of Europe should not follow this path, but rather deal with the citizens directly than through their self-proclaimed mediators. The responsibility to fight for respect cannot be outsourced to “community leaders”. When citizens are dealt with through these mediators, they are encouraged to view themselves as semi-detached, distanced participants in society. The state should be colour-blind, nor racism-blind.

Successful integration depends on the trust in the possibility of common values. In Malik's view liberal societies act self-defeating when they give up secularism for identity politics. A society without common values and without common public sphere cannot integrate newcomers except into preconceived groups.

Ute Frevert took up this problem from the comparative perspective of a German scholar teaching in the US. In European societies, she argued, history is mostly used to define the separating traits of national identities. The nations stress the differences in their experiences to gain a profile vis-à-vis their

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neighbours. From the American experience, Frevert said, one can learn that historical narratives can be “uniting instead of separating”. While Turks in Germany tend to refuse to accept the negative sides of national history – like the Holocaust – as their own heritage, the American model accentuates both the identity of the immigrants and their contribution to the greater good. Celebrating differences and the incorporation of non-American histories into the big overwhelming narrative are not mutually exclusive, Frevert said. There is a lot to learn for Europeans here, she stressed.

Paul Scheffer fell in with a slightly different accent. He, too, thought that Europeans have to look to the American perspective to make advances in understanding immigration. The American narrative is one of nationbuilding, and the subsequent waves of immigrants play a crucial part in this story, he said. In European societies this factor of national history has been marginalized. This is very odd, said Scheffer, because the total number of people migrating to Europe is actually higher than the number of immigrants to the US. We have to rediscover our own histories of migration, he claimed. Immigration is a never ending process of nation-building.

“We need the We”, Scheffer argued with respect especially to the dark sides of national history. He considered it a great progress, when a Dutch Muslim protested against the performance of Dutch soldiers in Srebrenica saying: “We have let the Bosnian Muslims down!” Scheffer said it is bad for integration to relativise the nation. The nation is the foremost address for integration.

Referring to the Chicago School of Sociology, Scheffer described integration as a 3-step-process: the first being a phase of segregation, avoidance, exclusion and isolation of migrant populations; the second one being riddled by competition and conflict; the third resolving in consensus, contract and accommodation.

Most European societies have entered the second phase: “We are in a period of conflict, and this is not just unavoidable, but it will be, in the end, productive.” With respect to Rita Süßmuth, Scheffer added: “It is not we who give them civil rights. The newcomers fight and compete for their place in our societies. They will face some tough questions about loyalty and about who they are. New rules are being negotiated in a tough contest. But multiculturalism doesn’t really help them. It stems from the era of avoidance and isolation, that we luckily have left behind.” Scheffer was optimistic, precisely because of the conflicts in European societies: “No single group of migrants in the history of humanity has failed completely in the long run. So, we do not need to panic. But still we have to realize that the situation for someone whose entire environment is turned upside down by mass migration can be very hard to tolerate.” Appeals to be more tolerant and meet somewhere in the middle are “empty talk”, stated Scheffer, “in an environment like Amsterdam with people from more than 160 cultures, there is no middle”.

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We cannot ask migrants to be model citizens, he continued, if we have a lukewarm relation to our constitutions and their enshrined values. A new understanding of our constitutions, their history and their principles is needed. Integration is not just about the rights of a citizen, but also about his duties. When the newcomers make use of the freedom of religion, they will have to accept the reciprocity of other people's religious freedom, including the freedom from religion. Widespread Muslim anti-Semitism and religious freedom are at odds with each other.

National history must provide a common narrative for the whole society, especially with regard to the dark chapters like colonialism or the Holocaust. Scheffer mentioned his own experience he made in the Dutch debate about a colonialism memorial that was finally built after fierce disputes. Now, Scheffer concluded, we have to come up with a common ritual for the annual celebrations: "When the Dutch revise their colonial history in a self-critical manner, this is also an invitation to the Turkish immigrants to go soul-searching about their history with the Armenians. In the field of historical narratives, the rule of reciprocity also applies." Scheffer pleaded, like Malik, for safeguarding the neutral, secular public sphere – especially now that religious identities have become increasingly important. Building mosques may be a natural thing to do for a religious minority claiming their space in the public sphere – but wearing the headscarf should not be allowed for an official in a Dutch courtroom, a policewoman or a teacher. This would be a symbol of group identities taking over the common public sphere. Asserting group rights and group-identities diminishes the sphere of individual liberties which is essential for an immigration society. It would force immigrants into ethnic blocs rather than encouraging them to act as self-sufficient citizens.

José Casanova took it upon himself to challenge this view. In sharp contrast to Kenan Malik and Paul Scheffer, Casanova preferred the American model of public religion to European secularism. He cited the American way of dealing with public religions as proof for the possibility of "non-secular modernity". The separation between church (synagogue, mosque, temple) and state in the US does not serve the purpose of reducing religion to a mere private issue. It rather serves the purpose to empower a diversity of "public religions" that meddle in all public affairs.

Immigrants to the US tend to become more religious after they arrive here, while in Europe it is the other way around. This may reflect the fact that in the US, being religious is part of being a good American, while in Europe, losing your religion is seen as a proof of your willingness to integrate yourself into European secularism.

The more secular, the more modern, the more at ease with diversity – this equation is a myth, Casanova contended. The European model has long lost its validity in the global arena. Europe with its anti-religious attitude – directed foremost against Muslims – is no longer the rule but rather the exception. Religion should be seen as a resource of civic engagement, not as a threat. Religion can be a tool for successful integration, as the American model clearly shows, Casanova said. Europeans should also take note of the contrast between a popular areligious or even antireligious sentiment and state

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churches, concordats, and multiple legal arrangements between religions and the state. Europeans are not as secular as they like to suggest, when they talk about Muslims and their conflicted relation towards secularization.

It is a pity that José Casanova's thought-provoking intervention came so late in the conference. There would have been a lot of material for further debate. But then – there is a topic well worth delving deeper into, maybe in another conference.

Out of the major contributions of the Lisbon conference, I see four big questions for civic education emerging:

- how to form a common historical narrative comprising the experiences of the newcomers and the old citizens
- how to find a place for religious identities in the public sphere – privatized, not neutralized
- how to cope with (inter-religious, inter-ethnic, inter-cultural) conflict as a productive and integrating element in an open society
- how to define common European values (and maybe a European Leitkultur) in a participatory way that is neither patronizing nor self-denigrating

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