

Extended synopsis of “Media/Anti-Violence” (EU-ERG No. 203487/ 2009-11):

Narrative media/cultural interaction as means of preventing adolescent violence and political/religious extremism.

The target of the research project to be conducted during my employment with *Cultures Interactive – Interkulturelle Bildung und Gewaltprävention e.V.* (english: *Cultures Interactive – Intercultural Education and the Prevention of Violence*, registered non-profit association, NPO) is to explore and evaluate possibilities of implementing the results and experiences from this research into areas of social work with different sectors of endangered adolescents, as it is currently carried through by *Cultures Interactive* (CI). The association (CI) at present does social work with different sectors of endangered adolescents, for example with individuals and groups being prone to xenophobic and gang related violence, to political and religious extremism, drug abuse, also with adolescent prison inmates of these sectors, with soccer fans and at schools and institutions which service adolescents who might be latently endangered to be drawn into any of these kinds of delinquent activities. This is done, in particular, in regions of East Germany but also in Poland and in the Czech Republic. CI also engages in the development of new and more adequate pedagogical methods for doing this work under the complex conditions of the contemporary historic and demographic situation of quickly evolving and adjusting inter-ethnic European societies (see also B3.1.)

The MC-Fellowship’s project, which I am currently working on is basic research. It pursues the question of „how individuals, both intellectually and psycho-affectively, interact with media narrations“ about issues which are personally challenging to them or may even have had „psycho-traumatological“ ramifications in the past, thus impairing the individual’s future life quality and options of formal education. This includes the question of „how an individual’s life history comes into play with her/his media interaction“ and how „mental interaction with media narrations“ affects and maybe assists the individuals’ dealing with the challenges presented by her/his biography and by being a member of an increasingly multi-ethnic and trans-national knowledge society“ (see also B2.2.). The ERG-project is designed to be applied research. It aims at practically testing, experimenting with and empirically evaluating possibilities of application in contexts of social work with endangered adolescents.

From the general conclusions drawn of the MC-EIF-interview project the following may be emphasized: (1) the relationship between an individual’s private/personal interaction with media and cultural narratives and the particular developmental challenges s/he faces as a result of her/his specific life history, is very close. (2) This then implies: engaging in literary and media interaction – especially if properly assisted through pedagogical means – may have considerable impact in terms of the constant mental work, in which any person is permanently engaged while unwittingly attempting to cope with and/or psychologically integrate certain parts of her/his biographical experiences. (3) Moreover, it showed that this kind of half-conscious mental work is very complex due to mental dynamics of ambivalence, conflict, and possibly psycho-traumatic experience as well as the patterns of psychic and interactional defence and coping with such ambivalences. Therefore the structure of the mental processes are not immediately evident to the individual nor to the interviewer and thus implicate particular methodological challenges in order to access, reconstruct, and – possibly – work with the mental, psycho-dynamic processes of biographical media interaction, be it in contexts of teaching, doing social work or personal therapy (for the last aspect see also the SNF-project in Zurich, B4.2.). The case studies from the MC-EIF-project reconstructs such mental processes in exemplary fashion. Pivotal for the success of the method was the narratological theory foundation on which the actual interview methods are based as well as the sources in psycho-therapy studies from which I draw during data analysis.

Equally pivotal, however – and this pertains to the ERG-project –, this narratological foundation seems to have been for the interviewed persons themselves. Narrating ones life history

vis-à-vis an interviewer who is trained to listen and ask certain kinds of narrative follow-up questions designed to expand and deepen the process, in almost all instances has proven to create a personally meaningful experience for the participants; even more so did the situations in which the participant is asked to narrate and associate about specific events of media experience – and to do so in the context of a group interaction which is conducted by a person with experience in group-dynamics. Thus, the project's participants subjectively experienced the interview process as personally insightful and valuable in terms of their further personal growth and skill development; albeit none such effects of personal consciousness-building and awareness-raising were intended in the project.

Given these results and the general research experience it seems most probable to assume that the narrative elements of the research design, if properly adjusted and applied in pedagogical perspective, may prove an effective factor in social work of violence and risk prevention. For, being able to reach the more personal and the psycho-affective levels of self-experience in individuals and groups focussing on media experiences, narrative methods may help to prevent the dynamics of intensifying ideological fixation, escalating violence and other forms of borderline behaviour. Hence, the ERG-project aims at developing methods of narrative and cultural/media interaction in groups for the context of 'cultural social work', as it is currently conducted by *Cultures Interactive* (IC)

The specific targets and aspects of the employment are: (1) to explore methodological interventions and pedagogical moduls of narrative cultural/media interaction which may be fitted into the work settings of IC and other comparable settings, (2) evaluate the impact and success of theses interventions by different methods of qualitative evaluation as well as case- and team-supervision, (3) modify and document the interventions and (4) publish the results; furthermore, (5) develop a post-graduate training program in Narrative Culture and Media Teaching for teachers, lecturers and social workers (see also B1.2.).

The projects premises are all the more encouraging given the state-of-the-art in the respective fields, i.e. the deficits and gaps which European traditions of studying and teaching culture, and literature – and to a lesser degree also current media studies having evolved from the philologies (or else from quantitative research) (HW 2007h /p, see also B1.3.) – are characterized by: Main-stream academic philologies/humanities, being in charge of teaching culture, arts and media seem – largely – indisposed to systematically contribute to developing psychologically well based solutions to concrete psycho-social challenges as working with risk populations of adolescents (see also B4.2). As far as the state-of-the-art of social work and 'cultural social social' work in risk prevention is concerned, there is almost no systematic methodological consideration of media-interaction. Also, this field of activity has its own traditional gaps in methodology, as can be seen with the traditional approach of "Betroffenheit"-pedagogy, i.e. the pedagogy of moral consternation vis-à-vis German historic guilt, as well as largely cognitive approaches of preventive information (also see B3.1.). Only in view cases narrative and group-dynamic methods are worked with, however, the more through-going group-analytic approaches are not yet observed.

Thus, the scientific framework of the ERG-project is established by interdisciplinary resources of qualitative social studies and media-interaction research, qualitative therapy- and psycho-trauma studies, qualitative research on violence, narratology as well as culture studies and pedagogy. The target is to develop and evaluate narrative methods which are appropriate and effective with this kind of population and document the results of the project, in one sentence: to establish "narrative media literacy" and "narrative interpersonal skills" as criteria and pedagogical tools of social work with risk populations among European adolescents. The results of both the MC-EIF-project and the ERG-project will be systematically fed back to the respective academic fields, especially to philological culture studies which are least engaged in such questions of applied research (also see B1.3.) as well as to media and pedagogical studies.