

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Rethinking Citizenship Education in European Migration Societies Political Strategies - Social Changes - Educational Concepts

Conference Paper

Introductory Remarks to Workshop 6, Session 1: Artistic Migration and Mobility – Impacts on Cultural and Citizenship Education

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Lisbon, Portugal, April, 26-28, 2007

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Ladies and Gentlemen, two years ago I moved to the Netherlands. This change of cultural and geographical context constantly challenges me to not only adapt and adjust but also question my own values and principles, as well as assess Dutch societal dynamics. Recently a friend of mine told me: the best way to fit in is to be ignorant (mostly mistaken to be tolerance). These words continue chiming in my head.

In this introduction I will bring in my pragmatic views and professional experience from working for a rather unique organization in Amsterdam, the European Cultural Foundation - an independent organization committed to culture, the arts and Europe.

Before I go on please allow me to briefly tell you about some activities of the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) in this context of today's topic:

- Since 2006 the ECF has streamlined most of its activities toward intercultural dialogue. This means that the ECF explores people's actual artistic and cultural experiences of diversity. ECF campaigns for cultural policies and conditions that help to make these experiences positive ones.

- Last year ECF with partners launched The Civil Society Platform for Intercultural Dialogue to help ensure that the [2008 EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue](#) has much more than merely symbolic importance.

European cultural organizations and networks, as well as organizations dealing with related issues such as migration, education, youth and social affairs, are part of the platform. The platform's aims are to map, exchange and disseminate best practice throughout Europe; produce content, policy analysis and recommendations; act as a consultative body for the EU in its preparations for the Year of Intercultural Dialogue; and to make its own contribution to 2008.

The platform will meet twice a year during an initial 3-year pilot phase.

- Another interesting programme is ECF's Mobility fund called STEP beyond, which stimulates and supports individuals in cross-cultural creative projects throughout the European continent. This fund

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motivates young artists and cultural practitioners to explore, experience, gain inspiration and stimulate innovative creative connections through:

- Exploring unknown grounds and discovering different ways of working and networking as well as
- Collaborating and exchanging views and ideas

- Apart from its regular Grant Programme supporting European projects the ECF is currently also developing a new project that will be launched early this summer. It is an online community for people and organisations working in the field of culture in Europe. The project is a network of cultural users connected to other users to share: projects, information, contact details, personal opinions, etc.

- Through European experience we at the ECF focus on the 'migration of minds', we explore the potential richness of 'trans-cultural' identities and advocate the best conditions for developing intercultural competence.

Today people are increasingly less interested in organizations. They are interested in causes. Causes they can now engage in, in a variety of ways.

Today I hope to go beyond plain words and discuss with you causes such as global citizenship, cultural mobility, education, and cultural diversity.

Increase in worldwide migration is presenting new challenges to civic, cultural and human rights education. Countries in Europe have become migration societies characterized by ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, but also by manifold and complex national, cultural and social traditions. It is due to migration and other social dynamics that: education, knowledge and facilitated mobility are becoming crucial in fostering a shared European Citizenship.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today is not an ordinary day. Think of the speed in which we today access information. We live the NOW generation, the age of the impatient person. According to a recent survey, the patience of the regular internet user waiting for a website to be opened does not exceed more than a few seconds.

Information is simply a few seconds away. However, this does not mean that our world today automatically makes anyone an expert.

Though internet can bring people together around subjects of common interest, it cannot replace social or geographical societies. Face to face communication, the physical encounter, if you wish, is crucial in rapidly changing societies. Mobility is the engine of democracy today, through which individuals gain knowledge, experience and try to comprehend today's current social dynamics.

European educational programmes like Leonardo, and Erasmus for students have been indispensable for creating vibrant and globally competitive citizenship.

As the world seems to be getting smaller and mobility an ever common occurrence, participation in global trends and indeed new developments is also becoming an Everyman business.

There is something inherently wrong with our system of governance, as we heard yesterday. Freedom to move, to be mobile, is one of the four fundamentals of economic freedoms. It results in: Learning, Objectivity, Earning, Openness and Broadening of horizons.

Mobility is a right of every citizen and it is therefore a constituting pillar of citizenship.

Mobility is essentially the stuff that citizenship is made of. So what went wrong?

When talking about mobility, it would be remiss not to point out the obvious: The clear political connotation difference between the terms immigrants/migrants in Europe (with a negative undertone) and communities which are mobile in Europe (with a positive undertone).

It seems the term FAIR needs to be associated to freedom of movement – to create and foster a global European citizenship.

Intercultural dialogue and mobility serve to engage people not only as spectators. Culture and mobility,

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in tandem, spell out a win-win situation for European integration. Therefore, positive implications of mobility must also be very closely considered. Coordinated actions through independent educational projects with this aim can make a great impact on citizenship education in European migration societies.

Today some countries in the EU look on to incoming migration (even to migration resulting from EU enlargement) with fear, desperation and impossibility.

Mobile individuals or migrants (whatever you prefer!) with hybrid cultural backgrounds play a central role in the process of education, culture and integration. However, what we lack today in Europe is an institutionalized infrastructure out of which individuals can learn and have their voices heard. What we lack is also an anthropological approach to integration and migration policies. (How many people in this room consider themselves migrants?)

Therefore, efficient and improved information on migration from migrant communities is crucial. Cultural studies and studies on impacts on mobility/migration should be incorporated within extracurricular activities and taught to young people in Europe - to create an equality of citizenship among all Europeans.

The software of citizenship also needs reexamining, in order to foster more accountability and responsibility among individuals and communities. Our aim today is to create a MOBILITY CULTURE as well as a culture of being mobile. Cultural education in this sense is a way to provide migrants with political curricula - to connect citizenship education to migrants.

There are a number of commendable organizations which are currently running inspiring projects: facilitating acceptance, accountability, redefined cultural identities and a new social cohesion.

Europe would not be what it is without its diversity.

Ladies and gentlemen, without migration in Europe (or mobility) I would also not be here today and have the honor to introduce to you this session.

Migration has given Europe a myriad of advantages, opportunities, progress and competitiveness – positive impacts to which many politicians remain oblivious and dismissive.

Unfortunately, we live a new form of modern apartheid. Today's apartheid defines inclusion and exclusion along ethnic and social borders. Our societies today have created divisions of citizenship levels, thereby creating varying degrees of social stratification and inherent inequalities.

There are also many examples successfully combating these new cultural frontiers. Yet, diversity, we see, is becoming an increasingly ambivalent notion - politicized and instrumentalized.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today I can still not give you a simple universally accepted definition on what it means to be Dutch. I am still struggling as a newcomer in the Netherlands to position my own identity and therefore find my own space in Dutch society.

Perhaps, in the end, my Dutch friend was to some extent right. Maybe we are all sometimes slightly ignorant (which we camouflage as tolerance). Perhaps, as a Macedonian living in The Netherlands, I will always remain Macedonian. One thing I know for certain; being in the Netherlands I have still not got used to Dutch food. Though living in the Netherlands has given me perspectives which I otherwise would have never had. Mobility has enabled me to become objective toward my own culture and has emphasized my sense of citizenship.

Mobility is a fact of life in Europe – and Europe needs an accelerated view on mobility, migration, education and culture. Citizenship education develops a common sense of purpose and belonging which European societies desperately need.