

Youth, Intercultural Learning and Cultural Politics in Europe

Some Current Debates

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Abstract

Intercultural education has been central to the field of European youth work since at least the 1960s, and arguably it has been one of its most formative influences and projects. Currently the field of intercultural education is subject to intense debate concerning its relevance to young people in diverse, multicultural environments. This article examines some of the ways in which intercultural learning has become inflated and over-burdened, and relates this to a general culturalisation of political education and the problematics of 'culture' as an over-determining concept. The argument is developed theoretically and through a discussion of research stemming from intercultural education training courses. In conclusion the article suggests some ways in which intercultural education can be re-politicised and reinvented.

Keywords

Intercultural learning; cultural politics; youth in Europe; anti-racism

Introduction

Europe frequently expresses its politics in cultural terms. The legitimisation of the political-economic integration of the European Union is accompanied by an elite longing for collective attachment and identification with 'Europe'. The intensification of global labour movements into the post-industrial economies of Western Europe is met with pleas and threats for people who migrate to integrate themselves into widely referenced, if infrequently elaborated, sets of national values and ways of life. People experiencing the *anomie* of liquid life and hyper-individualisation are instructed to rebuild 'community' as an idealised and pre-political response to social fragmentation (Outhwaite, 2005: 32). Contemporary political life, and its frameworks and categories, are characterised by the 'unassailed centrality of culture as an all-embracing category' (Orchard, 2002: 424).

This ubiquity and force of cultural expression is ambivalent for practices of intercultural education, and this ambivalence has given rise to an interesting debate on the relevance of intercultural learning in contemporary European youth work and training. Put simply, if the force of intercultural learning was its critical ability to cultivate reflexivity concerning the cultural shaping of realities and our responses to them, what happens to this critical impetus when culture is, as Ulf Hannerz puts it,

everywhere? (1995: 30–43). Hannerz has been a key figure in debates in the 1990s concerning anthropology’s responsibilities for the circulation of over-determined and over-determining visions and rhetorics of culture in political life. Responding to the affinities between classical anthropological constructions of cultures as bounded, coherent systems of meaning and value and the development of culture as an ‘essentialised rhetorical object in contemporary political talk’ (Cowan, 2001: 9), and to calls from such thinkers as Abu-Lughod (1991) to ‘write against culture’ as a way of undermining its more problematic connotations, Hannerz has argued for ways of keeping the concept useful. The current debate concerning intercultural learning has some parallels with this earlier academic discussion, as there is some anxiety among practitioners about the reductive and often naïve and dangerous premium intercultural learning has placed on ‘culture talk’. A move to ‘educate against culture’, however, presents a far more diffuse challenge than that faced by academic discourse.

Intercultural education has not only been central to the field of European youth work, arguably it has been one of its most formative influences and projects. Since at least the establishment of the Franco-German youth office in the early 1960s and the gradual increase in youth exchanges and structured international educational activities, forms of intercultural education have been developed as ways of ‘managing encounters’ and learning to work and live with – primarily national-cultural – differences. This focus on working with cultural difference has developed from understanding and solidarity building initiatives in the decades following the Second World War through forms of international education, and multicultural and anti-racism education. According to Hendrik Otten, a seminal influence on the development of European youth work since the 1970s, intercultural learning is the ‘collective term for the conscious pedagogical planning and realization of European youth encounters’, where intercultural encounters are conceptualized as providing an experience of ethno-cultural relativisation and reflection which can be translated into everyday life practice in multicultural societies (Otten, 1997:4).

The foundation of the Council of Europe’s European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in 1972 saw the confirmation of intercultural learning as a central tenet of the institution’s youth policy. A key dimension of this policy was a gradual shift towards training in intercultural education and the development of widely circulated educational resources, the most well-known of which probably remains the *All Different All Equal Education Pack* (Council of Europe, 1995). Over this period of training development, intercultural education shifted from primarily emphasizing the pedagogical planning of activities to becoming a subject in and of itself; conceived of as a key commitment of youth work and youth workers, and as a process of developing tolerance of ambiguity, reflexiveness and critical solidarity. It has also been integrated as a key dimension of other areas of youth policy such as European citizenship, anti-racism and anti-discrimination, conflict transformation, and more recently, ‘inter-religious’ dialogue.

There is no doubt that intercultural learning has made an enormous contribution to nonformal education, both in the programmes of the Council of Europe and European Commission, and in the training networks and participatory associations and initiatives which interact with them. Nevertheless it is at this juncture, marked by the almost universal recognition of the importance of intercultural learning in youth work and, paradoxically, at a time when the Council of Europe has just launched a

*White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*¹, that intercultural education within these European networks finds itself in a period of intense reflection, if not crisis. The reasons for this are multiple. Intercultural learning has been over-extended and over-idealised, leading, as Cunha and Gomes have put it, to a palpable if inchoate ‘discrediting’ of intercultural learning ‘... because it did not produce that decisive cultural change needed to create the balanced and peaceful Europe that the majority of Europeans dreamed of’ (2008: 4). This reaction is only possible because of arguably a far more profound problem – the noticeable depoliticisation of intercultural learning. The complexity of this depoliticisation is beyond the scope of this article, but two central aspects of it are worth noting.

Intercultural learning in European youth work has often been confidently reduced to the acronym ICL, whereas in practice there is simply no such stable educational philosophy or forms of practice that answer to such branding. Instead, contemporary intercultural education is a child of *googlisation*; formed by the circulation of theories, practices, models, modules and resources developed and shaped through networks of critical pedagogy, classroom based multicultural education, corporate ‘cultural awareness training’ and the multiple training and educational foci of non-governmental actors. These, in turn, deploy theories of culture and educational philosophy not easily abstracted from their conceptual and contextual histories, nor from their development within often highly diverse applications of intercultural education. Intercultural learning, then, despite its frequently stated role in education opposing all forms of discrimination, is a patchwork of approaches that contains different and sometime conflicting assessments of discrimination, and how to oppose it.

Yet this depoliticisation is more than a product of the ‘lego-brick’ syndrome of knowledge production in information societies (Hylland-Eriksen, 2001), as this eclecticism is made possible by a central dependence on ‘culture’ – as a discrete and transferable concept – as the defining aspect of subjectivity. Raymond Williams’ now commonplace observation on the difficulties of the *idea* of culture in social practices (1976) is only beginning to impact on current European debates, as is the attendant realization that prescriptions of culture in education, however latent, are deeply political acts and commitments. As Chris Barker puts it:

The concept of culture does not represent a fixed entity in an independent object world but is best thought of as a mobile signifier that denotes different ways of talking about human activity with divergent uses and purposes ... the concept of culture is plastic, political and contingent (2002: 84).

In contra-distinction, the dominant ‘model’ of culture immanent in European intercultural learning is fixed, apolitical and regarded as universally valid and transferable. On this basis, the ability of static intercultural learning practices to engage young people on their experience of the lived politics of race, ethnicity, identity, belonging, allegiance and legitimacy in European contexts currently gripped by such issues has been brought into question.

The over-extension of intercultural learning

Intercultural learning, in Peter Lauritzen’s rich phrase, ‘interferes with your own making’.² The verb ‘making’ not only draws attention to the ongoing, reflexive

commitment of non-formal education, but to a key tension in understandings of culture in intercultural learning. In educational practice, culture is taken both to mean a description of background and/or ethnicity and nationality, as well as a field of meaning into which people are inducted and in which they participate. Culture, as Terry Eagleton has pointed out, has historically involved friction between senses of 'making and being made' (2000:36). Similarly, Tim Ingold captures this as the tension between 'living culturally and living in cultures' (2000). In other words, the importance of intercultural education has been the ways in which it (potentially) encompasses both culture as a way of approaching the formation of discursive and interpretative frameworks within which people create, circulate and extend meaning, and culture as a defining vector of identity which sits in involved and uneasy relationships with collectivities of nation, ethnicity and race. Intercultural learning, in facilitating reflection on living in diverse societies, encompasses both a consideration of how we learn to perceive, interpret and evaluate our realities, and what it means to live within the powerful collective identities which so shape and influence those realities.

The problem is that much intercultural learning practice favours an essentialist emphasis on 'being made' at the expense of 'making'. This imbalance is no theoretical nicety; as Wolfgang Welsch (1999) points out, the concept of culture is prescriptive not descriptive, and hence it has profound consequences for the interpretation and evaluation of cultural reality, not to mention educational responses to those realities. This, I would contend, has two prime consequences for the credibility of much intercultural learning. The first consequence is that many approaches have become conceptually and educationally inadequate in contexts of cultural diffusion and mixedness. The centrality of a modular and essentialist concept of culture which simplifies human understanding, social subjectivity, affectivity and agency has led to theories and methodologies which are far too reductive to engage young people on their experiences and possible pathways of action in diverse societies. A second consequence of political inadequacy stems from this. Despite intercultural learning's centrality to anti-racism and anti-discrimination education, it classifies and constructs people in precisely the *racial* terms it is overtly opposed to. As a form of political education intercultural learning has become complicit in naturalizing the terms of reference of populist and integralist politics – the clash of civilizations, the new drive towards integration into 'our national values' – that have a powerful currency in western Europe.

These criticisms require some detail and elaboration before turning to examine them in a youth work context. If, as contended in the introduction, intercultural learning is a diffuse and messy field, can it simultaneously be said to be dominated by a set of central, problematic ideas? In an era where the movement of people, money, risks, information and images characterises social life, it should come as no surprise that ideas and discourses are also constantly on the move, flowing across boundaries and being transformed through translation and implementation. In particular, discourses associated with the socio-political work and educational activity of international institutions, globally networked NGOs and of transnational corporations are diffused through institutional cooperation, funding programmes, and through the increased articulation of ideas and practices of interculturalism in an internationally networked public sphere. To use an idea suggested by the sociologist John Urry,

intercultural education can be thought of as a *fluid*, flowing through interlocking networks of institutions, funding and educational collaboration (2000).

Fluidity is not anarchy, however, and it is possible to discern how dominant approaches to intercultural education prosper in this networked movement. In the absence of any empirical examination of this, a complementary analysis is provided by Alastair Bonnett in his discussion of 'the Americanisation of anti-racism' (2006). By Americanisation, Bonnett does not have in mind a simple formula that can be linked to any specific US political administration. Instead, he examines the ways in which influential global agencies such as the World Bank replicate US-derived perspectives on socio-cultural life. In particular this involves models of 'race relations' and 'minority inclusion' produced by experiences of US social politics, welded with neo-liberal orthodoxies of market economy, the role of transnational capital, and the subjectivity and possibilities of the 'modern' individual. Bonnett is not suggesting that translations do not take place at the interface between World Bank projects and national/local agencies and agents. Instead, he argues that:

The World Bank disseminates a model of social change that does not require US consent or involvement – it may, indeed, be at variance with US government priorities at any one time – yet it reflects a vision that melds US-Americanisation and neo-liberalisation. To a degree that has not yet become explicit in other world regions, the World Bank's vision for Latin America has recently been marked by a concern for the 'social inclusion' of ethnic minorities within the market economy. To this end the Bank interprets and categorises a number of Latin American societies through the lens of 'race relations', whilst approaching racial and ethnic identities as forms of capital which racist 'traditions' conspire to waste (Bonnett, 2006:1085).

Bonnett is not accusing the World Bank of not listening, or a lack of local consultation. His point is more fundamental; that the listening is to a large extent pre-determined by the framework for hearing, which interprets the ways in which local anti-racist groups represent themselves and their social analysis through fundamental assumptions ('that ethnic and racial identities are usefully thought of as forms of social capital; that multi and inter-cultural social inclusion enables "deeper" participation in the free market; that the development of racial self-identification, racial categories, and, more broadly, "race relations" provides an appropriate model for the development of anti-racism': pp.1093–4). Thus given that the World Bank operates according to a particular vision of the relationship between economic development and social emancipation, the operationalisation of this vision employs categories (of ethno-racial classification, for example) and assumptions (that minorities want to see themselves as forms of potential 'capital') that may not only be alien to the 'target reality', but which may shape that reality materially and ideologically, by interpreting differences in classification and political agency as 'resistance', or 'tradition', and by withholding funding accordingly.

Bonnett's analysis provides a way of understanding how models of intercultural learning, despite their diffusion through different networks and institutions, often end up promoting a coherent set of ideological assumptions. In my experience of the models and resources used in European youth work, intercultural learning is inhabited

by resources developed by agencies as diverse as the US Peace Corp, transnational organizational management consultants and religious-based peace activists. What they share, in their ‘iceberg’ and ‘Lilly pad’ models of culture and varieties on simulation exercises where discrete, separate cultures come into contact and collision, is a dependence on a vision of culture and cultural relativisation developed within UNESCO and disseminated within the networks which surround it. As Alana Lentin (2004) has documented, ‘culture’ became elevated as an explanatory framework for subjectivity and collective difference following the concerted rejection of ‘race’ in the aftermath of the Shoah. In a series of conferences and publications in the 1950s – most notably Claude Levi Strauss’ *Race et Histoire* (1952) – UNESCO sought to delegitimise race, and by extension racism. Race, particularly following the eugenicist projects of Nazism, was predominantly understood as a pseudo-scientific paradigm discredited both by its epistemological deficiencies and its role in legitimating hierarchies of dominance.

In its place, the problem of difference was re-worked through the idea of culture – a way of seeing human groups as different and having systems of meaning that require processes of translation. Crucially, this difference cannot be hierarchically organized, but instead must be regarded as making different contributions to humanity and as relating relatively to each other. Differences in ‘progress’ were explained by historical-geographical chance rather than innate racial characteristics. It follows from this that if race can be undermined as a spurious category, then racism can be countered by disproving the existence of race. Prejudice and ethnocentrism, as subjective conditions, can be overcome through education, reflection and an attempt to reach out to ‘the other’. At one level this fundamental shift illustrates the drive of intercultural learning to ‘interfere with one’s making’, yet something else happens in this paradigmatic reformulation.

As Lentin argues, disproving racial science and thus ‘pulling the rug’ from under racism succeeds in relabeling race, as opposed to *unthinking* it. In other words, race is not reducible to its articulation through scientific theories focused on human bodies, but instead involves a more fundamental modern desire to classify and know, and a political heritage of enshrining classifications of insider/outside and their legitimacies in the modern nation-state system. Thus UNESCO’s ‘culture’ is still in a fundamental sense ‘race’, as it proposes a mode of perception based on ‘the problem of difference’ which sees people organized into bounded, essential groups that define them. What gets elided in this shift towards cultural understandings is the experience of racism, reformulated as suffering forms of prejudice, and most commonly attributed to ‘ignorant’ individuals or obviously extreme political movements. Defined out, racism becomes part of Europe’s past, and as Sara Ahmed points out, in a contemporary context where commitments to cultural diversity and interculturalism are widespread and uncontroversial, the ubiquity of these pronouncements could be seen as a ‘... fantasy which conceals forms of racism, violence and inequality as if the organisation/nation can now say: how can you experience racism when we are committed to diversity?’ (2008: 2).

Undoubtedly much intercultural education in practice is capable of going beyond the limitations imposed by this latent vision of race/culture, and it is still widely practiced in conjunction with meaningful commitments to anti-discrimination and

anti-racism. However, much of the debate about the limitations of intercultural education stems from a realization that thinking through culture produces a key weakness – the centrality of culture to contemporary European politics has undermined the field's critical import. Interfering with one's making depended on building on the discomfort of cultural realization and relativisation and on compelling people to think of themselves as cultural. However the contemporary political moment witnesses few other modes of self-actualisation as powerful. Culture, remember, is everywhere.

This can be illustrated by looking at the current politics of identity and belonging in Europe in the post 9/11 period. Current public debates on migration in western Europe, for example, cohere not around the rejection of culture but around the rejection of a supposed excess of culture and its consequences. In such countries as the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, minorities are regarded as having been allowed to self-segregate in culturally inward-looking 'communities', and this threat to social cohesion must be countered with a cultural response; the integration of problematic minorities into 'our national values' and 'our ways of life' (see Kundnani, 2007; Titley, 2009 forthcoming). A basic social justice perspective would look to shift the focus away from fantasies of cultural integration, and point instead to the range of socio-economic factors which lead to migrants and minorities once again being held responsible, as the 'needed but unwelcome' (Appadurai 2006), for a range of macro-developments far beyond their agency. The problem for intercultural learning is that its dominant approaches cannot easily interfere in this picture, despite the clear absence of an account of power and history in most accounts of problematic minorities and cultural anxiety. Intercultural education has demanded tolerance, understanding and awareness in the face of cultural difference, contemporary actors from across the political spectrum are lining up to assert that tolerance and understanding have gone too far, and implicitly and explicitly apportioning some of the blame to intercultural education and related approaches. Hence the toothlessness of intercultural orthodoxy in contemporary European societies; appreciate other cultures? We did and look where that got us. Question your own 'making'? We have and we have found a lot that we like, thanks very much. Intercultural education has lost not only the debate, but the chance to shift the terms on which it is conducted.

The problem of orthodoxies

This theoretical criticism of intercultural learning stems from this author's personal experience of working with intercultural education in the European field. It was the questions raised by the adequacy of intercultural learning during a long term training course on intercultural youth work at the Council of Europe in 2004, which led to a subsequent study of that course and prevailing practices of intercultural learning. The course brought thirty-five participants from the wider Europe of the Council together to develop and implement local 'intercultural' projects book-ended by intensive preparation and evaluation residential seminars. To simplify somewhat, a critical evaluation of the course was stimulated by a curious observation; rather than participants speaking about their intercultural learning, intercultural learning was speaking them. That is, it was providing a prescriptive set of frameworks and vocabulary for reflecting on their experiences that obscured their meaning, imposed

programmatic conclusions and solutions through recourse to orthodox models, and often hampered located, rooted needs analysis.

A more structured reflection on the course was able to tease out the different dimensions of this tendency to over-determination. The central focus of intercultural education on limited ideas of culture means that it easily becomes an *a priori* framework which shapes and imposes responses in a number of ways.

- a. Orthodoxy of expression: even allowing for translation in action, a shared, overburdened language of intercultural learning provided accepted formulations through which participants distilled their experiences, probably at the expense of more emic possibilities. In other words, participants, in one way or another, felt compelled to work through the received shapes of 'culture talk'. This tendency to the formulaic has been recently described by Cunha and Gomes as the 'waste of experiences in intercultural learning' (2008).
- b. Deterministic formula: the importance accorded intercultural learning in the rhetoric, programmes and priorities of many influential bodies had a debilitating effect on some participants' ability to critically shape their own priorities and opinions. It seemed as if participants, initially at least, felt little freedom to question what they considered to be received wisdom about what intercultural learning can achieve, even if this ran contrary to their own experiences. Thus if the YOUTH programme insists that youth exchanges promote intercultural understanding, the functionalist assumptions of this approach were not questioned despite the far more complex experiences participants had with youth exchanges. A problematic consequence of this was an assumption that a project was a failure if it did not deliver the ideological assumptions of the funding body and the wider milieu of intercultural education.
- c. Mobile panacea: a key dimension of the over-extension of intercultural learning is the way in which a huge range of social and political issues can be analysed as cultural and prescribed cultural solutions. This was especially pronounced in relation to questions of conflict and social exclusion which clearly require far more multi-dimensional approaches. Intercultural learning can all too easily frame the question and provide the answer, and becomes a microcosm of the noted trend whereby social and political questions are treated to a cultural response (Yúdice 2003);
- d. Political reductionism: paradoxically, the over-extension of intercultural learning seems to reinforce individualistic diagnoses and solutions of social problems. In other words, when intercultural learning promotes end-state notions of 'understanding' and 'tolerance', action can become overwhelmingly individual action, despite the collectivist assumptions of culture and the organizational context of participants. A good example of this is the reduction of racism to a question of individual aberrant prejudice which can be ameliorated through individual responses.

The conclusion of the educators working with this course verged on the outright rejection of conventional intercultural learning approaches, as they provide an overarching story of culture and its consequences that, underpinned by the force of institutional credibility, compelled participants into understanding and responding to their contexts in limited and limiting ways. Rather than interfering in their making, it

was merely confirming the shape of things. This is but one among many recent experiences within European training networks which has started to question why intercultural learning can contribute so little in a context where an awareness of culture would appear to be in the ascendant. These debates are already engaged with thinking about how to reconstruct intercultural learning in these conditions.

An examination of current practices of intercultural learning can be understood as a theme within a wider discussion of the adequacy of nonformal education and training to changing social conditions. Hendrik Otten (2002: 11) has summarized the debate as follows: ‘... it can be said that in view of the increasing complexity of European societies, the requirements for education and training are growing, and the knowledge and skill needs demanded of those who are responsible for education and training are accordingly complex’. Otten proposes an abstract yet clear relationship between the complexity of societies, and the concomitant complexity of training skills. He highlights two inter-related aspects of training competence: *personal aspects*, including cognitive-intellectual, moral-ethical, emotional, and action-oriented dimensions; and *activity-related aspects*, including the didactic structure of training, methodologies, specific contents, and its political aims and objectives. Otten summarises the implications of this for training and trainers thus:

Training (should be) more subject, object and situation-adequate – a kind of paradigm shift, in order to get an intellectual hold on a changed youth sociology setting and the complex requirements of training and education as elements of life-long learning ... Trainers ... are also knowledge managers – they have to know many things; mainly however in view of the complexity of European societies ... they have to be knowledge brokers (Otten, 2002: 12–13).

Otten’s idea of knowledge-brokering is useful in teasing out how the success of intercultural learning has led to anxieties concerning its subject, object and situation inadequacy. In a field of nonformal education characterized by freelance work, short-term and modular training and elite mobility, the sureties of conventional intercultural learning and the transposable nature of cookie-cutter theoretical inputs and simulation exercises is hard to displace, and these forms of knowledge production and circulation are quite obviously part of a far bigger problem. However, they are, in Otten’s terms, thoroughly inadequate to a ‘changed youth sociology’ and thus increasingly irrelevant to the experiences of many young people, particularly in the diverse environments of European cities and in postcolonial and multicultural contexts where questions of cultural belonging and allegiance are sharply felt while never corresponding to intercultural education’s comforting algebra of ‘difference’. What this implies, of course, and this author has witnessed it several times, is that activities that may be included in intercultural policy agendas now proceed by ignoring the ‘classics’ of intercultural learning approaches.

Conclusion

In discussions of training in the Council of Europe and related networks, recent contributions by trainers have indicated some routes for reshaping intercultural learning, and they cohere around re-emphasising intercultural education as a form of political education that needs to be disentangled from the managerial logics and

practices of what Hannerz (1995) calls 'the culture-shock prevention industry'. Teresa Cunha and Rui Gomes (2008), for example, have looked at the ways in which intercultural learning must engage with legacies of historical injustice, and the consequences of history for social inequality and discrimination in postcolonial and post-conflict European sites. Furthermore, they advocate an open questioning of the assumptions behind intercultural learning and dialogue as part of the process of its constitution, questions which return intercultural learning to its relationship with critical pedagogy; who is in dialogue and who is not, and why? Who defines something as a subject of intercultural dialogue or education, and on what grounds? Where is the power in dialogue and exchange?

In an input to a recent consultative meeting of the trainers working with the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe, I argued that intercultural education can borrow from anthropology's debates on the status of culture, and shift from approaching people – and particularly over-culturalised minority young people – as subjects of culture towards treating them instead as what Ingold (1994: 330) calls 'real, living experiencing, thinking, affectively engaged human beings who follow particular lifeways'. This is, after all, what nonformal education is about; engaging people who are not only always being made but always making, and who can work to extend the basic assumption of the same dynamism and complexity to those they don't know. However this is not to tip the imbalance to 'living culturally' over 'living in cultures', as there is nothing worse than simplistic, cosmopolitan cultural education that urges people to overcome the false consciousness of national, ethnic and cultural group affiliation and identities as a step on the road to harmony. The contemporary politics of culture in Europe, among other things, ensures that people continue to have meaningful and charged affective and ascribed identities, and these allegiances and pressures can neither be dismissed nor flattened into the formulas of culture under discussion in this article.

It is also in this context that anti-racism education needs to be reclaimed from its general incorporation into intercultural learning. Anti-racism is not merely the opposition to racism, it is a complicated and controversial political terrain (Lentin, 2004). However racism in contemporary Europe, despite its polite expression through ideas of 'too much diversity' and cultural incompatibility, cannot be combated through forms of intercultural learning that do not realize their complicity in the fundamental shape of these new forms of exclusion.

Postscript: In memory of Peter Lauritzen

The debates in European youth work discussed here, and perhaps even the field of European youth work itself, are unimaginable without the presence and contribution of Peter Lauritzen, who died in May 2007. Peter was the first educational tutor in the European Youth Centre (EYCS) in Strasbourg when it was established in 1972. He became Deputy-Director of the EYCS in 1985, and then Director of the European Youth Centre in Budapest from its foundation in 1995 until 1999. Since then until his retirement in early 2007 he was Head of the Youth Department and Deputy Director of Youth and Sport in Strasbourg. This impressive institutional biography, of course, says little of the esteem, love and respect in which he was widely held. Peter was an unusual blend of intellectual, civil servant and activist, and he succeeded in harnessing

the often difficult tensions these different inclinations and roles bring into collision. He was, to say the least, scathing of the 'toolbox training' approaches he saw colonizing intercultural education and training in general, and the ideas discussed here and in countless areas of youth work, policy and research would not exist but for the force of his critical intellect, constantly assessing the adequacy of received wisdom and approaches. Peter was committed in his work to what he saw as the magic triangle of policy, research and training, and his gift was never to under- or over-estimate the contribution or importance of one domain in relation to another. In advocating and shaping these relationships, he oversaw a period of creative and sustained dialogue between the points in the triangle of European youth work. More than that, he was the human geometry that gave it shape, and continuing inspiration.

Notes

- 1 See <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/Source/White%20Paper%20final%20EN%20020508.pdf> (accessed 23 June 2008)
- 2 From an unpublished speech 'ICL and ambiguity' presented in the European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 28 October 2001.
- 3 The discussion document 'Plastic Political and Contingent: Intercultural Learning in DYS Activities' is available for download from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Training/Training_courses/2005_LITC_intercultural_lng_en.pdf

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