A Secular Cooperative School.
Can it Promote an Inclusive Education and Society?

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Abstract: This article is based on the French report and the European comparative results of an international project about inclusive education supported by the European Commission. It focuses on one of the main issues and the specific methodology of the French report. The globalisation has led to face the issue of making life together possible for native and immigrant populations on the same soil. How to build a common citizenship, with the same rights and duties, for diverse populations separated by their birth community, religion, history, customs and traditions? Which kind of education, and which kind of school are able to elaborate a new common heritage for citizens-to-be? Through research results, the paper compares the advantages and failures of the French republican secular school with others. It resumes the French conclusions to propose a cooperative school inspired by the spirit of the Council of Europe directives and developing social ties based on differences.

Keywords: inclusive education, cooperative school, partnership, otherness, tailor-made measures, community development, secularity

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Introduction: **main issues and methodology**

In a world enhanced by globalisation, all countries are both rooted in their history and boosted by ideas coming from the economic leader countries and their medias, in particular the United States, that is to say, by now, a democratic manner of living and governing. To-day, the intellectual middles and young people claim for liberty and lead other citizens to follow them in islamic countries considered by the western people as more conservative than themselves. We are far from a clash of civilizations. Inside each country, in north and south, west and east, as well as between countries, the clash is mainly provoked by the growing inequalities of income, and more and more people around the world become aware of it. But the opportunity of finding scape goats is offered too by an increasing immigration of southern and eastern people looking for better conditions of life in the wealthiest countries, for instance in Western Europe.

The Council of Europe raised the question to its 47 member states: how to respond to diversity? (Council of Europe, 2008). It is a challenge for applying their democratic principles and a test for their vision of the society of the future. Which choices will they make ?

> A society of segregated communities, marked at best by the coexistence of majorities and minorities with differentiated rights and responsibilities, loosely bound together by mutual ignorance and stereotypes? Or is it a vibrant and open society without discrimination, benefiting us all, marked by the inclusion of all residents in full respect of their human rights? (p. 1).

The Council of Europe represents the EU (European Union) countries. They are supposed to follow its principles reminded in all its publications, i. e. fostering societies based on solidarity, "maintaining and developing the unity

and diversity of European societies", in particular through education (Arnesen *et al.,* 2008).

Nonetheless, the EU countries do not follow the same paradigms of society and education, neither in their policies nor in their ideologies or their customs (Cousins, 1998; Zay, 2005 a&b, 2009, 2011).

France is alone to follow a secular policy educating citizens-to-be for a secular society. This article will present its characteristics in relation to those of other western countries and their impact on generating an inclusive education and society. It will be based on the comparative results of a project supported by the European Commission in ten countries (Muskens, 2009; Zay, 2009)[2].

The project aim assigned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture was to analyze, assess and, then, select priority measures and "good practices" that enhanced the opportunities of disadvantaged pupils and the inclusion and chances of discriminated groups of pupils, such as e.g. minority children and/or immigrant children. Synchronic data drawn from national and international policies statements, documents, laws, rules and statistics were not sufficient. They were completed by diachronic data, in particular collected through cases studies, based on

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[2] Procurement procedure EAC/10/2007–Lot 3 "Strategies for supporting schools and teachers in order to foster social inclusion", dated 9 August 2007, contract-2007-2094/001 TRA-TRSPO. The project started effectively on 16 December 2007 and was concluded on 16 August 2009, by submitting the reports to the Commission. The reports were accepted by the Commission on 12 October 2009 and disseminated through its website. Dr George Muskens, research director at DOCA Bureaus, The Netherlands, was project leader of the research consortium INTMEAS that has carried out the research assignment. Drafts of his final comparative report benefited from comments and advice from the consortium's reference group members and from other experts in this field. The INTMEAS consortium – Inclusion and education in European countries - gathered round him researchers from ten participating countries: France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (England and Scotland) representing a reasonable sample of the EU member States in terms of size, educational systems and inclusion index.

longitudinal analyses and assessments during a longer period, at least two years until five years or more.

The French report follows the same methodology and targets with the final comparative report and ten national reports. But, inside the general methodology, it chooses to develop the successful factors for an inclusive education through four case studies more detailed than in other national reports and proposing alternative solutions to the mainstreaming ways of teaching. They are called alternative because they are based upon a cooperative school model. However, the case studies observe the framework of the national secular model too, which remains at the heart of practice. Indeed, it was particularly meaningful because they were all led in socioeconomically deprived areas including important Muslim populations mainly from North Africa.

The methodology in all reports is founded upon:

1) A review of ongoing comparative and national research on education and social inclusion measures, 1980 onwards
2) An inventory of relevant scientific publications
3) Case studies.

The selection of references is inspired by the concept of inclusive education as "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 13).

The corpus consists of research and inquiries' results already published in books or refereed reviews, or disseminated in reports through websites, and of specific case studies, which, in the French final report, were elaborated by specialists in relation to the project research themes. It also includes indicators and statistics collected in the ten countries participating in the project and in others.

The following documentation has been gathered together on measures supporting:

- Schools with high drop-out rates and with high scores on other possible indicators of social exclusion,
- In socio-economically deprived areas,
- With large populations of pupils from immigrant backgrounds,
- Teachers working in such schools,
- Schools and teachers dealing with the problem of harassment and bullying,
- Pupils likely to become early school leavers,
- Pupils with a physical or mental disability,
- the facilitation of the educational success of pupils from minority backgrounds: ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional, etc.

First, I will describe the oppositions between European paradigms inspiring social and education policies, then the characteristics and the results of French secular education policy compared to other policies results and, finally, I will conclude by synthesizing our research results about alternative solutions based on a cooperative school model applying the UNESCO (2005, 2008) concept of inclusive education.

The conflicting European paradigms of social and education policies

All the EU countries have chosen a market economy. The "Common Market" preceded the EU. Educational issues cannot be detached from this general context. Economic development is considered to be dependent on a highly qualified population and access to the labour market is linked to having the right qualifications. Social and professional inclusion depends on academic success and businesses need staff who can adapt to technological progress. Schools therefore have a key role to play for both individuals and for society.

The statistics give us an unambiguous response: school exclusion and social exclusion are apparently linked as is the precariousness of a section of the population, left behind by the economic growth in Europe, and which now finds itself in suburban ghettos on the edge of cities. A study of international

trends on the effectiveness of schools shows that " 'ineffective' schools are located in sectors with poor socio-economic resources" (Thrupp, 1998, p. 205, in Welsh, 2005, pp. 66-67).

In all democratic and economically developed countries, research explores how to prevent and resolve these problems, but different paradigms underpin the policies for tackling them both in terms of society and education. The paradigms and policies are debated across the EU, and grounded in different concepts of social exclusion, integration and citizenship. Furthermore, the paradigms and policies apply in all countries but one in particular dominates in each. On two opposite sides of the fence, the Anglo-American specialisation paradigm underpinned by a neo-liberal overview of the world contrasts with the paradigm of French solidarity, based on a concept put forward by Durkheim. While each paradigm gives rise to certain social and education national policies, no education system is entirely homogenous. School models compete and each one struggles more or less successfully in some part of the system with respect to the strength of the competitive social forces that support them (Cousins, 1998).

Anglo-American liberalism "conceives the social order, like the economy and politics, as networks of voluntary exchanges between autonomous individuals with their own interests and motivations" (Silver, 1994, p. 542). Each is thus responsible for his or her own success or failure. The poor are deemed responsible for their situation and for developing the means of escaping from it.

Like any other sector of society, school is dependent on the laws of a self-regulating market. School heads in the most sought-after institutions only accept pupils with good results. Those in institutions in disadvantaged areas are obliged to take anybody who registers in order to have the required number of pupils for funding. All pupils must sit national tests, however, and the institutions find themselves in competition. Schools where pupils get the worst results risk being closed (Welsh, 2005).

In France too, the new measure cancelling the "*carte scolaire*,"[3] the catchment area list of schools according to where parents live and consequently where they are obliged to register their child at school, corresponds to free consumer choice combined with the negative effect of strengthening the "ghettos."

But, in French republican tradition, the notion of social exclusion, which inspires French welfare policy reflects a lack of solidarity as a rupture to the social fabric. This is Durkheim's inheritance and centres on social links, organic solidarity and social order. Exclusion occurs when the links which connect an individual with society are broken. The opposite of exclusion is inclusion. The concept of republican citizenship includes political rights and duties and an obligation for the State to help the excluded to be included.

In the same way, school, a compulsory public service, must ensure equal access to knowledge for all. Regulation operates by way of a supposedly strong administration that is expected to guarantee equal opportunities for all. Indeed, France has been a country of centralist traditions since the *Ancien Régime* of the monarchy. Additionally, it has been universalist since the Declaration of the Rights of Man during the French Revolution (1789-1795), first applied to the schools of the 3rd Republic at the end of the 19th century, and still considered as a golden age even today. It privileges individual rights as the basis of the State and considers nationality along the lines of integration and assimilation and citizenship in line with homogeneousness. Thus, school education is inspired by two other conflicting paradigms in the EU.

In one country, France, in line with universalism, the State takes into consideration the individuals first, no their communities. Because of their human nature, they are free human beings before being sons or daughters linked to their parents choices. They can have the same or other choices than their family and community, another religion or no religion at all. The State respects any choice in private life if it is not opposed to the law protecting all

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[3] French words are in italics in the French report. I keep the same rule in the present synthesis.

citizens, but religion is a matter of private life and private individual choices have no place in State institutions. Female children under the authority of their families cannot wear a headscarf at school, because the school does not belong to any community if it is a public service[4]. Students at the university can wear the headscarf as any other citizen everywhere. No teachers or other civil servants can do so in their working places, because they represent the Republican State and are not allowed to privilege their private belief when they are in relation with users who can have other belief. Indeed, the secular principle is: the State accepts any religion but does not adopt or favour any. This is the basis of equal freedom for all. The weakness of applying such a principle of universality in an educational policy is to assimilate universality or equality with uniformity or homogeneousness, and take insufficient account of all the many differences with respect to knowledge, whatever their sociocultural, psychological or physical origins in the normal school programme. In particular, pupils from immigrant backgrounds can feel discriminated against.

On the other hand, other European countries privilege birth in a community with regard to their citizenship within the state, but this means that while differences are respected, there is a risk that the differences take precedence over what is common to everyone in the nation. Comparing British and French policies, an American researcher observes:

> the fact that Britain is now routinely forced to deal with rather extremist claims, at considerable public expense, suggests that this cannot be the best of all religious governance worlds. Moreover, British Muslims, though pampered by a unique accommodating government rank among

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[4] But there are private schools, most of them catholic, which are very cheap for the parents when they sign an agreement with the State (all catholic schools do). Indeed, they benefit a financial support by the State because they apply the same national curriculum with teachers recruited from the same competitive examinations. They accept religious signs as the veil and some Muslim families choose them for their daughters.

the most dissatisfied and alienated Muslim minorities of Europe, which casts a long shadow over Britain's liberal multiculturalism (...). By contrast, France has nothing of this. This is despite the fact that this country is usually attacked for its heavy line on the headscarf, deemed only to alienate [France's] Muslims and to fuel further Islamic extremism. In reality, France is the only country in Europe to confront its Muslim minority with an attitude, and one that has paid off. This is because it has not been an attitude of exclusion or racism, as some have argued, but of setting clear and equal terms of integration. Muslims have understood and accepted these terms." (Joppke, 2009, pp. 124-125).

French republican universalism: the secular education

Centralism and universalism may have a positive impact on an inclusive education. Consideration needs to be given to the extent to which the French secular model enables members of communities that build their collective identity with regard to a religion a stronger individual sense of belonging to a nation than in other countries.

An American study of four European countries, including France, published in 2006 by the Pew Research Centre[5] (Joppke, 2009; Lesnes, 2006) shows that European Muslims have the same problems of unemployment within their community (83% in France, 78% in the UK) and are concerned about Islamic extremism. In terms of integration, however, the French differ. While half of British Muslims consider there is a "natural conflict between practicing Islam and living in modern society," 72% of French Muslims see none, a proportion identical to that recorded for French society overall. French, like the Spanish feel the least hostility to practicing Muslims, and 39% of the French believe that most Europeans are hostile to Muslims whereas 52% of Germans believe most Europeans are hostile to Muslims. 81% of British Muslims stated their

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[5] http://pewresearch.org/pubs/232/muslims-in-europe.

religion not their nationality defines them the most, while only 46% of French Muslims said religion defined them the most with an almost equal proportion of 42% stating their nationality defines them the most. These results are very different to those of the French population as a whole in which 83% identify first of all with their nationality, but the figures are close to those found in the US, where 48% of the population define themselves firstly as Americans and 42% as Christians. Finally, the perspective of French Muslims on other religions is much more positive. 91% of French Muslims have a favourable opinion of Christians and 71% have a good opinion of Jews, which makes them an exception: only 32% of British Muslims and 38% of German Muslims have a good opinion of Jews.

These results have been interpreted as the positive effects of an educational policy founded on secularity, which focuses on citizens-to-be in a neutral public space and not on members of separate communities privileging the milieu of origin (Joppke, 2009). "As the writer Cavanna, son of an Italian immigrant, said I tell you, your mother tongue is the language of school". (Schnapper, 2000, p. 18).

Referring to Rawls (1993), Joppke (2009) writes: "While in the private sphere, one may be a religious believer, in the public sphere one becomes a citizen engaged in 'public 'reasoning': abstracted from one's private demons. One never uses religions or other 'comprehensive doctrines' there, but only a political (read republican) language which may be understood and agreed upon by those who are otherwise divided by religion or ideology" (p. 29).

Schnapper (2000) cites Boulet and Fradet (1988), arguing the French school system has its advantages.

> All the sociological studies show that foreign children, when they have been in nursery school in France, have the same tastes, the same knowledge and the same behaviour as French children of the same social level. If we take their social relations into account, their school results are even slightly better than those of French children with the same

social level. However, at the same time, indirectly and surreptitiously,
the school system guides the pupils differently, taking their capacities
into account as they are judged by the teachers. (p. 18).

The negative discrimination of pupils in difficulty leads to alternative solutions

In all research themes, the DOCA French report focuses on the type of
negative discrimination that pupils in difficulty are faced with during their
schooling, whether from immigrant backgrounds or not (Zay, 2009).

Several researchers have analysed the spiral of failure in which some
children find themselves trapped by the accumulating difficulties in following
the school curriculum from the time they enter the school system until the
moment they can go no further. Kherroubi, Chanteau and Larguèze (2003)
present this phenomenon under the title "Des difficultés scolaires précoces qui
s'accumulent" (School difficulties that accumulate, p. 135). They first appear
in the second year of nursery school (Duru-Bellat, 2002). The two first years of
primary school present an insurmountable obstacle for a large number of
pupils, mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds (Troncin, 2001). The gaps
widen as they enter secondary education because "the elitism of *collège*"[6]
makes them ever wider (Duru-Bellat, 2002). Thus, pupils in rebound
programmes are often older than their peers in the same classes at *collège*
because they have already repeated years, even though this has not helped them
to get back into the system.

Many measures to combat dropping out are launched. They address young
people of school age but who are not involved in the classes (dropping in) or
who leave (dropping out). For pupils who lose interest in the course of

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[6] *Collège:* State secondary school for pupils aged between 11 and 15-16, just after primary
school and before *lycée* (16-18 years old).

schooling, these measures either involve the introduction of teaching methods in class that reinterpret the programmes by adapting them to the difficulties of the pupils "as they are", or measures like the "rebound" programmes which develop a space and time for transition within institutions that operate in line with official norms.

In both classes and rebound programmes, the hours and methods are adapted to the pupils in order to give them back a taste for learning and to reintegrate them into the normal school system by reinforcing their motivation, and encouraging them to make the effort needed. However, the value of the teaching measures to prevent students' collusion in their own exclusion both in terms of the pupils' learning and teacher training has been widely recognised and considered preferable to remediation measures that are implemented when deviant behaviour occurs.

For instance, the report by two Chief Inspectors of Schools at the Ministry of Education declares that "It would be useful to develop measures that deal with the pupils as soon as any deviant behaviour begins within the school itself, before the rebound programmes are needed." (Dusseau & Isambert, 2003, p. 99). It considers a scheme based on a tailored learning programme developed around choices made by the pupils themselves as a positive factor with respect to one of the causes of failure mentioned by several researchers. In addition, it repeats the notion that firstly, preventive measures developed within the schools are the best way to re-educate and secondly, they also make the rebound programmes more effective by integrating them in the "range of well-thought through and well-coordinated measures managed in a coherent manner, of which they are just one of the links in the chain." (*ibid.*).

There seems to be a contradiction here which fails to address the basic problem of disaffection from school, since, if the solutions advocated are different to, or even the opposite of what is developed in the system as a whole, how can the aforementioned process of academic and social exclusion be eradicated? Consideration needs to be given to the "in class" measures and the

rebound programmes as frameworks for transitional structures to understand how to inform potential reform in the education system as a whole.

Indeed, the return to *collège*, the ultimate aim of the rebound programme, can at times be a negative aspect of the results. This is effectively considered as the "programmes' stumbling block" (Dusseau & Isambert, 2003, p. 106). To avoid pupils being labelled by the teachers and other pupils in their old school, they are often sent to another school. However, the same problems arise following such a scheme. The pupil has changed but still has to make an effort to integrate into a system which remains uninteresting, even for those who have not been part of "in class" measures or rebound programmes. In addition, the groups of local young people often prevent integration in another area or another municipality. With this in mind, the recommendation to strengthen partnerships between *collège*, the local authorities and youth structures appears to be the most pertinent.

Researchers confirm that

> the programmes specifically designed (for young drop-outs) in order to help them gain qualifications are costly and their effectiveness is questionable, both in terms of getting them back into learning mode, restoring their self image, their relationship with institutions, and… joining the job market; wouldn't it be better to deal with the problem beforehand for most of these young people, in other words before they drop out of the school system? (Glasman, 2003, p. 2).

and

> The creation of educational monitoring units, the growing number of rebound classes and the creation of classes for 'precociously uneducated' children appear to be symptoms of a 'massified' school system which, unable to offer adapted learning conditions, cannot deal with its own 'failures' or the inequalities that run through it other than by increasing the number of specific measures and schemes developed under

categories as vague as 'uneducated' or 'disaffected' (Geay, & Ropé, 2003, p. 15).

In effect, these researchers'evaluations of the effects of the measures taken to combat disaffection with school noted that the teachers, caught up in the work of the class as a whole, tend to pass on the problem of disruptive pupils to others outside the "normal" school system. Such displacement has given rise to a multitude of costly schemes that aim to restore an educational space for the "poorly adapted". This inevitably leads to the question: wouldn't it be better to adapt the system itself to its users ?

The whole purpose of the DOCA research is to focus on this determining factor, in other words to focus on strategies that help schools and teachers to find solutions to the issue within the school of the young people concerned. The question emerges upon which solutions should the research focus?

To answer the question, one chapter of the DOCA French report is devoted to four case studies analysing how to introduce strategies that are designed to help schools and teachers change the present flaws in the school system in order to reduce the number of problems arising as a result. As Esterle-Hedibel (2007), we dealt with four determining factors in avoiding disaffection with school: a focus on the idea of the mission of a school as a public service for all the pupils, including those who step outside the norms; providing an atmosphere within the school which fosters encounters between pupils and adults so that they enjoy coming to school and sharing forms of social behaviour and exchange; the pedagogical choice of a benevolent, non stigmatising and normative attitude towards marginal pupils; the search for pedagogic solutions on a case by case basis, linked to structures outside the school institution, and that take into consideration the individuals' pace and anticipate the evolution of their best possible future personal development.

Like other researchers, we too considered it necessary to take up the gauntlet of the educability of young people. The process of "educational vigilance" should cover all those involved in education. We also need to

change the way we consider "difficult" pupils, seeing their disruptive behaviour as a sign of young people "in difficulty", or young people who are "suffering". Penalising such pupils should no longer be considered as the only alternative, and an educational approach should be developed rather than one of exclusion (cf. *Lettre réseau relais*, Rebound Network Letter, April 2008)

The studies carried out with young people recognized as colluding in their own exclusion by dropping out of mainstream education systems indicate that the cost of the present weaknesses in the system is not only economic and social (low quality-price ratio of the reforms and "repair" schemes, failure for young people to get jobs, problematic out-of-school behaviour that leads to urban insecurity), but also engenders a significant human cost. In effect, it leads to great psychic suffering during adolescence, a key period in the construction of the adult and citizen's identity. It is also a political issue and a choice of our society (Dolignon, 2005, 2008).

Such studies were evoked too in other national DOCA reports and led to looking for alternative solutions. In France as in other European countries, such innovations may benefit from support provided by local and regional authorities to supplement national measures (Zay, 2002). Case studies that are meaningful and important for the general DOCA research conclusions can be retrieved from the French report (Zay, 2009) and they resume previous works from the case studies' authors (Carra, 2009; Guigue, 2008; Padoani, 2008; Reuter, 2007). These case studies illustrate successful factors emerging from the ten national reports in the final comparative report by the project leader (Muskens, 2009). There is not space in this paper to examine the case studies in detail. However, I will conclude this paper by synthesizing some French report conclusions.

Conclusion: toward a cooperative school model including an education to otherness

The analyses of the French report have led me to question the solutions needed by an education system that appears to be poorly managed. Nonetheless, alternative solutions have always existed, based on initiatives introduced by social players, which correspond to those put forward by our research with respect to each topic. When policies are in place to support alternative solutions they may develop and spread throughout the system if those who wish to innovate have the resources to do so and are helped by the school and social climate. In periods of recession, alternative solutions may continue but are fewer and implemented on a smaller scale.

Two main factors for achieving an inclusive education system can be drawn in conclusion from the French report analyses.

Converging students' problems and strategies for supporting schools and teachers

Support strategies that could help teachers to better adapt to the needs of their pupils and ensure that pupils do not become "difficult" in class include making teachers aware of these processes and making them experiment with appropriate responses in the field. A school team as well as partnerships with other education players and external professionals or users, the parents, as well as with the elected representatives and town councils may be considered as training processes included in the completion of an academic teacher education. If no better practice for all situations is proposed by the final DOCA comparative report, the author notes, as do I in the French report and other preceding international researches (Zay, 1999, 2002, 2005a, 2011) that teachers and school involvement in tight relationships with students, their communities and local environment, are main factors that contribute to the facilitation of pupils' success at school.

In many research studies I quote, it appears that treating certain future citizens as having difficulties or diverse disabilities will result in isolating them from their peers, both in the physical dimension where ghettos are created, and in the cognitive dimension of the minds of others who are led to consider them as misfits, abnormal or inferior. Pupils are recognized as having a disability in relation to the material and symbolic environment around them and, in an inclusive education, this is what needs to be changed in order to give everyone access to the best personal development possible. In addition, training future citizens implies developing teachers who can facilitate future citizens to learn to live together with their differences, in other words providing an education about otherness, taking others into consideration as they are, something that is not achieved through a simple class of Civic Education, however useful this may be (Zay, 2011).

Learning about otherness seems to be a conceptual link between learning programmes and ways of working. It was in the heart of our case studies. Putting school programmes and specific initiatives and learning about otherness at the centre of our proposals as a programme-articulating concept is important. Such activity involves reassessing support strategies for schools and teachers with respect to their pupils, not only with regard to the learning content and the tools used, i.e. school textbooks, but also as a community promoting the development of identity as a citizen. Developing a citizen identity needs to include membership to multiple communities that are open to one another, their families, peers, school and the city.

Community links as a means to respect differences in the "whole community of free and equal citizens"

Strohl, a Social Services Chief Inspector, observes that in contemporary societies particular interests are growing up (CEDIAS, 2008, p. 9)[7]. She

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[7] CEDIAS: *Centre d'étude, de documentation, d'information et d'action sociale,* Centre for study, documentation, information and social action.

opposes community links to communitarianism where there is only one community. To her the best way to avoid individuals being locked in their community by birth and its particular ways of thinking is restoring the social ties by propping up all forms of more open, freer, and more fluid communities, so as to facilitate multiple memberships. Communities may adopt a protective role and provide mutual aid, as well as having a function of social control. Believing that the State does not have a monopoly of the public good, she advocates supporting community ties and the development of mutual support groups. Her reasoning calls into question the social action objectives in different territories, while maintaining control over the guarantee of access to services in nature and in kind. However, "the community, communities, and tribes make up the best and the worst of environments" (Strohl, 2008, p. 199) and it is for this reason that the development of communities must be accompanied by the protection of citizens by the State.

Strohl's proposal implies that local communities are free to take up social action in the forms that they judge the most appropriate, according to the best adapted scales (depending on the cost of living and the resources available in the town or in the département), the best means of access, as long as these forms are explicit and correspond in spirit to the objectives set out at national level. It calls on national objectives and "autonomous" territorial plans that correspond to national objectives. The administrative judge might ensure that the law is respected.

Such a proposal is in line with Schnapper (2000, p. 19, cf. 1994), for whom the State guarantees that all the individuals linked to diverse communities are in the "whole community of free and equal citizens". The proposal can also be combined with the European "community development" concept developed in a CEBSD European project Training and Learning for Community

Development in Europe[8], such as Dane introduces it at the CEDIAS Conference (CEDIAS, 2008, pp. 9-13).

Being an American born in Boston but working as a social worker in France and other countries, and participating in the CEBSD meetings, Dane observes the differences and complementarities between European countries very acutely. To her, community development has two meanings.

On one hand, it means a "community organisation," to strengthen the capacity of people as active citizens through their community groups, organisations and networks; and the capacity of institutions and agencies (public, private and non-governmental) to work in dialogue with citizens to shape and determine change in their communities. Community development plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the autonomous voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

On the other hand, community development has a set of core values/social principles covering human rights, social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity, and a specific skills set and knowledge base. In this sense, for Dane and other CEBSD members, "community development" is conceived as a planned and coordinated process of actions with populations acquiring competencies, the meaning often used in France.

In any case, whatever be its particular definition, the concept is based on The Budapest Declaration *Building European civil society through community development,* issued from a conference gathering representatives from 33 countries in 2004. Strengthening civil society seems to be a challenge for all countries which are at various stages. However, the challenge seems greater for Eastern European countries more than for others.

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[8] The CEBSD (Combined European Bureau for Social Development), an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) located in the Netherlands, manages this project with the European Commission financial support. Dane participated in meetings with representatives from 16 countries. She quotes Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Rumania, Spain, Sweden, the UK (England, Scotland and Wales).

To me, the spirit of the Council of Europe directives, which aims to uphold democratic societies through the education of future citizens, encompasses the general position of developing social ties based on differences: on the one hand, this implies the development of a concept of "community," based on solidarity, discussion and mutual support, constructed via the social processes developed through everyday life, whatever the community of origin (Strohl, 2008); and on the other hand, the inclusion of local territory (town, *département,* region) and local authorities as intermediary administrative bodies, involved in a continual process of information feedback, enabling differences to be dealt with as and when they arise, and wherever they arise, without necessarily sanctifying them as generalised laws but never-theless operating within an agreed national framework.

For instance, in France, the community development movement may be combined with that which appeared in municipal policies, and with its subsequent development, which was articulated with that of Education Action Zones, particularly in local education initiatives.

An example is given in the municipality of Aubervilliers, in the Paris area, with 60% of various immigrant populations represented by 60% of the town councillors. The majority of the national population is little concerned with certain aspects of the learning input introduced by teachers and linked to specific commemorative occasions and events of diverse reach (Sétif massacres in Algeria, for example), or the political decisions taken by Jacques Salvator, mayor of Aubervilliers. However, they can help citizens, whether young or not, to better accept the values that underlie national legislation, and to no longer perceive the area they live in as second rate. Young people can discover meaning in the history taught at school when they re-appropriate their families' memories in a celebration of events or festivals that either affect them personally or affect others, in collaboration with all the inhabitants of their town and not only in a place that specifically segregates young people like school (CEDIAS, 2008, p. 13).

In European countries other than France, the problem may, on the contrary, involve regulations imposed by the State in relation to the actions carried out by certain communities of citizens. In the UK, for example, the recent terrorist attacks in London committed by young British nationals who were educated in British schools, led to questions being raised as to the freedom that should be granted to communities with respect to the legislation voted by all citizens and its applications at school or elsewhere.

Iraqi-born Suleiman (2008), citizen of the United States, who did his undergraduate studies in the United Kingdom and is interested in France "by chance," noted that Europe is wealthy and the fear of a new world is "the privilege of the affluent" (quoted in Blumenfeld, 2008). A go-between *(passeur)* between East and West, and winner of the renowned French Goncourt prize for literature in 1993, Maalouf, author of *The Crusades through Arab eyes*, laments on the following evolution:

> Already when I was a young Lebanese boy concerned about the future of my country, I deplored the fact that it hadn't been built on a more solid footing, that a civic spirit worthy of this name had never been developed, that the people had always considered that belonging to a community was a more determining factor than belonging to a nation. In the world at that time, the popular concept was to go beyond communities to create a nation. This is not true today. On the contrary, the whole world is now breaking up into communities." (Flamerion, 2007; cf. Maalouf, 2009). But, like him, we can "tame the panther" (Maalouf, 2007, p. 187).

To Dane at the CEDIAS conference (2008), "civic skills" begin at the earliest age. Reuter (2007) research results confirm it. A school that transmits the basic idea that political legitimacy and the source of social ties are built on "the community of free and equal citizens" (Schnapper, 2000, p. 19, cf. 1994) seems to be the formula that best conforms to democratic values. It has fewer pernicious effects than the notion of "mono-communautarism,*"* but it must also

continually scrutinise and if necessary amend the notions regarding respect for the distinctive characteristics of each individual.

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