



diversity—human rights—participation  
european youth centre, strasbourg 11-13 may 2006

s e m i n a r   r e p o r t

### Background

The Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of Youth Research organised its sixth research seminar on May 11-13 at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. The themes of the seminar - Diversity-Human Rights-Participation - take up those of the "All Different-All Equal" Campaign launched in June 2006 by the Council of Europe, with the support of the European Commission. This was a response to the need expressed by the members of the network of researchers - the expert group for the research dimension of the Partnership - at its 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, held in September 2005 to conduct a research seminar around the themes of the Campaign.

This request demonstrated the felt need to critically assess the meaning of concepts such as diversity, human rights and participation, especially as they are being used in work with young people and in the construction of specific youth policy as well as wider policy that has a bearing on youth, such as employment and anti-discrimination.

The seminar is also inscribed in a project embarked upon by the Youth Research Partnership in 2003 with the first of its seminars on "Re-situating Culture". This seminar and the report on the future of Intercultural Learning, written by Dr Gavan Titley, have engendered a timely questioning of the core principle of intercultural learning (ICL) and its meaning today, more than thirty years since the birth of the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe.<sup>1</sup> The strong conclusions of the seminar on "Resituating Culture" and the subsequent publication and reports was that the mere recognition of cultural diversity must be replaced by a commitment to the opportunity for equal and full participation of all people living in Europe.

Building on the work begun in Re-situating Culture, the seminar on Diversity-Human Rights-Participation aimed to enlarge upon the three pillars of the Campaign and to

---

<sup>1</sup> The European Youth Centres (EYCs) in Strasbourg and Budapest are permanent structures for the implementation of the Council of Europe's youth policy. They are international training and meeting centres with residential facilities, hosting most of the youth sector's activities.

critically assess their meaning. This assessment develops chronologically; going from diversity, through human rights towards participation:

- The theme of diversity is essentially linked to the theme of culture (or, more precisely, interculturalism) dealt with extensively in the Partnership's research agenda.
- The theme of human rights is central to the work of the Youth Directorate. There has not yet been a scientific evaluation of the concept as there has been for Intercultural Learning through the work on resituating culture. It was therefore seen to be opportune to address this theme from a critical viewpoint.
- The theme of participation signifies the end point, or the aim of the Campaign. As has been realised through the experience of minority youth work and human rights education, working in this domain is of little use if it does not lead to full and equal access to participation in social, economic and political life for all.

The seminar aimed to be:

1. Analytical of the conceptual baggage behind terms such as 'diversity' and 'human rights'
2. Constructively critical of how these concepts are applied in practice (in formal and non-formal education, training, youth work, diversity training, human rights education, anti-racism work, social work, outreach work, urban development etc.)
3. Yet, facilitate a discussion of how more egalitarian participation can be increased through evidence-based examples of good practice (e.g. research carried out on projects or initiatives - planned or spontaneous - that led to increased rights, freedoms and opportunities for participation).

This report has three functions:

- To discuss the role of the two institutions in both the promotion of youth research and with regards to the theme of the seminar
- To summarise the proceedings of the seminar
- To evaluate the outcome of the seminar.

## CO-ORDINATION OF THE SEMINAR

The seminar was co-ordinated by the Partnership in Youth Research between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and was convened and administered by the Research Officer, Alana Lentin. Karin Lopatta-Loibl was responsible for coordination on behalf of the European Commission Youth Unit. The research seminar was chaired by three facilitators: Gavan Titley, Yael Ohana and Andreas Karsten.

## DOING YOUTH RESEARCH: THE INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

### *The European Commission*

**Karin Lopatta-Loibl**, Policy Officer in the European Commission Youth Policy Unit, welcomed the participants on behalf of the European Commission.

Ms Lopatta-Loibl briefly outlined the activities of the European Commission and in particular of the youth field against discrimination and specifically against racism and xenophobia. She referred to the two upcoming European Years on Equal Opportunities (2007) and Intercultural Dialogue (2008).

The Youth Programme of the European Commission made "Promoting diversity and in particular reducing all forms of racism and xenophobia" one of its key priorities for 2005. The SALTO Youth Resource Centres have established a Cultural Diversity Resource Centre. The European Commission's White Paper on Youth has emphasised the promotion of participation among all young people in Europe.

Ms Lopatta-Loibl identified two main aims of the seminar:

- to gain a greater knowledge about fields of importance for young people and thus to allow for knowledge-based policy-making;
- to bring young researchers from all over Europe (and beyond) together for an exchange on their research and for networking.

### *The Council of Europe*

**Peter Lauritzen**, Head of the Youth Department of the Directorate of Youth and Sport introduced the role of the Council of Europe in the realm of youth. In addition, he addressed the themes of the seminar and the role of dialogue between researchers, policy makers and youth activists.

The very essence of European citizenship is diversity - a fact about our societies which should be seen as lying at the heart of what it means to be European. Lauritzen sees this fact of diversity as being governed, to a large extent through the work of the Council of Europe, through the provisions of human rights legislation. The references and values provided by the legal apparatuses of human rights are needed by young people working on items such as discrimination, racism, homophobia, disableism and so on. Thirdly, the theme of participation relates to young people's role as actors of social change. It is up to the institutions to engage in dialogue with young people and to encourage and promote their participation.

Lauritzen placed particular importance on the role of "triangles" in the conceptual and practical organisation of the work on youth at European level. The first triangular relationship is that between the generation of youth policy, the dual theme of employment and personal development and the notion of citizenship. How to develop European-wide youth policy that reflects not only the need of

individual young people to be personally fulfilled and economically protected, but also to be active in the public sphere and in agenda-setting on their futures?

The second triangle refers to the organisation of work on these issues. The Council of Europe in its partnership with the European Commission works on the basis of a tripartite relationship between research, public authority and civil society. The aim of this relationship is to ensure that youth policy is evidence-based, based on both the findings of youth researchers and the practice of youth activists. The challenge is to make this relationship work. Addressing the researchers, Lauritzen stressed the fact that although the European institutions aim to see concrete results from this relationship, they must commit themselves to allowing researchers the freedom they require to engage in constructive critique.

In terms of the specific themes of the seminar, Lauritzen proposed that the three pillars of the Youth Campaign - diversity, human rights and participation - addressed by the seminar, could be seen as a new triangle that represents the challenge for a holistic concept of European citizenship.

### *The Council of Europe-European Commission Partnership in Youth Research*

Alana Lentin, Research Officer for the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission presented an introduction to the rationale of the seminar and set it in the context of the work of the Partnership in the field of research.

**The work of the Partnership in the realm of research**, as noted by Peter Lauritzen, is based on the creation of a triangular relationship between researchers, policy makers and youth activists. This is not necessarily an easy relationship to create. On the one hand, policy makers may be loath to accept the suggestions of researchers when they diverge from decisions taken at the institutional level, therefore running the risk of the consultation of researchers becoming little more than an exercise of "rubber stamping". On the other hand, there is a tendency among researchers to take a positivist/objectivist approach that denies the political relevance of their findings. In all of this, activists run the risk of being left out. Therefore, there is a battle to create a viable dialogue which allows for research to present a critical standpoint while at the same time, ensuring the openness of research to the worlds of policy making and activism.

The Partnership seeks to work towards the construction of a viable structure for this dialogue in two main ways. Firstly, through its research network, and secondly through its website: The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP). A pilot project linked to the EKCYP, Youth Debate.Net was launched to enhance the possibilities for researchers and others to promote their research through the internet and to engage in discussion with other interested people.

**The thematic rationale of the seminar** is to look critically at each of the three concepts chosen to be the banner of the European Youth Campaign "All Different-All Equal". In order to do so it is necessary to look at each concept individually, but also to see how they are linked and what the progression from diversity, through human rights to participation looks like. The critical assessment of this ensemble of concepts must take into account their discursive impact in the domain of politics. Each concept in itself is in fact the representation of a range of discourses - sometimes conflicting - which contributes to our understanding of what each of them means. In so far as these are discourses, they can be interpreted differently

by different people. For example, while for some people diversity may refer to a social fact, for others it may mean the desired outcome of a specific policy; such as increasing the diversity of a workforce. Perspective therefore is key.

The links between each of the three concepts and the choice to take them together as the sub-heading for the “All Different-All Equal” Campaign may also be interpreted in such a way. What discourse is being built around the package of these three themes? Or in other words, what political message are we trying to get across by presenting this as a package of themes? All these are questions that the research seminar begins to answer, but which must continue through the work of the research partnership on these topics which are central to our work.

In order to work towards establishing a critical discourse on work in the youth field, and in particular with respect to the themes of the seminar, it is necessary to engage in both an historicisation and a contextualisation of the key issues. In other words, in order to analyse concepts and the way that they are used politically, in youth work or in research, it is imperative to know their lineage: In what context – political, social, economic – do these concepts emerge? What are their antecedents? What are the prevailing reasons for them to emerge with force at one time and not at another? In particular, “diversity”, which can be seen to have replaced interculturalism and its earlier version multiculturalism, is an interesting example of the necessity of historicisation and contextualisation. Unsurprisingly, the emphasis has been placed on diversity and on the positive effect of culturally diverse societies on social relations, business and politics at a time when multiculturalism has been proclaimed to be in crisis. The murder of Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands and the “riots” by young people of immigrant origin in France in November 2005 have both been seen as signals of the notion that multiculturalism and assimilation have failed as policies for the “integration” of immigrant populations. Diversity is, in many ways, a replacement concept that hopes to succeed where its predecessors failed.

Lentin invited the seminar participants to reflect on how the current political context and the historical trajectory that led to it influence how we think about terms that we often use unproblematically in our work. By thinking critically in this way, we can further the aim of producing quality youth research that contributes to deepening our understanding of the work of researchers, policy makers and practitioners in the field of youth.

## **RESITUATING CULTURE/SITUATING DIVERSITY**

Gavan Titley, convenor of the seminar on Resituating Culture, the research seminar which inaugurated the Research Partnership, mapped the trajectory from the work on culture to that on diversity. He developed a compelling argument for seeing notions such as culture and diversity as discourses that frame the way we speak and act about particular topics that are often extremely sensitive and go to the heart of what it means to live together in diverse societies.

Titley described the term diversity, as used to describe societal situations and processes, as having three distinct meanings. Diversity is:

- a social fact and an implicit value;
- a framework for organising human experiences of the social world, and for constituting knowledge about that social world;
- an ideological franchise.

In other words, diversity can be used simply to describe the make-up of our contemporary, postmodern, postcolonial societies: a panoply of ethnic, religious, cultural, identities; a diversity of physical and mental abilities and sexual orientations. Talking about this state of diversity can also serve as a basis for constructing analyses of social contexts, problems, conflicts or positive experiences. Secondly, it is a framework for arguments both for and against the fact of diversity. Lastly, diversity may have an ideological function. For example, speaking about the positive nature of diversity may belong to a wider agenda serving specific policies of either governments, supranational institutions or private companies and organisations.

Titley revisited some of the arguments concerning the way in which the concept of culture is used as a descriptor of methods of human social organisation. In particular, he recalled the tendency of culture to essentialise and reify the often highly complex and conflicting identities to which human beings adhere. He spoke also about the debate on the purported failure of multiculturalism and where this leaves the category of culture: once so much in favour, and now problematised beyond political usefulness.

Diversity must be situated in relation to culture. Titley's emphasis was on the discursive role of diversity as a notion to replace the problems associated with talking about culture in an age that emphasises social cohesion over multiculturalism. In particular, he questioned the reasons for talking about diversity in relation to the principles and instruments of anti-discrimination. In light of the "All Different-All Equal" Campaign for example, how viable is it to emphasise the positive contribution of the euphemistic diversity of our populations in the face of increased - rather than diminishing - racism and ethnic discrimination? There has clearly been a worsening of the conditions of minority ethnic citizens and non-citizens in Europe, with the introduction of detention centres, deportations and immigration policies that emphasise economic efficiency over the protection of human dignity from abuse.

Under these conditions, it is urgent to question the aptness of stressing the positivity associated with diversity over the negativity of ongoing discriminations. As Titley, asks: is a discourse of diversity politically robust in relation to prevailing positions in the public sphere? We must question whether the policies of governments and institutions and the public opinion that is shaped by them actually support a diversity based on equality between different but equal fellow citizens?

Interestingly, the discussion following Titley's lecture focused on the relationship between discourses of diversity and racism and racialisation, showing that these topics are still very present in our minds when we talk of diversity, human rights and participation as campaigning slogans. In particular, the need to stress the significance of processes of racialisation in constructing racial subjects was emphasised. Several participants argued that while "race" is not a viable category for describing differences between human beings, we must continue to emphasise that the processes of racially categorising individuals and discriminating against them on this basis persists. Moreover, the idea that racism(s) are multiple and that the contexts in which they occur are vital for understanding them was stressed as crucial. The emphasis of the discussion leads, crucially, to the need to pose serious questions about the political reasons for which positively oriented discourses of

diversity have been stressed over what are considered to be negative approaches that highlight the persistence of racism and discrimination.

## INTERPRETING DIVERSITY

The first panel of research, chaired by **Gavan Titley**, brought together three contrasting stand-points from the worlds of law, ethnology and youth work. **Julie Ringelheim**, a legal theorist, discussed the ambiguous relationships between the discourses of diversity and equality. She did so by examining case law on affirmative action in the US education system. She critiques the interpretation of diversity as it is used as a point of argumentation in favour of maintaining affirmative action programmes. Diversity is interpreted solely from the point of view of ethnicity, the argument in favour of it being that a good ethnic mix brings an added value to the university context. This argument, by focusing narrowly on the university, ignores the issue of social justice and the role played by education in enhancing the life chances of discriminated groups in society. Furthermore, the arguments in favour of affirmative action programmes therefore emphasise the effect that enhancing diversity has on the formation of future national leaders. The effect of diversity on the positive experience of the majority is emphasised over the benefits for the students who are accepted to universities through affirmative action programmes.

**Mari Steindl**, a trainer with a long history of youth work in local, national and international contexts addressed the shifts from multiculturalism to diversity as a framework for working in non-formal education. She pinpointed the murder of Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh as a turning point in the history of multiculturalism. The emphasis placed on diversity and pluralist societies was portrayed as a means to by-pass the critiques of multiculturalism that such events have given rise to in recent times. Steindl outlined various approaches to diversity. Most interestingly, she looked at how the business world has adopted models of diversity in the aim of greater productivity and efficiency in the workplace and as a marketing tool that emphasises the relevance of the product for postmodern, diverse societies. With regards to the application of the notion of diversity in non-formal educational settings with the provision of diversity training, Steindl pointed up the necessity of clarifying what a focus on diversity means in practice. In particular, she pointed out that there is no clear link between a discourse of diversity and a language of equal opportunities.

A paper by **Kyriaki Iacovidou** brought an ethnographic dimension to the discussions. She focused on the social and economic discrimination faced by the Roma community of Cyprus, highlighting the problems of recognising and writing down cultural difference. Painting a detailed portrait of Roma life in Cyprus, Iacovidou dealt with the difficulty of carrying out research on the community and the potentially ambivalent relationship between researcher and researched in the ethnographic process. She emphasised the importance of this research approach which takes a stance which is both political and humanitarian. The ethnographic approach serves both to highlight the concerns of the Roma themselves, placing emphasis on their need for recognition and respect. It is also an important educational tool because it creates empathy with those researched and increases the understanding of outsiders, thus furthering contact and knowledge between privileged and dominated groups.

The debate followed on from the major points raised by the panel. In particular, the importance of self-representation as a mode of empowerment was stressed. While it is vital to ensure possibilities for under-represented groups to have a political voice, **Mariam Yassin**, representing the Steering Group of the "All Different-All Equal" Campaign emphasised the importance of redressing issues of socioeconomic inequality. It is impossible to conceive of full and equal representation for all in the absence of a focus on social, economic and political equality.

## THE FACT OF DIVERSITY: PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES

The aim of the second panel on diversity was to pose challenges in areas where diversity jars: when it is no longer positively perceived by the majority population. **Ofer Nur** drew a link between the history of the Zionist youth movement at the turn of the twentieth century and young people of immigrant origin in France. He stressed the issue of masculine identities and the gendered body and how this had an important bearing on the construction of an aesthetic of a new Jewish youth, freed of the negative connotations of Jewry created by antisemitism. He linked this historical analysis of masculine minority identities to the contemporary disenfranchisement of young men in the *banlieues* of France where recent unrest has provoked great concern. Pre-empting recent proposals made by a French Socialist Presidential hopeful, Nur proposed a universal civil service to be reintroduced in France in order to enhance personal development and the employability of young people. By providing institutionalised contexts for male bonding through positive role models, Nur's paper suggested a revalorisation of young (Muslim) male identity.

**Supriya Singh** turned the analysis to Muslim identity in the post-9/11 political context with specific reference to Britain, France and India. Building on a security studies perspective, Singh examined contemporary anti-terrorist legislation in the various contexts and looked at its effect on minority Muslim populations within a wider societal context. Singh's contrast of the European approach with her knowledge of the Indian situation raised some interesting questions as to why western societies have constructed Muslims writ large as a problem group within society.

**Momodou Sallah's** paper examined the domain of social service provision for Black children in the UK context. His analysis, based on an historicised evaluation of the development of social policy in this field, contrasted approaches based on relativism to those of dogmatism. Social services for black children and their families in the UK can be characterised by a dogmatic "we know best" attitude. Such an approach forces African and African-Caribbean families to adopt British cultural models that are not reflective of their experience. In contrast, relativist approaches put cultural sensitivity before child protection, sometimes tragically allowing abuse to occur by avoiding criticism of what are seen as cultural practices. In contrast, Sallah argues for a policy of cultural competence that would adapt social service provision to the situation at hand. Such an approach would be based on empathy for and knowledge of the cultural practices of non-white or non-European groups without ignoring the universal issues at stake in cases of abuse or neglect.

## THE ENDS OF HUMAN RIGHTS



**Professor Costas Douzinas**, Professor of Law and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Birkbeck College, London, gave a keynote lecture on "The Ends of Human Rights". Douzinas's paper addressed the contradictions inherent in human rights both from a foundational point of view and in terms of their practice in contemporary politics. Human Rights came into existence with the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* in France in 1789. By proclaiming all men to be born free and equal of rights, but insisting on the nation as the sole bearer of sovereignty, thus in practice denying freedom and equality to non-citizens, the declaration is contradictory. What are said to be the natural rights of all human beings are, in fact, nationalised. The poignancy of this original limitation of the Human Rights "offer" can be witnessed in the situation faced by refugees. The non-national, "moving aliens" are stripped of rights because they are without citizenship. The bare humanity of the refugee - stripped down to nothing but the fact of being human - in essence means that s/he cannot be protected by Human Rights.

Examining human rights from within a perspective on the current political situation, Douzinas focused on what he claimed were the four major characteristics of the new world order.

Firstly, this order presents itself as a moral order. The last thirty years have witnessed the extensive introduction of globalised economic rules that govern investment and trade. This has produced a global situation in the twentieth century under which the world's citizens are indeed governed by a unitary code of ethics but which differentiates among them hugely in material terms. The inequality that this status quo produces between the South and the North results in the violence that the North wields against the South. It is only to be expected under such conditions of gross inequality that the global South will rise up in anger against the rich North. The ruling powers on the global political stage fail to apply the same rules that they apply to others to themselves. According to Douzinas, as long as the United States refuses to be accountable to the International Criminal Court it will fail in its mission of holding poorer states responsible for human rights violations.

Secondly, the new world order is structured by a radical asymmetry that creates the powerful and the powerless. This leads to an unequal prioritisation of the value of the lives of people from different places. The ongoing occupation of Iraq and the "collateral damage" it causes highlights these value differences. While the powerful are permitted to kill their opponents, the opposite is unacceptable, the West protecting itself with the ever-increasing sophistication of its military technology. The example of the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib and other prisons, in the name of the War on Terror, is an example of how this war has led to the normalisation of brutal practices. New definitions of what is permissible in the aim of fighting the West's enemies have been established leading us into the terrain of the distinction between the human and the post-human, those beyond being considered worthy of living.

Douzinas claims, thirdly, that the new world order is defined by a weakening of territorial boundaries and a replacement of their importance by an emphasis on generalised "space". This means that there is no longer a distinction between what is inside and what is outside. In other words, the whole world becomes policeable in the interests of security. Under these conditions, humanity becomes divided into victims and rescuers, with the victims being further divided among genuine victims and those portrayed as evil-doers. It is seen as necessary to eliminate the latter to ensure that the virtuous rescuers prevail over evil.

In sum, Douzinas's lecture does not propose that Human Rights are debunked. Rather his analysis focuses on the political purposes of Human Rights and the ends that they are used for within the contemporary political climate. The goal of such an analysis is to revalorise human rights and refocus them with the aim of ensuring their true universality, rather than forging greater global divides.

## HUMAN RIGHTS: FOUNDATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

Yael Ohana, chairing the first panel on Human Rights outlined the core concerns involved in a problematisation of the conceptual baggage around the issue of Human Rights. The main aims of the panel were to:

- explore the meaning of human rights and its discourse in contemporary Europe;
- critically assess the content and directions of the debate on human rights in both socio-political and research-theoretical terms;
- raise alternative and innovative ideas about how human rights debates and related research can influence best practise in youth work.

Ohana pointed to the hegemonic status taken by Human Rights as the central legal and political framework for the protection of individual human dignity in society. She noted that the centrality of Human Rights have led to their becoming the main discourse used by a wide range organisations to frame grievances, sometimes at the expense of other discourses and campaigning strategies. This has led to the development of a language of Human Rights that emphasises their moral capital and overarching status, for example the reference to the western "culture of Human Rights".

Despite the discursive hegemony of Human Rights, Ohana pointed out the clear discrepancies with policy and practice, noting for example, the regular contravention by states of the Geneva Convention and other treaties established for the protection of human dignity. How is it possible to talk about a culture of human rights when western states formulate policy that dismisses the importance of protecting asylum seekers, migrants and refugees? It is also important to question what it means to talk about Human Rights in an era of globalised socioeconomic inequality. Finally, Ohana pointed out the fact that Human Rights are dynamic, and therefore need to be reassessed with every new form of abuse, thus enabling the formulation of adequate protection. Legal mechanisms may not be as fast to evolve as the situation they are put in place to counteract.

In light of these opening comments, the panel heard three complementary papers on theoretical approaches to Human Rights. **Nurlan Mustafyev** addressed a critique of Human Rights discourse and practice, focusing on the grounding of Human Rights in a western culture that nevertheless establishes itself as universal. He pointed out the variable perspective on the concept of Human Rights from non-western standpoints. He also highlighted the relationships between human rights practices and objectives of global governance, demonstrating the link increasingly being made between humanitarian initiatives and the aim of spreading democracy and principles of the market economy globally.

**Madalina Gligor** turned the focus to a theoretical analysis of the discourse of international humanitarian intervention, using the case study of the Kosovo refugee camps. Relying on a poststructuralist framework and heavily emphasising the work of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben on "bare life", Gligor portrayed the refugee camp as the expression of modern western politics. Camps reduce people

to their bare life, or their basic biological functions, stripping them of their uniqueness as individuals. Under these conditions, within states but at their margins and hidden from public view, human life is no longer sacred. The example of the Kosovo refugee camps highlights the powerlessness that the lives led by those living in them are reduced to. Refugees exist in a relationship of inequality with their “rescuers” - humanitarian aid workers and the states and institutions that fund them. There is no possibility for refugees to control their own destiny within this relationship, further pushing them towards bare life, or mere subsistence. Gligor’s paper highlights some of the main tensions in focusing on the moral supremacy of humanitarianism within a framework of human rights above, for example, self-determination and empowerment as alternative means of reinstating human dignity.

Finally, **Vanessa Trapani** took a discourse analysis approach to the examination of the treatment of Human Rights within Polish political debates. She stressed the fact that Human Rights is not only a practice but also a language that has different meanings and interpretations in varying contexts. The discourse of Human Rights creates an ideological domain where ideological dilemmas are translated into opposing discursive practices. The Polish case illustrates well the conflicts that may arise out of the opposition of varying Human Rights discourses. Poland is a society, due to a great extent to its history of constant political fluctuation, that is based both on a process of universalisation, through globalization and EU accession, and one of particularisation, seen mainly through the growth of minority groups in society and the opposition to them. Trapani analysed various parliamentary and internet debates in order to shed light on the way in which the language around Human Rights, identity and diversity is constructed in the Polish context, concluding that these ideological discourses meet with significant opposition in these fora.

## **PARTICIPATION: BYPASSING THE BARRICADES**

Opening the session on participation, **Andreas Karsten**, looked briefly at how the concept of participation is used with work with young people, thus drawing a direct link between theory and practice in youth work. He explained that the concept favours the role of young people as social actors with their own rights, rather than as a “problem group”. Karsten introduced the structuring dimensions of youth participation as being based on a triangular relationship between challenge, capacity and connection: The challenge is the domain in which a young people wishes to act, the capacity denotes his/her capabilities, knowledge and skill to do so, while the connection is the young person’s ability to relate to and have the support of other individuals, organisations and institutions. This three-dimensional model of participation can then be applied to internal work, within specific youth organisations in a local context, or externally, on a wider national or international level or across organisations.

The three papers presented in the panel took quite different approaches to participation, in all cases focusing on the relationship between individual young people’s capacity for participation and the societal context by which their agency is constrained.

**Demet Lüküslu** looked at new forms of participation among young people in Turkey. She contrasted the situation of youth in Turkey in the 1980s with the current situation, critiquing the analysis of youth as a “silent” and politically apathetic generation. Rather than looking for participation in traditional

categories, such as political parties or trades unions, Lüküslu identified the need to examine what alternative channels young people use to express their opinions. She analysed the content of three internet discussion platforms established by young people in Turkey, using these examples to show how young people create channels for communication that by-pass traditional loci of participation, yet counter generally accepted notions about young people's apathy towards political processes.

In reflection, **Karin Lopatta-Loibl** pointed out that the consultation process for the European Commission's White Paper on Youth revealed that young people generally mistrust politicians but that this does not mean that they have no interest in public life. They tend, rather, to develop more individualised forms of participation. The White Paper identifies the need for public authorities to enhance the possibilities for young people to participate by removing the reasons for their mistrust of institutions.

Further reactions to Lüküslu's paper attempted to address the reasons for young people's apparent lack of traditional participation. **Mariam Yassin** noted young people's fear, in particular in the wake of violent crackdowns on public protest such as those at the anti-G8 protests in Genoa in 2001. For young people from minority ethnic background, the situation is worsened because of the growing propensity to view the policing of protest from the perspective of anti-terrorism. This leads many young people who do not have citizenship to refrain from participating actively by joining demonstrations etc.

**Yael Ohana** made the point that there is a danger that the current stress placed on participation replaces ensuring everyone's rights to equal opportunities. Participating is now seen as something to do to further employment prospects. This means that those who are excluded from participating in organisations, political parties and so on also risk being excluded from education and the job market.

**Joan Cortinas-Muñoz** looked at notions of participation and culture in political struggles against the exclusion of young Roma people in Catalonia. He argued that the main conception of participation developed by governments in the 1980s and 1990s emphasised the insertion of young people into the job market. Inspired by the work of French sociologist Alain Touraine on the concept of exclusion, Catalan policy-makers focused on unemployment as the primary cause of exclusion. This model assumes that by providing people with jobs, their inclusion in mainstream society will be ensured. This utilitarian view of participation is based on an individualisation and psychologisation of social problems. This in turn leads to the racial stigmatisation of Roma and other racialised groups. Cortinas's research with social workers in Catalonia demonstrates how their focus on individual personality traits leads them to conclude that particular "types" of people (in this case Roma) are unwilling to work and, therefore, are incapable of being included in society. This approach allows discrimination to be banalised, making exclusion from the workforce the fault of the victims, rather than of those responsible for it. The paper demonstrated the dangers of reducing participation to social inclusion through employment and of evaluating societal problems - such as racism and unemployment - through a focus on the individual that leads to their being pathologised and depoliticised.

**Dimitris Parsanoglou** presented his research on the participation of second-generation migrants in Greece. He began by problematising the concept of the "second generation" by pointing to the diversity among young people of immigrant

origin in Greece, in terms of their experience and their own construction of that experience. The strong link to the country of origin, for example in the case of the children of Albanian migrants, is linked to the discrimination experienced by these young people. Parsanoglou identified two main forms of participation among the second generation: socio-political, rights-based activism; and socio-cultural participation. The latter stresses alternative forms of political and cultural expression and is based on an inter-communal organisation between people of a variety of origins. This activism is lived as resistance to the barricades imposed by the migration regime which denies those without citizenship rights the possibility to participate fully.

## DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN PRACTICE

The final session of the research seminar addressed the practice of Human Rights and Diversity in educational work with young people. **Yael Ohana and Andreas Karsten** posed a set of questions to the panel addressing the concerns raised by Human Rights education in particular in light of the theoretical remarks made earlier in the seminar.

- What are the political and legal resonances of bottom-up approaches in the context of youth work, such as those proposed by Human Rights Education and education for democratic and/or European citizenship?
- How can Human Rights Education empower those deprived of substantive rights when it teaches hope and belief in the ideal of Human Rights?
- How can Human Rights Education activities in a European context meaningfully treat issues like empathy and solidarity in contexts where people from “developing” continents or particularly disadvantaged European contexts are present, given the quite clear discrepancy between the ability of different states to address the basic human survival needs of the populations under their responsibility?
- If the objective of Intercultural Learning is to develop a kind of confrontational political literacy, then it has to be differentiated from Human Rights Education, which also has its political value, but develops the notion of respect as a moral prerequisite for justice and social harmony. How can Human Rights Education achieve this level of differentiation in practical terms?

Four papers addressed these core questions. **Alice Muller** assessed the feasibility of Human Rights Education (HRE) programmes to promote intercultural communication among school children. Her analysis focused on the introduction of HRE in school settings following the commitment of supranational institutional to such programmes. She noted that there is a significant discrepancy between HRE approaches and traditional educational settings. It will only be possible to assess the efficacy of HRE as a means for promoting more open intercultural dialogue if the formal educational system is transformed in order to better integrate it into the curriculum.

**Lene Mogensen's** paper was based on her experience of intercultural learning training with youth organisations. She carried out an analysis of a variety of training manuals produced by the Council of Europe and the European Commission in order to assess the ways in which they represent culture and difference. Mogensen revealed how many intercultural learning exercises, frequently used with young participants, construct ethnic minorities as “helpless victims”. The dominant group in society is therefore called upon to help and educate them in order to ensure their possibility to participate in society. Such an approach may transform a

genuine willingness to help into a moral discourse that stresses minorities' deficiencies. While Intercultural Learning aims to create awareness and change attitudes it is insufficient for doing so because it takes place in a decontextualised learning setting and it gives participants limited chances for developing real intercultural competencies. To overcome the problems posed by current Intercultural Learning (ICL) practices, Mogensen suggested several solutions. It is vital to operationalise the concepts used in ICL by questioning them. Space must be given to practice in real contexts. Finally, it is important to work on developing participants' competencies in relation to the challenges arising in real-life local contexts. Above all, the local dimension and the diversity of local settings must be stressed over the current priority given to international training work that often creates distance between the trainees and their local environment.

Sari Höylä's paper focused on the difficulty of introducing the topics of Human Rights Education and active citizenship into Finnish youth work.

Katarina Batarilo's empirical work on the implementation of HRE into the formal education system in Croatia concluded the panel. Her quantitative analysis of the impact of these programmes took in 221 students from 10 schools across Croatia. Her conclusions reflected those made in more theoretical terms by Alice Muller. Whereas 89% of the students surveyed saw HRE as important, the lack of basic principles of HRE within the teaching methods in the Croatian school system reduces the programme's overall impact. She recommended that HRE should involve the whole school and that it should be mainstreamed across subjects, but acknowledged the problems involved in doing so in terms of resources and commitment.

## DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Dina Kiwan was invited to make some concluding remarks on the seminar as a whole and the relationship between the three themes it examined. She did so in reference to her own research on inclusive participative citizenship. In particular, Kiwan made the following points:

- Regarding the triangular relationship between research, policy making and youth work, there is a need to think realistically. Researchers have an ethical commitment to think about the consequences of their research, yet whether this is best done through discussion with policy makers and practitioners remains a subject to be discussed.
- There is a significant conflict between the way in which diversity is represented in educational curricula and the way in which it is experienced in society. Policy making tends to frame diversity as celebratory. In contrast, there are many examples of the conflictual nature of diversity in society, such as that highlighted by Supriya Singh in her paper on the realities faced by Muslims in light of the post-9/11 security agenda. The educational curriculum in the UK, for example, talks about diversity as a status quo that should be learned about: the "pedagogy of acceptance" approach. In contrast, it is necessary to situate diversity in the learning context and to relate it to developing participation skills.
- There is a common tendency to conflate Human Rights and citizenship. Human Rights are often taken to be the theoretical underpinnings of citizenship. This poses problems because Human Rights are situated within a universalist frame of reference, whereas citizenship, linked to the nation, is necessarily

particularist. Human Rights are elucidated in reference to an ethical community and ethical conceptualisations of the individual, in contrast to citizenship's anchoring in a political community which conceptualises the individual in legal and political terms.

- Human Rights fix identity and make a direct link between that identity and the rights that can be claimed by individuals. This is demonstrated by Madalina Gligor's example of refugees whose identity as victims is fixed by the Human Rights discourse about them. Because Human Rights stress legal definitions of the individual in universal terms, they are unable to capture the multiple or fluid nature of identities.
- It is necessary to address the often conflicting aims of policy makers and young people with regards participation. Kiwan's research on citizenship education in the UK revealed that the official aims of citizenship education is to promote the upholding of democracy and to combat the political apathy that is supposed to have grown among young people. However there is a tension between the objective of empowering young people and promoting diversity among participants, and the unspoken aim of maintaining social order through the encouragement of participation in formal spheres.

## EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF THE SEMINAR ON WORK IN THE YOUTH FIELD

The research seminar raised some important questions about the conceptualisation of diversity, human rights and participation and their relevance to the youth field. As the 2003 seminar on Re-situating Culture and the success of the ensuing publication revealed, there is a need in the youth field to re-evaluate the conceptual tools we work with. The reassessment of culture and the way it is applied to intercultural learning contexts is vital. Yet, this work is far from over. The research seminar Diversity-Human Rights-Participation may be seen as adding to the work begun on culture; making it more complex by adding the themes of Diversity and Human Rights and asking questions about what thinking about these issues means, in practice, for young people's participation. How can we start to talk about global participation or active citizenship before we examine who, in reality, has the possibility to participate actively in democratic structures? In this light, the seminar raised the following - by no means exhaustive points:

The term **Diversity** often becomes a euphemism for by-passing central political, social and economic problems that affect young people globally. There is a growing tendency, in an understandable attempt to counteract much of the negativity that dominates the post 9/11 political atmosphere, to frame social issues in positive terms. Therefore, talking about diversity and its positive impact upon society, or the "added value" it brings to social, political and economic life, is a way of by-passing the discrimination that is still faced by racialised and ethnicised people, the disabled, sexual minorities and so forth.

**Human Rights:** In light of the European Commission's work in the field of active citizenship, and the Council of Europe's focus on education for democratic European citizenship, the research seminar asked key questions about the link between Human Rights and citizenship. In this regard, the seminar already raised some interesting points for the next scheduled research seminar on European active citizenship and young people, to be held in November 2006. As Dina Kiwan's research has shown, there is a tendency in the conceptualisation of education for citizenship to conflate human rights and citizenship. Kiwan points out that while

Human Rights are purportedly universal, citizenship rights are de facto particularist, because they are based on membership of a particular nation-state.

Costas Douzinas pointed out the contradiction at the heart of Human Rights by reminding us that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, while claiming that everyone is born free and equal, accords the nation-state with the sole right of sovereignty. Therefore, the true universality of Human Rights is weakened by being overruled in practice by states, which have the power to grant or take away rights. In effect, the basic problem of Human Rights is that despite the fact that they are rhetorically protective of the individual whatever his/her situation, they are almost impossible to apply fully in the case of stateless people or refugees. As Madalina Gligor's paper showed, the only way in which Human Rights can be accorded in the case of refugees is by stripping refugees of their autonomy as human beings and classing them as victims and thus making them entirely dependent on their rescuers: aid workers and advocates – the frontline agents of Human Rights.

The issue of **participation** cannot be divorced from either diversity or Human Rights. Nevertheless, in the selection for the seminar it was obvious that many youth researchers still tend to see the topic of youth participation from a traditional perspective that stresses political activity in parties, trade unions, and so on as the most significant forms of participation. The evidence presented at the research seminar showed the contrary to be true, stressing the importance of new forms of participation, in particular the Internet. The autonomous forms of participation invented by young people from immigrant or "minority" backgrounds more widely, often in cooperation with other groups in alternative political movements revealed the extent to which participation is "happening" in other places, marginalised from the mainstream.

The connection made between diversity, Human Rights and participation often emphasises the need for official state and supranational structures to be more open to excluded groups and to encourage their participation therein. However, this approach – while entirely commendable – neglects the fact that many young people, in particular those who face racism or exclusion – are wary of becoming involved in mainstream political parties, organisations or other loci of activism in which their autonomy is threatened. The experience of anti-racist groups made up of migrants or minority ethnic communities in the face of larger parties or organisations that seek to co-opt them or deny their autonomy is testament to the problem of top-down policies to encourage participation. Youth research, such as that presented by Dimitris Parsanoglou, that demonstrates how young people are creating their own spaces of participation, is vital. This evidence reveals the fact that participation *is* happening, yet that it may not be happening in the usual places. This should perhaps not be seen as a sign of the system's failure, but of evidence of the extent to which participation is being taken and moulded to the needs of individuals and groups, active in society on their own terms.

Joan Cortinas-Muñoz raised some further important points about the conceptualisation of participation. By demonstrating how participation is interpreted in terms of the job market in the case of Gypsies in Catalonia, he revealed how participating can mean very different things from group to group. European debates on the future of work, the growing flexibilisation of the labour market and the resultant precariousness experienced by many young people makes this debate central to the interests of youth research. For many young people, in particular those from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, often from "minority ethnic"



backgrounds, participation is framed solely in terms of work. As Cortinas-Muñoz commented, there is an accepted idea that work forms individual identity and that the inability to find employment is revealing of an individual's character. However, the inequality of the labour market closes this channel of participation to sizeable numbers of the young population. Therefore, a vicious circle is created within which individuals are stigmatised for not working, but are unable to find jobs due to the parallel stigma that labels them as unemployable.

Under these conditions, there is a risk that participation in the wider sense of the term is reserved only for those for whom there is no anxiety in the realm of education and employment: an additional luxury. In contrast, those excluded from educational or employment structures are also excluded from the frameworks of wider participation to which they have not merited access. It is here that the recognition of alternative forms of participation that attempt to open doors to excluded young people through self-organising and empowerment is vital. New forms, but also new spaces and new publics for participation that recognise the multiplicity of participative structures, beyond but also in parallel to education and employment, are necessary.

The issues explored above should be the basis for further work in youth research in this and related areas. The discussion should also contribute to reflection within both the Partnership programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and the work of the European Centres and its partners in the educational domain.

## **FOLLOW-UP**

This research seminar is being followed up in several ways:

- **[www.youth-debate.net](http://www.youth-debate.net)**: The discussion platform of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy has houses an ongoing discussion on the themes of Diversity-Human Rights-Participation.
- **Podcasts**: In cooperation with Non Formality ([www.nonformality.org](http://www.nonformality.org)), the Partnership in Youth Research has co-produced podcasts, or audio recordings of the keynote lectures given during the seminar. The podcasts can be accessed by visiting [www.youth-debate.net](http://www.youth-debate.net). This initiative should be continued for future research seminars as it allows greater numbers of interested people to have a direct access to the seminar proceedings.
- **Papers**: The papers presented by all the participants are available on [www.youth-debate.net](http://www.youth-debate.net). They are also uploaded into the database of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth ([www.youth-knowledge.net](http://www.youth-knowledge.net)).
- **Publication**: A book-length publication on the seminar themes is being edited by Dr Gavan Titley and should be available by the end of 2006. Printed and online versions will be available.
- **"All Different-All Equal" Campaign**: A discussion on how to integrate the results of the research seminar to the Campaign has begun. The inclusion of researchers in the upcoming symposia on the three themes of the campaign could be envisaged as a good way of linking the two processes.