# The Impact of Cultural and Citizenship Education on Social Cohesion

**3 – 5 December 2009**
**Vilnius, Lithuania**
European Capital of Culture 2009

# Report

**Workshop 3**
**Culture as a Means to Overcome Social Borders and Involve Socially Disadvantaged Groups: Are Cross-Milieu Concepts and Co-operative Projects Essential?**

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**Culture as a Means to Overcome Social Borders and Involve Socially Disadvantaged Groups: Are Cross-Milieu Concepts and Co-operative Projects Essential?**

**Scientific Inputs:**
Andrea Reupold, University of Munich (Germany)
Marion Vargaftig, Manifesta (UK)

**Project Presentations:**
Thomas Laue, Essen City Theatre (Germany)
Tom Hannah, Memory Trust (UK)

**Moderation:**
Lina Balenaite, Former Head of British Council (Lithuania)

**Introduction**
Poland, Austria, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Belarus, Finland, Great Britain, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, France and Romania: there were no less than thirteen countries represented in workshop three. So a huge variety of different contexts, working conditions and expertise were brought together by the participants.

**Presentations**
We directly started analyzing the first question (*Are cross-milieu concepts and co-operative projects essential?*), and found it a truism at the first glance. Then we listened to the presentation on **social milieus** by **Andrea Reupold** (Munich Center of the Learning Sciences). The question was not if milieus exist, but how milieus can be identified and where their borders are – there emerged a need for definitions and measurability. A *cross milieu* approach needs a definition of the milieu in order to cross its borders, and a definition of the milieu was exactly what Andrea started with. For her research group, people similar in social status represented social units/milieus, and their algorithm applied over Germany produced ten such clusters, varying in social status or basic values (e.g. *traditionalists, escapists, experimentalists* and *modern performers* – just to name a few). In this model, cross-milieu (social mobility) could be translated as people transgressing the borders of their clusters – and concrete applications can measure this mobility as changes in individual or group behaviour in fields like civil participation, political activism or volunteerism. The example presented by Andrea – a qualitative study on social milieus tackling the issue of participation in adult education – showed that the model was fairly consumer oriented. This brought along one of the first comments from the audience: due to its strong economic origins, the social milieu model would yield optimum results in a *product clinic* setup, and as participants would observe, the local relevance of social cohesion could be elusive to this model. All the more so, as the model rather underlines what makes people different from each other than what unites them. Another issue raised was that in the presented examples the social milieu model was used only as a diagnosis tool (before the intervention) and not also as the evaluation tool of the economical or social context resulting from the intervention. The examples presented thus failed to show conclusive comparable results and remained offering the model as a potentially useful but unproven technology in social work. In any case, as Andrea put it, one's responsibility in conducting a research should always boil down to having someone say "thank you" in the end – and the inherent pragmatism of the model was certainly well-received in a context with definitions ever so elusive.

The second question addressed was "what could be the contribution of cultural and citizenship education in this field?", and here **Marion Vargraftig**'s *Belonging* project provided a possible answer. Her presentation of the creative video workshops she organized in marginalized/ sensitive communities (London East End, Casal de Boba in Lisboa and the 20'eme arrondissement in Paris) proved that an intuitive and heartfelt approach can become as valid as any scientifically rooted one. The *Belonging* project found a common denominator in visual self-expression – in this case, film. Film can constitute a common language, film is easy to understand, and film is transportable. And most certainly it is *cool* with the selected age group (15-19). The 43 productions of one to three minutes revolved around the central theme of belonging, and this put in motion a generous number of themes along the axis of identity, community, territory and migration. The initiative is far from unique: zalab tv (italy) and slumtv (kenya) are also involved in community based (collective) creation processes – and this convergence all the more indicates the large applicability of the approach. It is important to note that films develop a sense of community not only among the audience – the creation process in fact is a journey for the creator of the film himself in acknowledging a personal view, in articulating it, and finally publishing it. Thus one of the greatest benefits of the project is social history learning, for creator and viewer alike – a social history that is often unofficial, but always relevant and alive. The discussions following the presentation revealed common features of the films: a general scepticism towards society representatives, a good dose of humour and a strong set of common personal or community values.

Perhaps this could help explaining why the films are so easily transportable (to festivals/ showcases e.g. MOA Lisboa): *Belonging* is more about the things that unite us than those that differentiate us. These commonalities are signs of a *community of faith* project beneficiaries share. Finally, as a common conclusion, keywords like **learning, understanding and opening** emerged from the discussion as representing this community of communities tied together in a community of faith, as the film by Imran Jabber (UK) would have it: "Veins in a body".

**Project**
The third question "what are the main challenges of cultural and citizenship education in the future?" was answered by the most certainly juiciest presentation of the day with **Tom Hannah** – a "professional singer" – as he put it. His keyword was **sustainability**. But there was much more: listening to his rendering of the *Verse For Cash* project to rediscover the ancient alchemy of rhetoric – the power to turn words into truth. The project, in short, is about people getting paid to learn poems. It is a privately funded initiative by people like you and me. It targets mostly socially disadvantaged groups (like prison inmates). The harder to memorize a poem is, the more money it is worth. And this is apparently all. But in listening to Tom, the geniality of the project emerges. Imagine an inmate learning poems: it is a matter of will, of self-discipline, of learning how to learn, of learning to be accurate and to succeed. It is work. Its subject and object are intellect and spirit. But Tom would never yield to any project manager romanticism. Instead he plays out his principles: "keep it real and cut the crap" or "exclude the teacher, pay the learner".

Perhaps he is helped by having naturalized his discourse in the British model of cultural economy: individual, individualistic, talent-based, often creating little, one-person markets. The project presentation raised many questions from the workshop audience: Where is the added value? Now, is this creative? Is this to better the inmates? What's the catch? And Tom would answer: "no added value except what I already told you"; "no, this is mechanical learning, and there's nothing creative to it"; "cut the crap" or "don't speculate". It is so hilarious. It is so beautiful. And as it is meant to be, YES there is a part where Tom Hannah betrays his character: right at he beginning he talks about Aborigines, about how important oral history was for them in preserving information about waterlines or enemies – a life or death matter. The *Verse for Cash* project's result is inmates quoting Shakespeare.