



INTRODUCTION  
CHAPTER ONE

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Creating the European Learning Citizen—  
Which Citizen for which Europe?

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**Introduction**

This volume is one of the outcomes of a European Union-funded thematic network—EURONE&T—which brought together scholars from Europe and beyond in order to critically reflect on the way the European Learning Space is being constructed. The network set out to investigate the implications of the European integration and enlargement processes on learning related policies<sup>1</sup> in the EU, including the new member states. As we will note in more details further on, education and training have historically been outside of—or at best marginal to—the policy remit of the European Commission, given that the key concerns of the EU have tended to focus more specifically around economic and political agendas. Learning moved much more to centre-stage in the post-Maastricht, and more so in the post-Lisbon era, when the EU aspired to make important strides forward in establishing itself as a ‘knowledge-based society’ in an attempt to turn the tide of global competition in its favour.

As many of the contributors to this volume note, this new policy focus on education, articulated as a response to the perceived threats of globalisation, produced specific effects at both member state and Community levels, promoting a particularly economic and technocratic approach to learning. A key concern of EURONE&T was to understand the learning society more broadly and holistically, that is as a society where knowledge and continuous learning occupy a central position and affect *all* aspects of life: not just the economic, but the political and social as well. In contrast to mainstream discourses which tend to privilege economic, technological and institutional issues, EURONE&T set out to put the *learning citizen* at the centre of its work. This volume reflects this stand-point. It thus investigates the impact of the



European integration and enlargement processes on learning related policies, but it does so by foregrounding the manner in which such policies contribute—or *fail* to contribute—to creating and supporting the learning citizen.

The present collection of papers has to be seen within the context of the overall thematic project, discussing learning related policies from different perspectives by the four thematic EURONET domains guiding the interdisciplinary discourses among scholars from Europe and abroad.

**Framework Domain:**

The Learning Society visions in Europe and beyond

**Thematic Domain 1.** Learning related policies in member states/regions between internationalised challenges and national systems.

**Thematic Domain 2.** Learning related policies and EU enlargement from the perspective of member states and candidate countries during transition to market economy in accession countries.

**Thematic Domain 3.** Learning related policies from the European perspective: European policies and research.<sup>2</sup>

This particular collection of papers addresses mainly the issue of the Domain 1 of the network. It therefore focuses on learning-related policies in member states and regions as these are being developed in response to the challenges of Europeanisation and globalisation. In their attempt to respond creatively to our invitation, the authors of these chapters have articulated a number of overlapping and inter-connected concerns in a way that, to our mind, rises to the challenge we set ourselves in the ambit of intellectual work. This is understood as a labour that necessitates ‘...freedom from the powers, criticism of received ideas, demolition of simplistic alternatives, [and] restitution of the complexity of problems’ (Bourdieu, 1998, p.106). This introductory chapter sets out to provide a synthesis of the themes and concerns that emerge from the chapters, placing them squarely within the context of the lifelong learning (LLL) discourse that is increasingly gaining hegemonic status both within and across Member States.

But first a note about the title of the volume: *Homo Sapiens Europæus*—somewhat tongue-in-cheek, of course, but also purposefully reminiscent of another utopian endeavour to create the ‘new man’—the *Homo Sovieticus* of the then ‘second world’—who needed to be moulded in such a way as to further the social and economic fortunes of another version of a ‘brave new world’.

For, as Heikkinen argues, there is little doubt that what we are seeing across Europe is the discursive ‘manufacturing’ of a new type of ‘wo/man’, and, we would add, a new—and restrictive—form of ‘citizenship’. The key in this ‘performative’ endeavour is ‘lifelong learning’, on which, it seems, Europe is placing its bets in the hope of becoming ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world.’ We shall also argue that in the LLL discourse, the ‘absent centre’ is, ironically, the ‘citizen’, who, ultimately, is supposed to reap nothing but benefits from a lifelong investment in learning, where, in a latter-day version of a new social contract made to measure for inhabitants of a ‘risk society’, a ‘new deal’ is struck in what has aptly been dubbed the ‘ruthless economy’: learn or be damned.

### **Key themes**

In considering the implications of the European integration and enlargement processes on learning related policies in the EU, and in the way such policies are mediated via national systems, traditions, cultures, and values, the contributors to this volume address five key overlapping themes, namely:

- the production of the lifelong learning discourse;
- the ideological *context* that shapes the LLL discourse;
- approaches to learning and to the Learning Society;
- the construction of the ‘citizen’ in relation to a Europe of learning;
- the EU, the Learning Society, and member states.

Some of the central insights that the authors generate in considering these inter-related themes are discussed below.

### **Producing the Lifelong Learning discourse**

A major theme addressed by practically all the contributors to this volume is the production of lifelong learning discourse. This critical inquiry as to both *why* and *how* LLL has become so deeply inscribed in our world views and everyday discourse is in itself salutary, given the almost common sense—and hence hegemonic—quality that the very term—and its use/s—have attained. It is salutary to remember that the idea of ‘lifelong learning’ is far from new, and in Europe has been around for well over a century at least. Indeed, the notion of ‘lifelong education’ more broadly has a long history that is anchored in the world view of several civilisations and cultural traditions, including those that emerged in China, India, classical Greece, medieval Arabia, and renaissance

Europe (Lê Thành Khôi, 1995). What characterises contemporary discourse about LLL is that over the past few decades the notions of education ‘from the cradle to the grave’ has become mainstreamed and popularised (Gelpi, 1985), with technological, cultural and economic transformations driving the notion that learning is, or should be, an ubiquitous phenomenon.

The authors in this volume make a number of points regarding the production and intensification of discourse on LLL. First of all, several authors note the role of the European Commission in the development of the discourse. There is indeed little doubt that the Commission’s *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, the consultation exercise in Member States, and the myriad follow-up activities—including meetings, reports, and EU-funded research—have served to intensify the discourse around LLL and the Learning Society—perhaps to an extent that was hardly imaginable a few decades ago. This does not mean that debates and reflections about LLL were not present in the member states prior to the *Memorandum*—rather, as Rasmussen notes, the EU policy texts draw on, combine, and filter educational discourses that are often present in national contexts, even if they may have different meanings and significance. But the Commission has done more than simply that. It has not simply and neutrally drawn on the different views on LLL that emerged through its consultation process. Rather, EU texts re-introduce the resultant discourses in the individual countries, leading to what can be called ‘harmonising effects’. This process has, in the post-Lisbon phase, been reinforced by the Open Method of Coordination which, as Dale and Robertson note, ends up assigning to the EU far more of a policy role than it had previously been able to establish in the area of education and training.

Several authors in this volume point out, however, that despite the increasing visibility of LLL as a policy theme across and within the EU, what we have here is still a *discursive* construction, that is, a *gesturing* towards a set of social practices that have yet to be realised. Ure, for instance, notes that while there is a slow penetration of LLL in national education and training systems, the latter are not yet transformed into anything like a LLL *system*. There might very well be a national discourse on LLL, but in many countries across Europe it is not at all evident that there are practices, social actors and institutions that constitute *systemic* elements of LLL.

Another key issue raised by a number of contributors to this volume refers to the *reasons* underpinning the Commission’s interest in promoting LLL. It is a well-established fact that initially, the definition of learning within Commission deliberations on LLL drew almost exclusively on a human capital approach, a perspective that was slightly modified due to the reactions during the consultation process, where more emphasis was placed not just on LLL as economically related to employability, but also to ‘personal fulfilment’, ‘active

citizenship', and 'social inclusion'. But, as Stuart and Greenwood aptly note, despite this seemingly genuine attempt to take into account the 'citizens' views', the fact remains that the European Employment Strategy (EES) is, in effect, the key trans-European policy vehicle with which to monitor the development and the implementation of LLL. The tight coupling between learning and employment means that the prospect for the implementation and monitoring of a more holistic LLL strategy is compromised.

Keep, writing in the same vein, also points out that the National Action Plans (NAPs) that have to be developed by the different member states in relation to the targets established by the EES are, necessarily, employment-oriented, and privilege an economic focus that sees the value of LLL in terms of its potential contribution to employability and productivity. This, in turn, leads to reduced attention to the wider societal, cultural, and citizenship aspects of LLL associated with the development of the individual for life and leisure outside the workplace. Such concerns appear to be justified when one considers the recent Communication on the Lisbon Strategy by the President of the Commission, Barroso (COM(2005)24 on 2.2.05) where 'growth' and 'jobs' are placed centre stage, almost to the exclusion of anything else. Within this document, LLL is practically exclusively tied to workplace development, and knowledge and education in a 'renewed Lisbon strategy' are meant to be mobilised in order to 'give people the opportunity to climb the productivity ladder', besides guaranteeing that the EU's overall productivity grows at a faster pace (p.14).

Other authors note that this intensification of discourse around LLL leads to a number of assumptions that need to be problematised, not least because such assumptions feed the policy making process at both the nation state and Community level. Chief among these assumptions is the one that draws a direct link between investment in learning and economic growth. As Keep notes, there is a problem in seeing education and LLL as a key lever for change, and for addressing what ultimately are *economic* challenges. Thus, more and better LLL need not necessarily provide people with better paid and more interesting employment, if there is little real growth in job opportunities. Seeing LLL in this light raises major questions about the value of endlessly investing in education, leading not only to qualification inflation but also to chronic underemployment. It is useful to quote Livingstone at some length in this regard, given that he has carried out some of the more extensive, empirically-grounded work on LLL (Livingstone, 2003). Summarising this research, Livingstone (2004, pp.17-18) notes:

'...there appear to have been only gradual changes in skill upgrading of the general job structure and incremental gains in the proportion of jobs predominantly involving the knowledge work of planning and design in the post-WWII period, while rates of completion of post-compulsory schooling and participation in further education

courses have grown exponentially. Employment-related informal learning remains even more extensive. Rates of underemployment—in terms of general unemployment, involuntary reduced employment and educational attainments exceeding job requirements—have also grown significantly during this period...Such evidence suggests that *we already live in a learning society in both formal and informal educational terms, but not yet in a knowledge-based economy.* [our emphasis]

What we tend to end up with, suggest many of the chapters in this volume, is an overly optimistic and ultimately misguided belief that LLL will set most things right, for individual and society alike. Of course, this ‘education gospel’—as Grubb and Lazerson (2004) have called it—is not new: throughout the history of industrialist capitalist societies, formal education has been touted as the solution of economic crises. What is surprising is the extent to which this ‘mantra’ keeps being intoned, despite the fact that human capital approaches have been definitively debunked (Livingstone, 1999). But then, perhaps it is not so surprising after all, given that ‘to insist that more education and training are the only solution to economic problems, to the exclusion of any serious attempt to address economic reforms themselves—as many current politicians do—is merely to divert attention from the central problem, lack of decent jobs’ (Livingstone, 2004, p.12).

Another related assumption underpinning the LLL discourse that is challenged by several contributors to this volume is the unproblematic connection between increased education and training on the one hand, and social inclusion and cohesion on the other. Rasmussen and others indeed point out the fact that the consumption of LLL is a *competitive* feat, which enables one citizen to get ahead of the other in the queue for employment and improved life chances: while education is often couched within a discourse that furthers social inclusion, the fact remains that education and training have become yet another strategy in a meritocratic struggle for survival in a competitive, Darwinian society, signalling ‘positional battles’ between an ever-increasing number of highly certified applicants for a small pool of ‘good jobs’. Citizenship here is necessarily associated not with collective good, but with a competitive individualism where the devil takes the hindmost.

### **The ideological context that shapes the LLL discourse**

Linked to many of the points made by the different authors in relation to the way the notion of LLL is being ‘framed’ discursively is the fact that the ‘master discourse’—the actual ‘frame’—is neo-liberalism. What we have referred to as a discursive intensification around LLL in Europe has been accompanied by a shift in the way the nature and purpose of education are articulated. Seddon and

Mellor capture well the significance of this shift, not only in relation to the EU, but also to other regions of the world, including their native Australia: ‘Market reform insists that we learn, all the time, about everything, exhaustively and exhaustingly all through our lives. But it also insists on learning that is utilitarian in character and oriented to enhance productivity, narrowly conceived. It is learning framed largely by the market rather than by citizenship.’ The critique here is not simply that the view on humans should be *widened* towards other social components, for this would mean that for the *homo economicus*, the economy *as it is* is fine. The critique is also a critique of this ‘real existing’ economy which apparently requires a specific type of a social creature—a person who lives to work, and not works to live.

Here again the exercise of our historical imagination becomes critical: it is therefore important to recall that initially, much of the discourse on lifelong education galvanised around the idea of education as an *emancipatory* practice that enhanced participatory citizenship in a democracy (Ranson, 1998; Jarvis, 2001; Borg & Mayo, 2002; Wain, 2004). Drawing on the writings of Dewey, Gramsci, and Freire among others, the adult education field produced a series of key texts that promoted the idea of education beyond schooling, culminating in the highly influential Unesco report by Faure and his colleagues in 1972, significantly entitled *Learning to Be*. Influenced by the deschooling movement, by radical critiques of the way education served the interests of capital and contributed to the reproduction of inequality, and by the left-leaning post-war climate, liberal humanist and even radical agendas were developed, alongside more utilitarian ones, with a view to ensuring that all citizens had access, throughout their life, to an education that was enabling and empowering socially, politically, and economically. A typical, summative definition outlining the philosophy of lifelong education and the politics of the LLL movement current at this time—one that we would be hard put to place in the present-day forum on LLL—is that articulated by Dave (1976, p.34):

‘Lifelong education is a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the life-span of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life of both individuals and their collectives. It is a comprehensive and unifying idea, which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning for *acquiring and enhancing enlightenment so as to attain the fullest possible development in different stages and domains of life. It is connected with both individual growth and social progress.* That is why ideas such as ‘learning to be’ and ‘a learning society’ or ‘an educative society’ are associated with this concept.’ [cited in Wain, 2004, p.9—our emphasis]

Most of the contributors to this volume note that this emancipatory view of education has all but been silenced in the current preoccupations about European competitiveness in the global economy. The intensification of

discourse has not succeeded in maintaining the equitable balance in agendas that underpinned earlier movements in favour of LLL: what seems to matter in the mainstream view of LLL is ‘learning to *have*’. As has already been noted, while pressure arising from the consultation exercise led to the expansion of the Commission’s Memorandum to take on citizenship issues, the actual evaluation of progress to LLL is based on the European Employment Strategy, and thus unabashedly vocationalist in orientation. All in all, progressive strands have been largely domesticated within the current construction of the ‘official’ lifelong learning discourse at European level. True, as Dale and Robertson note, learning within the context of the Lisbon declaration is framed by five distinct discourses—namely competition, the knowledge-based economy, sustainable growth, more and better jobs, and greater social cohesion. But these ultimately contradictory discourses are conditioned by—and fall within the shadow of—the imperative to regain and maintain competitiveness in the global market—an imperative that has taken on an even more resolute turn following the Kok Report (European Commission, 2004).

The human capital imperative is driven by a widely-held assumption and a deep-seated conviction that advanced societies can only thrive if they transform themselves into knowledge-based economies. In other words, survival in the face of global competition depends on the capacity of the individual—our new European *Homo Sapiens*—to remain open to learning, and to the perpetual re-fashioning and re-creation of the self in order to be of service to a greater cause, and to fulfil his/her duty towards two ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1983)—not just the state, but Europe as well. In this scenario, ‘learning is next to godliness’, for it contributes towards the wealth-generation process, to the development of ‘high ability’ economies, and to ensuring that citizens do not become a burden to society by losing their economic use-value. It is the resolute self-investment in education and training, on the part of the European ‘citizen’, that will ensure that the ambitious aims of Europe—i.e. nothing less than becoming ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010’—are fulfilled.

### **Approaches to learning and to the Learning Society**

This imperative to learn is, in a sense, species-specific. Indeed, many have pointed out that the distinctive characteristic of *Homo Sapiens* is the ‘will to learn’ (Bruner, 1966). However, never, historically, has learning been touted with such force, presented as nothing less than a moral obligation. Several of the chapters in this volume consider different aspects of ‘learning’: its nature, its meaning within specific national, cultural, and regional contexts, and its transformation within a knowledge-based economy. A key observation is that,

for all the concern that there apparently is with education and training, much of the discursive density in the Europe-wide consideration of LLL is on Member State education *systems*, rather than on *processes* of education as such. And as Dale and Robertson note, the fact that an overwhelming theme is the issue of early drop-outs from formal education and training gives away the game: the concern, as has already been suggested earlier, is with ensuring the availability of adequately trained human capital, and not with learning *per se*.

Several contributors to this volume note that the reductionist and homogenising discourse on learning in the EU fails to recognise the fact that different countries have different conceptions and traditions of learning. A focus on process rather than on outcome, and a consideration of the cultural contexts in which flesh-and-blood citizens—rather than disembodied, atomic individuals (*vide* Heikkinen)—engage in learning, suggests that it is problematic to adopt a ‘harmonised’ view of LLL that is promoted at EU level. Rasmussen, for instance, notes how the Danish educational tradition promoted the social and personal dimensions of learning, besides the cognitive and instrumental ones. He attempts to rescue from his own country’s past some of the features that are largely missing from the vocationalist approach to learning that has become hegemonic, including: the recognition of the rights of citizens to participate in education throughout their lives and the concomitant obligation of the state to support this; the commitment to open educational access to facilitate social equality; and the linking of public education systems to collective actors, such as labour market partners and social movements. This lies in stark contrast with the views on learning promoted by UNICE, one of the employers’ fronts on a Europe-wide scale which, as Stuart and Greenwood note, not only unrelentingly stresses economic competitiveness and employability in its approach to LLL, but which has categorically rejected the ETUC’s attempt to advocate LLL as an individual *right*.<sup>3</sup>

Laske also engages in historical excavation and comparative analysis in an attempt to retrieve notions of learning that seem to be increasingly silenced in the current debates on LLL. She thus makes reference to the VET tradition in Germany, where training was not a purely economic construct based on the division of labour, but encompassed the citizen both as a working and a social being. This lies in contrast with the narrow view of a *homo economicus* that is often found in Anglo-Saxon countries but which, according to Laske, has no equivalent in the German vocational education tradition.

Green, on his part, takes up this notion that learning is culturally determined and addresses the overarching question of whether we can identify different regional models of lifelong learning within Europe, deriving from longstanding historical affinities in cultures, political systems and socio-economic structures. He is concerned with analysing how far these models

depend on certain regional socio-economic contexts, and whether they are constitutive of the different models of the Learning Economy/Society which have been posited in the literature. Most importantly, he concludes that the EU generally has much to learn from the Nordic ‘model’ or approach to LLL, given that it comes closer to the vision of a ‘competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy ... with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’ than any other region does. In other words, it is the Nordic states that seem to most closely approximate to a model of the knowledge society that combines high level of economic competitiveness with relative equality and high levels of social cohesion—a point that is also made by Keep.

A key aspect of LLL that is addressed by a number of authors in this volume concerns the fact that learning is being reconstructed and re-imagined within the context of a (largely ‘mythical’) knowledge-based economy. Heikkinen, for instance, notes how the management of learning by the ‘Eurobusnocracy’ has reduced knowledge to the accumulation of ‘competences’, a fragmented approach that obfuscates the relationship between ‘knowing’ and ‘being’, and between ‘knowledge’ and ‘wisdom’, while at the same time rendering the process more open to measurement in relation to perceived skills gaps. The ‘management of learning’ becomes increasingly important, so that all forms of knowledge and skills acquisition have to be identified, assessed and made visible and valued according to the needs and occupational standards set by employers. The role of the individual *qua* learner is to accumulate such competences, and to provide ‘evidence of learning’ in a sophisticated exercise of ‘self-promotion’ and ‘self-marketing’.

In relation to this, Magalhães and Stoer note that the notion of LLL, particularly when couched in economistic terms, signals and vehicles the idea that education is now ‘individualised’, i.e. it is ‘no longer a public good demanding social/collective responsibility, but rather a private commodity which leaves it up to the individual, condemned to struggle throughout life to remain attractive to the market of employability’. Stuart and Greenwood also note that one result of this individualisation of responsibility for education and training is a shift in the terrain of the debate from a focus on full employment, to the individual’s characteristics that make him or her employable—such as flexibility, adaptability, and so on. Through the individualisation of responsibility for training, the individual ends up having only himself or herself to blame for his own unemployment.

At one level, such individualisation and the accompanying emphasis on the strategic consumption of educational and training services strongly suggest the need for mechanisms that facilitate equal access to learning resources. In other words, such changes require the development of a *system* of LLL to sustain learning, and the variety of learning initiatives that are said to have a lifelong

and lifewide perspective. But the individualisation of learning (for employability purposes) in contrast to collective learning (to advance citizenship) also means that the investment in LLL is driven by the tempo of business cycles and of the unemployment rate. Ure is quick to point out that as a consequence, the vocationalisation of adult education leads to a policy focus on those who are employable—with deleterious repercussions for the rest and for the whole notion of equal access.

Some of the authors also note that the way learning is being conceptualised in mainstream discourse on the knowledge-based economy—exemplified, for instance, by the notions of a ‘learning organization’, or of ‘communities of practice’—is weakening the boundaries between sites of learning, work, leisure, and communities. While such developments are often portrayed ‘heroically’ by those who work from within the human capital paradigm, many of the contributors to this volume are somewhat more sceptical and cautious. The multiplication of learning centres from which ‘clients’ buy services could encourage the dismantling of educational systems, and to any concern for equal access. Ure also is rightly worried that the individualisation of learning and the delegation of LLL to various learning environments of everyday life can lead to a situation where learning needs are defined not by teachers and educators, but by employers and leading organisations. A case in point would be the increasing emphasis on workplace as a site for learning. Work-based learning, Keep notes, challenges aspects of work organisation and job design, and promotes the upgrading of the workplace as a learning environment with roles for employers and trade unions. However, much of the rhetoric around work-based learning and the learning organization remains highly problematic given the dynamics of capitalism in the ruthless economy. As Ure points out, capital accumulation increasingly depends on maintaining market flexibility through short-term contracts. The emphasis on cost containment and flexible labour markets discourages long-term investment in human capital.

### **The learning citizen**

As has been pointed out from the outset, one of the key goals of EURONE&T and of this volume is to make the ‘learning citizen’ the object of analysis, an especially important goal given the fact that the ‘citizen’ tends to disappear in the macro discourse around knowledge-based economies, both in terms of being grounded anthropologically (as flesh-and-blood beings), as well as socially and politically (as active members of a participatory democracy). In contrast, several of the authors in this volume are keen to focus on the historical and geographical constitution of humanness between nature and culture.

Reading about ‘lifelong learners’ in much of the mainstream literature on the learning society gives the impression that, as Heikkinen rightly notes, they ‘have no bodies, sex, age, families, no social or ethnic characteristics.’ When the complex ‘messiness’ of individual lives are referred to, it is largely in relation to the way that the low achievers, the unproductive, the poor and needy, the incompetent, the disengaged and dissident—all represent wasted investment and failure in the development of European human resources. But attention to the way individuals and groups make sense of the ‘heroic myths’ surrounding the LLL discourse can be very revealing.

Indeed, it has already been intimated that much of the LLL discourse is based on ‘push’ factors (i.e. the social, labour market and technological transformations that ‘impel’ citizens to remain constantly engaged in learning and training). But the question needs to be raised: why should this ‘learning imperative’ ‘resonate’ with the citizen? The standard rhetorical response would be that in the knowledge-based economy, where change and innovation are the order of the day, continued learning is the key to the management of insecurity and risk. But as Keep points out, and as we have made clear earlier on in this chapter, such a response does not stand up to the evidence, given that it is only a minority of workers that are actually employed in the knowledge-rich sector. As Grubb and Lazerson (2004, p.245) note in relation to the extreme claims made on behalf of the knowledge-based economy:

‘... the Knowledge Revolution has directly touched only a minority of jobs at this point, perhaps 1 to 5 percent of all nongovernmental workers... Some claims, such as the statement that college for all is ‘just common sense,’ are simply absurd when only 30 percent of job openings require any kind of postsecondary education.’<sup>4</sup>

And citizens know this. Those studies which, like Antikainen’s (2005), take a life-history approach and try to connect with citizens as *subjects* rather than as objects of research, amply show that lifelong learning is far from becoming a reality in the life-courses of people.<sup>5</sup> This, of course, does not mean that there is a disengagement from learning, but that as by far the greater majority of workers feel that they are underemployed, they prefer to that invest in learning that is not necessarily work-related. Keep underlines this point when he shows how for many, the re-engagement with learning seems to most often start with learning experiences that are focussed on issues other than development for employment. This consideration is worth dwelling on a bit further, particularly in the light of the fact that we see Europe-wide a new phenomenon of disengagement from personal investment in building one’s identity around work, signalled by the publication of two best-sellers, i.e. Corine Maier’s *Bonjour Paresse* and Tom Hodgkinson’s *How to be Idle*. Both authors advise that the route to well-being is to refuse to have one’s energies absorbed by

one's work, and to save oneself for 'real life' outside the workplace—a stark contrast to the admonitions of the policy-makers, in a case that might be termed 'the citizen strikes back'. The promise of 'salvation' in and through work might make sense from the perspective of the policy making and employing classes, but it cuts little ice with the citizen who knows that ultimately, despite the rhetoric, a few jobs may indeed be fulfilling, but the majority are not and never can be. To quote Terkel's (1974) classic study on work, too many people feel trapped in 'jobs that are too small for [their] spirits.'

Another aspect of the focus on the 'learning citizen' concerns the social and political dimension of citizenship, namely, that of being an active player in a participatory democracy, and the role of learning therein. The contributors to this volume are unanimous in noting that within the prevailing ideological context, the 'good citizen' is defined as one who is constantly engaged in learning/training to maintain 'use value'. They resist this notion, and find the coupling of 'learning' with 'citizenship' strategically useful in pointing out the social and civic dimensions of education and training. As Seddon and Mellor note, within a neo-liberal context, education has increasingly become considered to be a 'private good', and it only has value as long as it gives an individual social and economic advantage (Kuhn, 2005). Within such a perspective, learning is a commodity, with the individual being construed as an innovative entrepreneur, a 'can-do' achiever striving for individualistic and particularistic benefits. Seddon and Mellor, like other authors in this volume, articulate a different vision for the 'learning citizen', one for whom learning is a collective responsibility, and whose goal is collective and universalistic benefit—what the classics refer to as the 'virtuous life'—a doer of public good in collective decision-making arenas.

Many of the authors therefore argue for a different kind of education, one that equips citizens to act in ways which can enhance *both* the individual *and* society. Underlying this view is a concern that the Lisbon agenda severely constrains the possibilities for the development of the kind of citizenship learning not associated with economic citizenship. Thus, several authors wonder about the extent to which citizens are getting an education that provides them with the tools to interpret the complex realities around them. Indeed, Seddon and Mellor argue that schooling in neo-liberal times creates a narrow kind of citizenship that does not question market liberalism, with citizens not even aware of the right to challenge the dominant discourse, or that alternatives exist.

From a different though related perspective, some of the authors wonder about the extent to which the European integration project succeeds in helping citizens rise above their rootedness in nation-states, in order to exercise their citizenship rights on a European scale. Ulma considers the (largely limited) successes in the attempts to inculcate a European dimension among teachers

in France, using mobility in order to promote ‘Europe as a state of mind’, and to facilitate ‘the critical reflexivity that puts national conceptions into perspective, and [the] redefinition of value systems thanks to objectivization and dialogue’, which, she hopes, ‘opens up the education area in such a way as to have a significant influence on living together in Europe.’ Field and Murphy, on their part, are somewhat less sanguine about the notion of European citizenship, and of the Habermasian notion of a learning society entailing Europeans making the ‘abstract leap’ from local to national to supra-national democratic consciousness. While education and training could make a contribution to the development of European citizenship and post-national identities, for Field and Murphy the prospects for a genuinely European civil society remain remote, largely due to the manner in which the EU project is being formed, with ‘a loosening of ties binding elites to the masses.’

### **The EU, the Learning Society, and member states**

A critical consideration of the project ‘Europe’—and particularly of the ‘learning Europe’—was very much at the heart of the concerns of the thematic network, and consequently of this volume. A key question we asked authors to consider is the way the EU has promoted a specific understanding of the Learning Society and of LLL, and how such an understanding has had an impact on the policy-making process in the member states.

Some of the authors raise issues about the nature of the EU in relation to the enterprise of learning, noting a contradiction between Europe being seen as a *shield* against globalisation and rampant neo-liberalism, while at the same time aspiring to be a dominant actor in global economic competition. Heikkinen makes much of this contradiction, arguing vehemently—from the point of view of a citizen from one of the more ‘peripheral’ of Europe’s member states—that Europe’s aspirations are reminiscent of war, pillage, and colonialism, serving to silence and cut out the non-European inside and outside the EU. What she sees, under the guise of global competition, is ‘the struggle on ownership, control and exploitation of natural resources’, which, historically, has ‘always gone hand-in-hand with military, political, ideological and educational supremacy.’

Of course, Europe’s (Lisbon) agenda is no different from that of the US or Japan—or even of some of the Member States individually. It is indeed about the struggle for domination of markets in a context of cut-throat global competition. Some of the authors still entertain the hope that, despite these similarities, the EU project is—or rather, *could* be—formulated within a context of the European Social Model. Magalhães and Stoer, for instance, consider a variety of possible metaphors for Europe, making a case for seeing the EU as a ‘bazaar’, a place where citizenship expresses itself through the

community of general rules that do not violate the differences of citizens. They, like Field and Murphy, wonder if the EU can construct itself as a new type of entity, a political model that can reconfigure the feeling of national belonging, providing the basis for a reinvented form of citizenship. In doing so, they are echoing the sentiments expressed by Rifkin (2004), when he contrasts the EU with the USA, saying:

“While the American Spirit is tiring and languishing in the past, a new European Dream is being born... [that dream] emphasizes community relationships over individual autonomy, cultural diversity over assimilation, quality of life over the accumulation of wealth, sustainable development over unlimited material growth, deep play over unrelenting toil, universal human rights and the rights of nature over property rights, and global cooperation over the unilateral exercise of power.”

But ultimately, the overwhelming impression one gets from most of the authors is that this European Dream—of tempering the market economy by a strong social dimension that gives pride of place to the citizen—increasingly appears to be just that: a dream. The increasingly neo-liberal turn within the Commission, signalled by its President’s recent communication, confirm the extent to which the commitment to market logic is deepening as panic sets in with the Lisbon targets fading away in the horizon.

The authors of the volume were asked to consider whether learning-related policies adopted at the EU level are having an impact on the member states. In other words, it is not only necessary to ask what shape the EU project is taking at supra-national level: it is equally important to ask whether that form is also shaping learning-related policies at the member state level. A consideration of this relationship between levels proved both challenging and complex, given that the European integration process includes both the development of supra-national structures and identities, and the preservation and development of regional and national cultural characteristics. This is especially true for education, with individual member states jealously guarding their autonomy in the field.

A point made by several contributors to the volume is that EU action in the field of education and training has intensified in the post-Maastricht, and especially post-Lisbon phase. While initially, EU intervention in education focused on the development of a so-called ‘European dimension’, with a view to promoting the *feeling* of being European, in response to charges that this new supranational entity was a politicians’, not a citizens’ Europe, increasingly this European dimension has come to be seen as a strategy to add value to the efforts of each member state’s efforts to transform itself into a knowledge-based society. From the point of view of the Commission, trans-border EU efforts in education and training—through mobility, harmonisation of educational cycles, and equivalence structures in qualifications—are expected to generate

a new dynamics where the whole would be larger than the parts, putting Europe firmly on track to attain the Lisbon targets.

Contributors to this volume refer to several ways in which the EU has, in Field and Murphy's words, asserted its 'creeping competence' in matters educational. Among these one can mention funding leads via EU programmes, muscular invitations to harmonise policy and practice (e.g. the Bologna, Copenhagen, and Maastricht processes), key officials becoming socialised into the trans-national culture of EU policy making, peer pressure tactics, and the incitation to the emulation of what is benchmarked as 'good practice' through the so-called 'open method of co-ordination' (OMC). Dale and Robertson, Field and Murphy, and other authors in this volume in fact conclude that developments post-Lisbon—and particularly the setting up of the Concrete Future Objectives, together with the establishment of a mechanism to co-ordinate the attainment of these objectives through the OMC—assign to the EU far more of a policy role in education than it has previously been able to establish. Through the OMC, member states may remain free to develop their own coherent and comprehensive strategies, and to design and manage their own systems, but the goal ultimately is that they broadly move in the same direction, on the basis of a shared normative basis for common action.

An even more structured influence on the LLL agenda in the member states could be attributed to the European Employment Strategy, given that in terms of policy convergence, the EES has played an important role in making LLL a political priority, generating debate, but also providing raw data for evaluating comparative progress towards pre-established goals. Four authors in this volume in fact focus on the impact of National Action Plans, providing comparative evidence to show that while in some of the Member States the NAPs are used as a reporting mechanism, in others they actually set the agenda for policy making. Because of their role in monitoring and auditing progress, NAPs, argues Keep, are a means of getting a Commission foot in the nation state's policy door.

Despite the undoubted influence of the Commission in setting member state educational agendas, several authors suggest that such influence is dependent on a number of factors. As the first, most explicit form of a 'networked state', the EU opens up possibilities for individual and group affirmation at different levels (i.e. local, regional, national, and global). As Stuart and Greenwood note, the Member State level still acts as an important filter for EU-wide discourse, so that the convergence of market-oriented policy levers that are pushing the agendas for training and LLL through outcomes at nation state level are not determined, as at this level they are mediated and shaped by historical, traditional and institutional structures. It clearly makes a difference to the extent of the impact of EU-level policy directions if, at member state level, LLL is managed centrally by the state or is decentralised and outsourced,

if employers and the social partners play an important role in provision or if they do not, and if the balance between education and training fluctuates one way or the other—a point that is also made by Green. Furthermore, in some cases, EU policy directions may simply serve to crystallise trends *already present* in member states. Both Rasmussen and Heikkinen note, for instance, that the documents produced at EU level on LLL may not serve to develop and implement specific policies as much as they *reflect* and *legitimise* policies that have already been adopted.

The filtering of EU-level policy directions in education by the member states, note some of the authors, depends on the power they enjoy within the Commission—in this regard, Rasmussen points out to the relative weight of Germany or France compared to Denmark, for instance—not to mention the new member states, many of which seem to be happy to fall over themselves to accommodate Brussels—at least on paper—in order to be in the Commission’s good books (*vide* various chapters in Strietska-Ilina, 2005). Dale and Robertson note that while no member state is against Lisbon in general, none, and certainly not the more powerful countries, are positively ‘for’ it as a guide to their own national policies in education—a fact which seems to certainly be true for the UK, a clear instance of a case where ‘Lisbon has not really penetrated the thinking of the Ministry in relation to LLL.’

Overall, then, there is plenty of evidence of gaps between Community aspirations for LLL, and the realities of implementing such targets. Keep, for instance, points out that the benchmark of 35 hours dedicated annually to LLL is not very visible in most member states; that technological literacy targets have been ignored by the UK, where the LLL policy rhetoric is in sharp retreat and is being replaced by narrowly defined workforce development measures; and that the objective of setting national targets in LLL has not met with much success in most of the member states. This, however, should not blind us to the fact that the Lisbon agenda has made important inroads into the way education is defined narrowly in relation to employment and economic growth, and that the Commission has an increasing number of instruments in its arsenal to not only promote that agenda, but also to support the ruling elites in the member states in walking the same road.

### **Beyond a synthesis**

This synthesis of some of the key themes and issues raised by this collection of chapters is necessarily partial in both meanings of the term: it is a selection from a much richer set of ideas, and one that resonates most closely with what is of concern to us. Readers will undoubtedly find much more to consider

as they work through the different chapters, identifying other themes and arguments that they will, we are sure, find helpful in the challenge of thinking through the challenges posed by the notion of lifelong learning.

The over-riding impression one gets from most of the readings is that neoliberalism and the concomitant reduction of education to its economic function have, as Heikkinen

Argues (but see also Kuhn, Tommasini & Simons, 2005), colonised and hijacked the LLL debate at both the EU and member state level, to such an extent that while educational institutions, workplaces and communities are increasingly acknowledged as learning contexts, they are largely considered within the frames of economic rationalist discourse, which is concerned about business outcomes, but which seems unconcerned about social and civic outcomes. Such a state of affairs should not blind us, however, to the spaces that remain, and which we must occupy if we are to make a difference. As Magalhães and Stoer note, ‘it is at the site of the tension between the depoliticisation of education, resulting to a large extent from the effects of the current wave of neoliberalism, and its repoliticisation through the assumption of reclaimed citizenship that, in our view, the political agenda for education is being reconfigured.’ The case for a ‘reclaimed citizenship’ is made by several authors in this volume, a task which requires both sophisticated analysis and political action. Field and Murphy, for instance, wonder about the extent to which the partial legal competence of the EU in education and training can be harnessed as a means of facilitating the construction of a post-national identity at the EU level. Magalhães and Stoer go on to argue that ‘to see amongst the threats and opportunities that are arising from emergent social dynamics only the ‘invisible’ hand, inevitably dirty, of neoliberalism may be a way of refusing renewed forms of political agency.’

If this volume contributes to this important task of redefining education from the perspective of a reclaimed citizenship, and of further galvanising the will to actively engage in promoting alternative, more emancipatory educational practices and democratic civic spaces, then our labour, and that of the authors, will have served its purpose.

## Notes

1. The term ‘learning related policies’ signals that the focus includes a range of policy fields that relate to learning but that are not usually covered by the somewhat more narrow concept of ‘education and training policies’. The project therefore adopted a wide interdisciplinary approach that looked beyond educational research to consider such fields as labour market and science and technology policy research. Such a broadened view seems particularly necessary with regard to the stated aim of developing the EU into a learning society and the fact that various policy fields are affected by—and need to contribute to—this development by promoting innovation and learning in many fields. The term

'policies' is understood to stretch from 'intentions' to concrete measures of implementation. 'Policies' are represented by laws, government programmes, constitutions, decrees, whereas 'measures' are actions that put these intentions into practice (in various areas, to various degrees). EURONE&T aimed to reflect and map 'learning related policies' in accord with this definition of the term.

2. The outcomes of the EURONE&T work feature in four volumes, all published by Peter Lang. Other than the present book, the publications include: *The Learning Society in Europe and Beyond* (edited by Michael Kuhn and Ronald G. Sultana); *The Clash of Transitions—Towards a Learning Society* (edited by Olga Striestka-Ilina); and *The European Learner—A new Global Player?* (edited by Michael Kuhn). Dr Michael Kuhn, the Director of the Forum for European Regional Research at the University of Bremen in Germany, was the overall co-ordinator of the network.
3. For a discussion of the role of organised employers as a lobby group that influences Commission thinking on education, see Sultana (2002). This paper focuses in particular on the European Round Table of Industrialists.
4. Livingstone (2004) draws on a number of sources to make similar points regarding Canada, where knowledge workers still made up less than 10 percent of the labour force in 1996. He also estimates that for the US labour force only about 20 percent of job openings will require a university degree in the early part of this century, compared with over a third of new entrants who have one, while the vast majority of new jobs will require only short-term training. Livingstone's conclusions are that in aggregate terms, formal educational qualifications in Canada and many other advanced industrial countries clearly exceed formal job entry requirements.
5. Antikainen focused on lifelong learning in Finland, in comparison to eleven other countries.

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