

Toleration and the Public Sphere

Investigators:

Dr Gideon Calder, Dr Jonathan Seglow, Dr Phillip Cole

This project aimed to explore the prospects for a productive and inclusive transformation of the public sphere in Britain and Europe, especially the legal and political dimensions of that transformation. It did so by involving participants from diverse backgrounds, both within and beyond academe, in the discussion of pressing, difficult issues concerning the negotiation of cultural difference and the contemporary meanings of 'toleration'. We held five one-day workshops during 2006, in London, Newport, Stirling, York and Belfast. Thus by holding workshops in a range of geographical contexts, each with themes related to their location, and with different voices represented each time, we sought to establish a distinctive forum for the exchange of ideas, in a way which emulated the overall theme of the workshop series itself. Discussions varied in pitch and tone according to the topics at hand. Written outputs have included pieces in the press and in mainstream periodicals, a book, *Citizenship Acquisition and National Belonging*, co-edited by three of the workshop chairs (to be published in 2009 by Palgrave), and a symposium in the philosophy journal *Res Publica*.

Workshops held in 2006:

April: 'Cultural Identity and Freedom of Expression'
University of Wales, Newport
Chair: Dr Gideon Calder

April: 'Immigration and Citizenship'
Royal Holloway, University of London
Chairs: Dr Phillip Cole and Dr Jonathan Seglow

August: 'Gender Equality and Cultural Justice'
University of Stirling
Chair: Dr Andrea Baumeister

September: 'Toleration and Multiculturalism'
University of York
Chair: Professor Susan Mendus

November: 'Division, Democracy and the Public Sphere'
Queen's University Belfast
Chair: Dr Cillian McBride

Published outputs:

Magazine article:

Gideon Calder 'Where do we go from here?'
Planet 177, June 2006 (on issues raised by Newport workshop)
www.planetmagazine.org.uk

Newspaper article:

Gideon Calder, 'Questions that must be asked?'
Western Mail, 19 October 2006
<http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk>

Book:

Citizenship Acquisition and National Belonging: Migration and Membership in the UK and Beyond

Edited by Gideon Calder, Phillip Cole and Jonathan Seglow (workshop chairs)
(Palgrave, 2009)

Journal symposium:

'Gender Equality and Cultural Justice', edited by Andrea Baumeister Calder
(comprising contributions from four participants in Stirling workshop)
Res Publica: A Journal of Legal and Social Philosophy (Springer), vol. 14, no. 3
(2008) .

Journal special issue:

'Recognition, Equality and Democracy: Normative Perspectives on Irish Politics',
co-edited by Cillian McBride, Jurgen De Wispelaere and Shane O'Neill
(participants in Belfast workshop)
Irish Political Studies, vol. 22, no. 4 (2007)

Spin-off networks and projects

Five participants in this series (Calder, Cole, De Wispelaere, McBride, Seglow) have since made a successful bid for a related, consolidating project under the Religion and Society networks scheme – entitled 'Religion, Justice and Well-Being: the normative foundations of public policy in a multi-faith society'. This will commence with a workshop at University of Wales, Newport in April 2008.

Contribution to debates

This was evident in successful, surprising ways both throughout the workshops themselves, and in the resultant publication outputs. We have been delighted with the vibrancy and cogency of the discussion, in both senses.

The project engendered:

- Fruitful dialogue between academic and non-academic stakeholders
- Lively discussion at all of the events and a desire to take that forward in publication – as evidenced above

More specifically, and with each seminar topic, a deeper sense of how different factors, themes and issues are perceived and 'pan out' from diverse angles. The broad range of backgrounds and experiences among participants has provided genuine insights into the different preoccupations and frameworks that inform the actions and expectations of various 'stakeholders' in this important area, and highlighted the complex relationship between competing values, discourses and priorities.