



Report on Workshop 4 For a new collective intelligence

A summary of objectives

The aim of this workshop was to bring to the fore the production of collective intelligence as a precondition to the creation of a true common political and social space. Exercising one's rights as a citizen requires civic skills, along with individual and collective knowledge. As regards organising for action in situations where mechanisms for negotiation are absent, and developing knowledge and participative capacities, the objective of the workshop was to reply to the question: how is a new form of collective intelligence to be created and developed, with a view to the common good?

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Overview – obstacles

The workshop first of all brought to light the lack of any unified political culture in the European social space. The debate can take different forms, depending on the social environment. What common ground, what accessible public space can be found for debate among Europeans? Should culture always be the motor of political projects on the European scale? Some participants talked about the danger of issues being "culturalised". The workshop insisted on the fact that political questions have to be treated politically, and on making a distinction between the idea of new collective intelligence and that of "educating the citizen". There was also the question of defining what might actually be meant by "collective intelligence", and a number of historical and philosophical references were brought up. Where does the idea itself come from? Is it a point of departure for a thinking process, or its culmination? In any case it is obviously linked to the concept of the common good, which in turn needs definition. These questions need to be posed in a critical and inventive manner, so as not simply to reproduce existing debates.

The workshop identified a number of obstacles to the development of collective intelligence. There is a tendency to ignore existing projects and initiatives; an awareness of what has already been done is sorely lacking. There has been a progressive decline in participation, and especially in civic resistance, perhaps resulting from a deficit of communication and receptiveness, and the fact that the citizen is not invited to take part in debates, nor kept informed. But these problems should be seen in a larger perspective, in relation to the current transformation of public space, and also urban space, under the

influence of neo-liberal economic models. If it is difficult, on the European level, for citizens to move beyond the mere exercise of consultative powers, this is partly a problem of time. What is free time, and how is it used? How is it recognised in society? The question of work exists in its dialectical relationship with free time considered as a pure value, not as a resource that is potentially utilisable for civic activity.

The development of major cities has also led less-favoured citizens, who often live quite far from their workplaces, to spend more and more time commuting. And poorer people are pushed out of the political sphere by socio-residential segregation. This simple observation shows that the identification and characterisation of the emerging cityscape is indispensable to any reflection on the construction of collective intelligence.

Possible lines of action

The participants in the workshop identified a certain number of possibilities for action. In the first place, there is a need for critical reflection on the common good, and on what it is that turns a resident into a citizen. What, today, is meant by "common good"? Can something that might be identified as "common" still motivate civic action, whereas processes of disidentification and desolidarisation are everywhere growing more significant? It is urgent to get beyond a purely economic view of Europe (for example, in order to avoid competition between the major European cities), and the confinement of the citizen within a consumerist logic. The point is to replace a purely economic project by a political project. In other words, every new initiative also implies the deconstruction of certain traditional European schemas. It is important to turn away from the mode of operation of European bureaucracy, and to draw more inspiration from associations. Centres of decision-making must be brought closer to centres of participation. The fact is that effective participation for all in public discussion, and in the democratic process, are points of departure for a "new collective intelligence". The authorities must be challenged about the inadequacy of their involvement in the mobilisation of civil society, which needs greater inputs of information, presented in a more transparent form. On the other hand, it is vital not to encourage a passive attitude among citizens by "feeding" them information about Europe, without at the same time seeking to make them more involved, and allowing them to develop their critical faculties.

Concrete proposals

Some concrete proposals were formulated, with a focus on three points: the mobilisation of people themselves; a search for additional funding, to be used in a more effective, transparent way; and the circulation of information. There should be active support for initiatives that already exist, and for the creation of mechanisms in parallel with those that are already in operation. Neither money nor dynamism is lacking in Europe. In particular, there is a need for convergences with the European parliament. Channels of expression for citizens ought to be developed. And it is also important to recentre political debates and decision-making on themes that are of concern to everyone, given that citizens feel a stronger sense of involvement when their own interests are at stake. Mobilisation must be based, among other things, on the new solidarities that are springing up in the major European cities: more and more citizens are "transnational", and many couples consist of people from different countries.

The participants in the workshop agreed about the importance of developing alternative media on the European level, enlarging the means of communication, posting structured documents on the Web and making available publicly-financed studies, so as to create the conditions necessary to the non-hierarchical transmission of knowledge. It must never be forgotten that the media are an integral part of public space.

There was a proposal to create a fund for new initiatives, and for local platforms that

would be easily accessible, with guaranteed autonomy in relation to local contexts. (But with what resources? And who would administer such schemes?) In any case, funds for the creation of platforms and concrete action need to be kept separate. And the evaluation of projects should be carried out by independent experts in a horizontal mode (citizens-to-citizens). In particular, it is not just projects as such, but also the setting up of networks, that requires financing. The question of how private-sector funds could be channelled into this initiative was also brought up, though no consensus was arrived at.

Regular assessments of elected officials, and of policies, were proposed. At the same time, the workshop felt that it would be helpful to develop platforms for discussion between politicians and citizens, where the former could participate in debates without necessarily taking centre stage.

Finally, it is on the European level, and not just the local, that town planning should be given a priority, with the development of local forums for debate. This is related to the need for European public debate to attain greater visibility.

In a structure that is currently flawed, there is a need for a coherent framework that would bring together Europe and its cities. The notion of "collective intelligence" could allow us to change paradigms, while providing a response to the difficult question of how the old and the new are to achieve some form of integration.

Recommendations and proposals

Solutions were envisaged and proposals formulated. Taking up the founding idea of European citizenship, according to which the right to vote is a catalyst of integration, the workshop put forward some suggestions.

- A process of harmonisation, or reconciliation, between laws on citizenship in Europe, and also a standardisation of citizenship rights.
- 2. The introduction of a concept of **European residence citizenship** on the European level. The fact of living in a city, being economically active and belonging to a community implies a form of citizenship, and this necessitates adequate legal and political provisions. Citizenship founded on residence partly overlaps with citizenship of member States, but it should also be open to those who, though not European Union nationals, are resident in Europe.
- 3. The extrapolation onto the European level of the debate that was launched at the Conference.
- 4. A reinforcement of participation in local elections by European citizens of other member States.
- 5. The development and promotion of genuine, incisive consultation mechanisms for Union and non-Union residents, based on negotiation.

The task will not be easy; considerable coordination is necessary, but also the pursuit of a precisely-defined aim. The possibility of enlarging the network to include other parties who, though potentially concerned, were not represented at the Conference, was also brought up. And there was a call for involvement in further work and projects on the theme of political participation by non-national immigrants, and for the results to be communicated to interested parties in the different member States.

Modes of action

The workshop's conclusions are viewed as a point of departure for future actions. Coordination is necessary if exchanges are to be beneficial, and if the proposed objectives are to be pursued. The following modes of action are suggested.

- The creation of a mailing list and/or a forum accompanied by a coordinating body,

with a view to exchanging information and comparing best practices across the different member States as regards the political participation of migrant populations.

- The organisation by the workshop participants of conferences in their own cities and countries, so as to push forward the debate on the local and national levels.
- The creation of a "European Residence Citizenship Day" across the Union, for example on the occasion of European elections.
- The mobilisation of European institutions on these issues, notably by proposing "European citizenship" as the theme of the forthcoming AGORA encounters organised by the European Parliament.

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Further documentation used for this workshop