

HUMAN PLUS 2004

First Conference of the Archipelago of Humanistic Thematic Networks "The role of the humanistic arts and sciences in European society, education and research"

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Work group: 2 "Defining and promoting cooperation in the archipelago for meaningful collaboration in research"

Thematic Network: Ci Ce

I think it will be a very demanding task to find ways of defining meaningful research projects in such a big network as represented by the Archipelago. Especially demanding considering many different disciplines, different research cultures and research interests. But, I also see interesting opportunities and challenges as we know that new gateways to knowledge can be opened in such interdisciplinary research.

As my research background is in education, sociology of education and evaluation of educational reforms, I see several possibilities for interdisciplinary and comparative research, where cooperation with humanistic disciplines can be both necessary and useful.

Just to mention a few ideas and possibilities:

- a comparative perspective on educational reforms in Europe, historical developments, new tendencies and future challenges,
- the "Bildung" tradition in European education and its importance in contemporary curricula,
- participatory democracy and its meaning in European schools,
- local traditions meet globalisation, the school as a place for counter culture in a standardised world,
- peace education today, what has it been, where are we now, new possibilities and challenges.

To organise research projects around one or several of these themes might be possible if:

- we can find some European funding, hopefully from a EU framework,
- people from at least three different networks can agree upon ideas like these as a starting point for further discussions,
- people agreeing upon further cooperation have necessary interest, time and experience to fulfill their obligations in a demanding research task,
- have the necessary support from their home institution,
- the institutions involved can agree upon how to organise such projects.

These ideas are rather concrete. In our group discussion we might also ask a more fundamental question: Where do humanistic science and social science meet at the level of epistemology in Europe today? Have we bypassed the old discussion about positivistic science and have reached a point where this distinction has more or less lost its importance? It might be possible to argue that we have a common science of "the human condition", where we are educated in different disciplines, learn different research methods, but when we move to the "the frontier" of research, we see less and less importance in stressing our background disciplines. What is important, are our research interests and where we might find people offering new ideas and methods for doing this research.

