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Bridging anticipation skills and intercultural competences as a means to reinforce the capacity of global citizens for learning to learn together

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1. Introduction

The present paper is part of an ongoing action-research project which the authors conduct based on experiments in collective intelligence approaches of foresight and anticipation in the context of activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations or intergovernmental organizations. A starting point of our reflection is that much of today's political debate in many countries tends to be polarized around issues pertaining to identities and cultures. Such polarization is expressed in the various forms of physical violence exerted by individuals, terrorist groups or State representatives against specific groups or whole populations as well as in the various forms of symbolic violence that can surface in speeches on the presence and status of immigrants or the degree to which persons born in a given country to immigrant families belong to a country. These behaviours and attitudes can be interpreted as symptoms of the fact that, in a globalized world cultural differences are, in a near mechanical fashion, sources of clashes (Huntington, 1996). It can be argued, though, that while it is a fact that the forces of globalisation can be said to impose unto the different cultures a sort of forced coexistence (in the form of immigrants, unforeseen goods and services or even media contents), it does not follow that the mere co-presence of different cultures should produce conflicts. Our hypothesis is rather that the crisis of coexistence purportedly experienced by contemporary societies is a crisis of the future, that is a crisis in their collective capacity to imagining common futures shared across borders and cultures. Living together in peace requires, in our view, that members of a community have a capacity to imagine shared or common futures. Following this assumption, it can be said that the crisis described above has roots in the fact that our conceptions of the future have traditionally been shaped within local, provincial or national communities: what we lack is a collective capacity to imagine common futures that would match the scale and scope of globalisation. Building on the hypothesis that renewed conceptions of the future could enhance intercultural relations in a globalized world, this paper addresses two main issues bearing (1) on the possibility of characterizing global citizenship as future-oriented and (2) on the issue of instilling citizens with a global consciousness that would entail a future-oriented awareness.

If we take the notion of citizenship as inseparable from equality and democracy, the answers to these two questions cannot be separated, bearing in mind that thinking about the future holds nothing self-evident from a political perspective. Ivan Illich expressed a clear warning as to the power issues attending the use of the future: "At present people tend to relinquish the task of envisaging the future to a professional élite. They transfer power to politicians who promise to build up the machinery to deliver this future. They accept a growing range of power levels in society when inequality is needed to maintain high outputs. [...] Alternate political arrangements would have the purpose of permitting all people to define the images of their own future." (Illich, 2001). This assertion by Illich makes it clear that we should

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