

# THE SOCIAL CITY AS A SPACE FOR CITIZENSHIP IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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The Council of Europe is the Human Rights organisation par excellence in Europe. There is not only the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights as the standard setting instrument and institution for the implementation of Human Rights, but there are also all kind of efforts and activities made to create and pertain a culture of Human Rights in the member countries. These are a club of 46 member states, including the Federation of Russia and all European CIS countries. The core values of the Council of Europe are Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law; the organisation is also called ‘the home of democracy’.

Of course, the European space of the Council of Europe, which has a geographic West-East extension from Funchal to Vladivostok, is not a standardised space, where the social, political and cultural reality of its citizens is the same, wherever you are. In fact, there are considerable economic and social differences between member countries and in many cases also within the countries themselves; the efficiency of democratic institutions is very different as well and so are the outreach of media and new technologies, the education system and the opportunities for free movement.

The most fascinating challenge to the organisation is its incredible cultural diversity; a source of enjoyment and rejoicing, but also a potential for stereotypes, prejudice, misunderstandings, intolerance and racism. This is what has to be learnt for Europe to have a future: the ability and willingness to live with cultural diversity, both within member states and between them.

How can such a big European organisation with such a wide mandate reach out to citizens in Europe, how can it reach out to young people, is there any chance that this organisation could make a useful contribution to young people in depreciated urban areas, does it have any relevance to the concept of the ‘social city’?

I would like to take these questions both at theoretical and institutional level and also provide some practical, 'hands on' elements to my answer.

Let us turn to the transformation processes modern nation states undergo right now and see how this effects the concept of citizenship. In the old understanding, and indeed today we are citizens of one nation-state, accountable to this state's laws and institutions and entitled to access and specific rights and responsibilities. The state '...exercises power resting on a "tripod of sovereignties" – economic, military and cultural: the ability to balance the books, to control its borders and to legislate the norms and the patterns by which all its subjects were to compose their customary conduct.' (Zygmunt Baumann).

How stable is the tripod these days? With Baumann I see the legs of the tripod become increasingly wobbly under the following influences:

- Globalisation. The speed of global financial transactions, the deterritorialisation of company structures and of both capital and labour, the cut-throat competition and what is called today 'wild capitalism' have crumbled the concept of national economy ('Nationaloekonomie'). Who balances the books now? Much of the modern welfare state could only be developed because what has been earned was reinvested into state and welfare infrastructure within one territory; the 'national wealth' was subject to social struggles concerning its distribution – what do these social struggles look like now, what is their dimension, where and how do they take place, if at all?
- European integration. 25, soon 27 and later more member countries of the Council of Europe are members of the the European Union. They have accepted the logic of supranationality which simply means that whatever is subject to the European treaties as they stand is no longer a national matter, it is a community item. This concerns in some areas (agriculture) already more than 80% of what used to be national competence, in others less (education, culture), but it is a fact, that it is very inconvenient to have an incomplete European Union side to side to incomplete nation states . Logically the Union competence will constantly increase despite occasional set backs, simply because you cannot really be 'half pregnant' – only by completing the political, economic and social agenda of the European Union can one fully benefit from membership and eventually turn to other crucial areas

such as peace and security and ecology more energetically. Which means that already a 'pure' definition of the nation state as a sovereign policy actor is obsolete; within the Union we deal with European states, made up by nations with common objectives, history and destiny.

Globalisation and European integration being the strongest agents of transformation of the nation state, other strong influences contribute to the modification as well:

- the increasing importance of civil society. The nineties of the last century have seen the birth of "governance"; a kind of contract between civil society and public authority. In practically all areas of potential governmental action there will also be interest groups, associations, lobbies and all kind of other civil society actors around and they will strongly mark what the legislator will do. They will also stay around and keep an eye on public authority in such a way, that governmental action will become "governance", which indicates mutual communication and cooperation between state and civil society. This sector has grown so much, that Hans Magnus Enzensberger in a Spiegel essay of more then 10 years ago simply put into doubt, that any state action against an organised group in society was still possible. Whatever this means for democracy (Is the influence of the Rifle Association on US government really such a good thing?), it clearly means reduction of state power.
- the 'lean state philosophy'. Everybody demands reduction of public spending not least through the reduction of a publicly paid work force. Bureaucracies are screened according to market criteria and have to learn how to behave within a market; what can be privatised will be privatised and what can be outsourced will be outsourced. Within modern service societies the distinctive behaviour of public authority becomes more and more alike to any market actor. Again, the nation state has less resources, becomes a lean state indeed.
- Decentralisation. Whether states are federal states or states with traditions of devolution of power, or, on the contrary, central states with centralised power structures, they all have a tendency to empower local and regional communities and to give these communities strong responsibilities. This is particularly true with regard to social assistance, prevention of risk behaviour and social exclusion, dealing with poverty, exclusion, migration and

- multicultural affairs in urban areas. The welfare state or the social state appears often in the form of the local community and what it can do or not do. The other side of the coin is the local community as economic actor and area; attractive communities will be able to host industries, training facilities, research and education infrastructures and service providers. This is a positive development, but it weakens the nationstate's power base all the same.
- International terrorism. This worldwide development has introduced new dangers to the life and security of citizens, which cannot be met appropriately with the concept of national defense and territorial armies. What is required is world wide co-ordination and a combined integrated operation between armies, police forces and secret services. With no international force of this kind in place and faced with unsurmountable differences with regard to what is now called "the war on terrorism" by the US administration even the classical function of the nation-state - to protect the integrity of its territory and its citizens – is endangered. Presently the Council of Europe is in the process of carrying out an investigation on this matter: have the US been able to torture European citizens in special camps and prisons? Have European citizens been literally kidnapped and brought outside their country? Whatever the answers will be, it seems that international terrorism has created facts outside national and international law to the detriment of the nation-state's integrity.

What I want to show is a transformation process of state power. Zygmunt Baumann calls it the divorce of power – the politics stays territorial, while economy, military force and culture become even more global and thus extraterritorial.

In such a world – how to deal with identity and citizenship? On paper this looks easy: citizenship will have to be understood as a differentiated citizenship, same for identity. Why can a global citizenship not be a possibility, many widely travelled artists and writers have felt as global citizens? European citizenship is under construction, it grows with the European project, so does European identity. National citizenship and identity are still dominant patterns, they exist and will last. Regional and local citizenships and identities have always been – so why can citizenship and identity not simply follow the complexity of today's world? Are all these concepts not complementary to each other?

They are, but in reality, this does not work. The above is too abstract or only liveable for a few. For a great many, particularly young people, identity formation and citizenship become an individual burden because the collective side to identity formation works badly. This overlaps with other developments: secure jobs become part-time jobs, careers turn into a sequence of occupations, good school and university results count only for little on the labour market and flexibility is the virtue number 1. All in all, this is a scenario of insecurity and insecurity is what we have to deal with.

What the nation-state cannot provide fully any more, what the European Union will probably never be able to provide and what remains a bit cloudy in global citizenship needs to be tackled from the local level first. There, the idea of “citizenship” and of “community” are integrally connected.

“Citizenship and community are words that relate to the fundamentally human business of living with others. The two words depend on each other. Citizenship has no meaning on its own; you have to be a citizen of something, namely a community. And there are no communities worth the name, which do not afford members a sense of something shared and a common status of belonging (a status which one can call “citizenship”). Understood broadly, these concepts are as old as human civilisation itself.” (Hall and Williamson 1999, p.1)

Placing understandings of identity and citizenship in a local context is a first step in dealing with insecurity and all the practical difficulties will be present: what is a community, if we are talking of big cities? A burrough? An administrative unit? Maybe, but in the first place it is a human fabric of neighbourhoods, workplaces, educational facilities, town halls, pubs and sport and leisure locations, it is an urban environment and it will be, normally, a heterogenous community formed of members of many different origins, belonging to different faith groups, representing class-, gender-, age- and income differences. It is a ‘warm’ context and it can make people experience the emotional side of citizenship; it is belonging, not concept.

It is for this context, that the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe has, in close co-operation with my service, the Directorate for Youth and Sport, developed the “Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life”. This charter is a concrete set of guidelines on how to involve young people in sectoral policies which concern them (employment, housing, transport,

health, gender, minorities, anti-discrimination, criminal justice etc.) and how to promote their participation through specific instruments.

Thus the big item of ‘participation’ is introduced. The more the world shows itself as complex and differentiated’ and the more access to power seems impossible, the more discouragement with the political process will raise and this is particularly true for young people. Their abstinence to politics has become proverbial; it is of utmost importance to reintroduce youth political participation “...with the clear intention of also giving them roles and responsibilities at a very young age. Someone who can develop a computer company in a garage can also have his or her voice heard in the city council; someone who understands complex computer programmes at a young age can also contribute to the teaching of mathematics and informatics at school; and trendsetters in modern lifestyle sports can also say a lot about the organisation of urban space.” (Lauritzen, 2005, p.5)

The most important educational strategy in respect of citizenship and identity is Human Rights Education. Speaking for the youth field, this means for us to introduce Human Rights as a condition for human existence and the awareness of and knowledge about them as prerequisite to lower existing levels of humiliation and discrimination. In other words, we understand Human Rights Education as one way of doing youth and community work. The methodology is based on a very comprehensive handbook, the COMPASS. This is a compilation of youth and community work methods which is truly intercultural, inclusive of minorities, sensitive to racism and discrimination and leading to develop coping strategies and solutions. The text consists now in almost 20 languages, including Arabic, and the Directorate of Youth and Sport and particularly its Youth Centre in Budapest direct international and national training courses with multipliers in order to make the methods known and effective. Recently a Human Rights Education e-learning community has been created and the whole programme is a huge success.

For us, in the Council of Europe, working with young people on items such as citizenship and identity in a changing world means, paradoxically, to go local. In a second step it means to confront what makes up our own identity – Human Rights, Democracy, the Rule of Law – with the concrete life circumstances of young people and to show, how relevant these concepts are to living a decent life.

In a third step it means to develop youth policies and to see to it, that these are closely connected to youth and community work practice. Without opening the big chapter of what youth policies are about in Europe – this is not the right space for it – I would like to point to the triangle of ‘personal development – employment – citizenship’. This basic understanding requires that what is done for young people’s personal development alone, a classical youth work objective, is not enough; there must also be an employment dimension and what is done for employment might be just as well called ‘vocational training’, if it has no citizenship dimension. By proving the relevance of working with young people, of empowering them and by including them into the running of public affairs youth and community work is a key area exactly for better employment prospects and active citizenship.

Within the local community, within the social city, citizenship and identity can become real and human rights a common good. The social city represents the space for reconstruction which has gone lost in the nation-state and is not or may never be there in Europe. For the concept to hold, it needs networking and exchange, it needs transnational associations, intercultural communication, democratic diversity management and a constant awareness of global and European policy processes. This is not about Russians not being Russians any more or Germans not being Germans or Turks not being Turks – it is about the divorce of affectionate citizenship from power, the incongruence of what is believed to be the unshared power of the nation-state and what has become the real structure of power in Europe.

I have said already, with others, that Europe has to learn to live its own cultural diversity successfully. This will not be possible without an idea of social justice, of respect and dignity and of full citizenship for everybody – still a long way to go.