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★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

# **The Impact of Cultural and Citizenship Education on Social Cohesion**

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## **Report**

**Workshop 1  
Working in Neighbourhoods and District Management: Future Models  
for Participation and Empowerment**

**Rapporteur  
Mariana Assenova, Bulgaria**

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**Working in Neighbourhoods and District Management: Future Models for Participation and Empowerment**

**Scientific Inputs:**

Jonas Büchel, Agency Büchel for Urban Development & Social Planning (Latvia)

**Project Presentations:**

Stefan Krüskemper & Maria Linares, Common Berlin e.V. (Germany)

Emilie Wacogne, Banlieues d'Europe (France)

**Moderation:**

Nel van Dijk, Institute for Political Participation (The Netherlands)

The workshop gathered theoreticians and practitioners of cultural and citizenship education to exchange their knowledge of how arts and culture could influence the public sphere both from professional and scientific points of view. The main topics under discussion were how cultural actions could bring together people from different generations and backgrounds and how such projects could be put into operation in deprived neighbourhoods with excluded communities. The practical aspects of Neighbourhoods and District Management were examined by the presentation of two projects – Common Berlin and Banlieues d'Europe. The participants were supposed to answer three core questions, defined by the organizers:

- Which concepts, which values should be discussed when we talk about the impact of cultural and citizenship education on social cohesion?
- Which are the main target groups?
- Which ways and means are specially important and interesting to achieve a more “inclusive” society?

The workshop started as proposed by the moderator Nel van Dijk, Director of the Institute for Political Participation (The Netherlands), introducing the panelists. Subsequently the first speaker, Jonas Buchel, made his input by presenting Agency Buchel for Urban Development & Social Planning (Latvia). His main idea was that it is important to connect Citizenship Education with urban development and to see what will happen. He mentioned some important issues in this process: concentrating on details, being curious, focusing on the community we work with, and searching for a story. The city needs its poetry and its eros – lacking the wor(l)d, said Jonas, but the urban frame today provides mainly senseless shapes, filled with man-made environment without any character or atmosphere. But words are everywhere, and cities are full of their own stories. According to Jonas, we just have to help discovering the atmosphere and establishing the communicative junction between environment, community and stories. From his perspective, we urgently need bridges – practical and well accepted tools to overpass the communication gap in society today.

Special attention was paid to Jane Jacobs, the American-born Canadian urbanist. Jonas pointed out that 50 years ago Jacobs wrote in her best known book “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” – a powerful criticism of urban policies in the US in the 50s – what is needed to get life inside the city: tension (not only between 2 people, but also between buildings, streets, everything); diversity (of human beings, cultures, forms, signs, signals); density (a city which is not dense is boring). According to Jonas, all the time we are trying to develop everything, and maybe we should not. He showed pictures of half-finished, abandoned blocks of flats in Latvia that could be seen elsewhere too. Culture is the most important issue – everything is kind of a culture to my mind, said Jonas. Planning processes offer a chance for

increased participation and activation. Jonas concluded that neighborhood management and community building processes doubtlessly support social cohesion. The main challenge is to bring the two mutually depending working concepts together: political education and urban development!

After this detailed input, Stefan Kruskemper and Maria Linares presented their project “Common Berlin”. Stefan gave some facts about the association that was founded last year to bring artists and creative citizens together and to offer them space for all kinds and forms of contribution. He explained the search for projects that create community and new contexts – irrespective of the kind of activity – with the main goal of engaging the public to participate and thus to create community and enforce civic involvement. Maria spoke about their motivation. She explained that the public space is a social place for communication, but that there are not many opportunities for minorities to get involved. According to her, competition should motivate different people to participate. Stefan gave detailed information about the workshops. They plan actions and explorations of artistic approaches of a kind that will involve the citizens (diverse members of the community and generations) to change the environment in the city they live in together. As the project has not been started yet, Maria gave some examples of projects related to Common Berlin: The closed space (strategies to open up gated communities), The economized space (how the privatization of public space influences the whole city), The coded space, etc.

The second project “Banlieues d’Europe” was presented by Emilie Wacogne from France. She explained that it was created in 1992 and now gathers 300 international active members, cultural and social workers, artists. As a European Cultural Network, the main goal of “Banlieues d’Europe” is to bring arts and culture to the places we all consider to be problematic – the outskirts (*banlieues*). To achieve social cohesion, it is necessary to bring up social and human issues and to involve the citizens, said Emilie. New social cohesion means new dynamics and new competences. Arts create these new landmarks and teach people to take responsibility for their lives. To explain in which way “Banlieues d’Europe” contributes to this, Emilie presented a project based on the experience of the world’s first hip hop opera – “West End Opera”. It is done by young and unemployed people in Germany, aged between 16 and 27 years. In the course of the project they have had the chance to be guided by artists and social workers. The real impact of the initiative is that most of its participants – 85% (having been totally excluded before) are now working or studying. The other project Emilie spoke about is called “The Beat Initiative”. It was developed to bring together Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, UK by reinventing the annual Belfast Carnival Parade. The diverse range of cultural and arts activities – such as visual arts, music, dance, performances, crafts – slowly builds bridges between two polarized communities we usually watch combating each other on BBC. The cooperation in the process of producing events for the Carnival creates a new image of Belfast – every year more and more people get involved. The tremendous impact of the project became obvious by short quotations from a movie Emilie presented.

After the presentations the participants accepted the proposal made by the moderator not to follow the recommendations of the organizers of the NECE conference to answer the first question – which concepts, which values – but to discuss the input and the projects.

The first topic raised concerned the role of arts and artists. Jonas Buchel shared his working experience in deprived areas of Berlin with artists who were not recognized as “real” artists by their colleagues. Now they have better chances. According to Emilie Wacogne, art could be seen as a cosmetic means, due to the fact that it is like a product now. Phil Wood, expert and consultant in Cultural Diversity and Urban Policy quoted a friend of his, saying that art sometimes is like a lipstick on the face of the gorilla - can we change the gorilla than put lipstick on her face? asked Phil. The answer, according to him, is to make a more strategic intervention inside the places imagined by developers because recently he has met a 30 years old developer who had never heard of Jane Jacobs (quoted by Jonas Buchel in his input). “Our strategy is to think about integration together with developers – to open a call for projects that will function with the people – generations and areas”, added Maria Linares. “Common Berlin” intends to offer opportunities to work with different people – developers, workers or unemployed – all are welcome.

Christian Ernst from “Zeitpfeil” (Germany) talked about the development. The traditional funding logic for Citizenship Education is not the logic of development, he said. So we should find new project frameworks. Thereby, a very important term is ownership – the projects have to create ownerships. Coming back to the role of artists – in his opinion, defining artists as experts in Common Berlin is not easy for young people to understand. In his concept there are artists and there are experts. But what is their role? he asked. Stefan Kruskemper answered that they look for people who are interested in talking about their competences. Maria Linares added that they intend to reach and involve people, so that democracy takes place in open spaces. Emilie Wacogne also explained that the artists they work with should have some pedagogy skills too and act as experts. Jonas Buchel described the situation in room “Animalis” as that what we have very often – misunderstandings between different languages, not between English, French and German, but between the languages we speak as a developers, artists or politicians.

Almut Moller, Political Analyst, asked the question – where do we place politics? In other words, is it not that we live in a time now when a lot of things are concentrated with governments? Maybe projects devoted to work with deprived people could force governments to change their policies or to provide leeway to communities. To de-monopolize the state from democracy. Maria Linares explained that “Common Berlin” is a very political project, but on another level. How to balance the spaces is a very political issue, she said – as we start with the people directly – moving people to participate. The goal of their platform is to bring democracy back, to make it more alive in the public space – where it belongs to. Phil Wood talked about the consultations fatigue in Britain as a result of attacks on the developing profession and land its loss of self-confidence. From this point of view he liked the idea – artists observing how people live they lives – intelligently! There is a lot artists can do, he said.

The moderator Nel van Dijk concluded that decision-making is shifting to private agencies and everybody claims that the gap between politicians and people is becoming bigger, but it is smaller. In her opinion, during that discussion participants were answering the third question – which ways and means are especially important when we talk about social cohesion. The conclusion drawn is that such projects bring participation of the people and democracy to the community, but not on all levels.

Coming to the second question, if in reverse order, Emilie Wacogne explained that in “Banlieues d’Europe” they do not work with target groups – it is a territory issue aiming to make people move and mix. This statement opened a serious discussion. Sophia Bickhard from the Berlin State Agency for Civic Education disagreed, saying that for her social work rather means working with target groups. Jonas Buchel quoted the EU convention for social work, 1<sup>st</sup> article – “dealing as an advocacy for inhabitants”. Social work is a piece of art, I teach my students to actively work on the field; it empowers us, but this work can be extremely difficult, said Jonas. According to him, society in general is the target group. Christian Ernst added that defining target groups is part of the tradition. But to him, arts are mainly to define settings that are accessible. A concrete example was given by Nel van Dijk: a few years ago a local level project was started to educate migrant groups in local democracy. The first comment was, why this was not open for white people. As a result, since then even the ministry has not dared organizing projects for migrants only. Phil Wood said that he wants to place more attention to school – it is a physical body in the city – and schools are keeping for themselves and not communicating with their neighbourhoods.

Finally, the participants agreed that target groups are not the right concept, but creating different settings to reach the people would be more important. The moderator Nel van Dijk closed the workshop with the following reasonable conclusion “the more we define target groups, the more target groups we have”.