

MYPLACE News

June 2012

About MYPLACE

1st June, marked the end of the first year of the MYPLACE (Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement) project. MYPLACE is a large scale, multi-partner project funded by the European Commission's 7th Framework for Research and Development (FP7). MYPLACE will run until 31st May 2015.

The project investigates how young people's social participation is shaped by the shadows (past, present and future) of totalitarianism and populism in Europe. Co-ordinated by Hilary Pilkington at the Sociology Department of the University of Warwick, the research involves a consortium of 16 research institutions from 14 European countries as well as 14 stakeholder public institutions (museums, NGOs, archive and document centres).

MYPLACE is interdisciplinary in nature, bringing together researchers trained in disciplines across the social sciences (including sociology, politics, anthropology, psychology and cultural studies). It includes five major empirical work packages using survey, interview, focus group and ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis in an integrated re-search design.

More on the project's aims, methods and the project partners can be found on the project website www.fp7-myplace.eu



www.fp7-myplace.eu



<http://myplacefp7.wordpress.com>



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MYPLACE Project Meeting—Riga, May 2012

“Mixed-method, interdisciplinary social research on this scale clearly presents many challenges, but it is this same scale which the team believe makes the project genuinely exciting.”

The first year of the project was effectively brought to a close with the third project meeting, held in Riga at the University of Latvia. This meeting was, in many respects, a landmark meeting for the project. A public opening to the meeting was held on Thursday 24th May, attended by MYPLACE team members from across Europe, together with interested academics from Latvia.

In the morning invited speakers Howard Williamson (University of Glamorgan), Catherine Woollard (European Peacebuilding Liaison Office), Marta Medlinska (Council of Europe) and Evija Rudzite (Youth in Action, Latvia) joined MYPLACE policy co-leads Marti Taru (Tallinn University) and Mick Carpenter (University of Warwick) in a policy forum, discussing current issues around youth policy in Europe, including the implications of the proposed “Erasmus for all” programme.

This was followed by an afternoon session in which another invited speaker, Olga Shevchenko (Williams College) spoke about her current research on the transmission of memory – a key theme which puts the ‘M’ into MYPLACE. The public event ended with MYPLACE team member Klaus Levinsen (Southern Denmark University) leading a discussion of what European survey data can tell us about ethnic intolerance in Europe. MYPLACE researchers from Croatia, Germany, Finland and Hungary then provided their perspectives to the issues raised.



University of Latvia: Venue for the MYPLACE project meeting

Research design and planning

From the morning of Friday 25th May until lunch time on Sunday 27th the project team, with 63 delegates from the 16 partner universities, turned their attention to the business of planning and organising the work of the project. Links with policy makers and practitioners, dissemination and ethics were all on the agenda with good progress made. The key milestones for the meeting were related to the four elements of the project (Work Packages, in EC project terminology) which will provide the bulk of MYPLACE’s primary data.

In the survey work package, the final debates and decisions were made on a common questionnaire which will be used for the 18000 young people, aged 16-25, in 30 fieldwork sites across 14 countries later this year. Work on

the survey has been lead by the team from the Sociology Department at Manchester Metropolitan University, with work package co-leads from the Caucasus Research Resource Centers, Tbilisi, focusing on sampling strategies.

Simultaneously, intensive work to develop a common interview schedule for use in follow up interviews with 900 young people from the survey sample (co-ordinated by Centro de Investigato e Estudos de Sociologia in Lisbon and University of Debrecen) culminated in the approval of a set of core common questions.

These common research instruments formed two key deliverables to the European Commission, and will be key elements in the MYPLACE data collection.

MYPLACE

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Research design and planning continued....

Meanwhile, other Work Package co-leads (Anton Popov from University of Warwick and Dusan Dekak from Univerzita sv Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, Slovakia) prepared a common template for 15 reports on the transmission of memory and discourse production, linked to work with museum and NGO partners in each country.

Another key Work Package will see over 40 ethnographic case studies of youth activism completed. The Riga meeting was used to finalise the list of cases, which includes a broad spectrum of activist groups, from formal and state-sponsored organisations and aspiring political parties to occupy movements and indignants; from far right activism to the radical left (where and if such distinctions still hold) and much of the spectrum in between. The researchers in this work package (led by Hilary Pilkington and Phil Mizen at University of Warwick) then used the discussion time in Riga to organise

them into broad clusters, to allow cross-case analyses to be organised.

The process of agreeing common instruments and strategies in a project of this size is rarely straightforward. Local contexts must be considered, and the instruments must be flexible enough to allow for local variation, while being rigid enough to allow cross-national, cross-regional and cross-case analysis. The challenge of this analysis was the topic for the final plenary session where Hilary Pilkington, as qualitative lead and Gary Pollock (Manchester Metropolitan University), coordinating quantitative components of the project, began to outline a vision for analysis which will continue to evolve as the project progresses. Mixed-method, interdisciplinary social research on this scale clearly presents many challenges, but it is this same scale which the team believe makes the project genuinely exciting.

Partner Universities

- ◆ University of Warwick, UK
- ◆ Manchester Metropolitan University, UK
- ◆ Tallinn University, Estonia
- ◆ University of SS Cyril and Methodius, Trnava, Slovakia
- ◆ University of Bremen, Germany
- ◆ Jena University, Germany
- ◆ University of Eastern Finland, Finland
- ◆ University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
- ◆ ISCTE, Lisbon University Institute, Portugal,
- ◆ 'Region', Ul'ianovsk State University, Russian Federation
- ◆ Daugavpils University, Latvia
- ◆ Caucasus Research Resource Centers, Georgia,
- ◆ Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia
- ◆ Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, Spain
- ◆ University of Debrecen, Hungary
- ◆ Panteion University of Athens, Greece

