

Listening

Summary

We live in a very fast changing world. 20 years ago, we had 2 superpowers: the Soviet Union and the USA. In the Soviet Union, media had the clear agenda to tell people what to think and to educate them about what was “right” and what was “wrong”.

When the Soviet Union fell, we were left with the USA as a single power. However, after the US’ decision to invade Iraq and after the economical crisis, this role is changing again. If you look at the political landscape today, you can identify about 6 global players.

These fast changes have been made possible by the media. Especially the third turning point in media, which was the invention of the internet, has made it possible to distribute ideas extremely fast, which helped to speed up social and political changes.

Comment

When I heard that “a very important man from the media” was going to give the Introduction Speech, I immediately had to think of Rupert Murdoch. I thought of a man sitting in an oversized chair in one of his apartments, drinking Whiskey and watching the TV channels he owns, as if he was gazing upon his creation.

My opinion of most people who work in the field of TV is not very good.

Approximately 2 minutes into Mr. Colakoglu’s speech, this opinion started to change and I realized that owning TV stations does not automatically make you a puppet master. His idea of the Soviet Union’s fall because of their extremely strict media policies resembles my idea that a transparent and open state actually increases people’s trust in their government, and the fact that he called the internet one of the best inventions of all times made me smile in agreement as I had never heard that sentence from anyone his age. I

do agree that media has been shaping humanity since it's invention, and I am also positive that the three turning points he mentioned are milestones in human history, even though I consider the invention of writing not as important as the printing press and the internet. What's the point in having a way to archive ideas when you can't spread them?

Reading

Summary

In the Interview, Mr. Colakoglu focusses on the cultural history of Istanbul, mentioning that the city has been the capital of three of the longest-living empires in history. Because of this history, the people of Istanbul have developed a wide range of acceptance for different cultures and religious beliefs. He also states that Istanbul is a European city, and that the title of the Cultural Capital of Europe will make people more aware of this fact. When questioned if the idea of Istanbul being European might suggest that the eastern parts of Turkey might be less European, Mr. Colakoglu points out that many members of the EU also have problems with underdeveloped regions, such as Italy or Spain. Concerning the accession of Turkey to the EU, he says that becoming a Cultural Capital will introduce the true face of Istanbul, and therefore Turkey, to many EU citizens.

Comment

When I arrived in Istanbul, I was surprised by how European the city felt. I have always had the opinion that Turkey was a European country, but seeing a city that is divided between Europe and Asia but that looks like any other Mediterranean city in the EU still made an impression. Mr. Colakoglu describes Istanbul as a perfect example of a multicultural city that is still changing extremely fast even though it has hundreds of years of history, which is also exactly the way I see Istanbul.

It is often said that Istanbul is at the crossroads of the Islamic and the European culture, which is a sentence I strongly disagree with. I do, however, not disagree with Istanbul being at the crossroads, I just feel offended by comparing Islamic culture and European culture: One being a religious term and the other one being geographical. Istanbul is not a cultural or a religious border, it is a mere geographical one. It is at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, but who cares about man-made borders, when the people of the city being divided do not only respect each other, but do actually form one common culture combining all their history and heritage.

Writing

Over the past year, I have had the amazing opportunity to be part of two EYP sessions, one being national, the other one being international. Now that I came back from the International Youth Forum 2011 in Istanbul, I would like to open your mind to EYP.

When I first prepared for the National Selection Conference last year, I did not really know anything about the European Youth Parliament. I imaged it to be a sort of discussion forum for people of my age, where we could talk about important European issues and where I could possibly improve my English. Little did I know that this only covered about 20% of what EYP is actually about.

Upon arrival in Vienna, we immediately started with team-building exercises. Some of these exercises mainly focussed on having fun, while others pushed me to think outside the box, to rely on others and to do things I had never done before. All these exercises made me realize that EYP is not about sitting in a room with 10 other grumpy people, talking about dry political topics. At this point, i felt that EYP was in fact about meeting people, making friends, forming an opinion on important topics and learning how to express this opinion.

With this knowledge in mind, I attended the International Youth Forum 2011 in Istanbul, and again, I was challenged. I was challenged not by others, but by myself. I had to find out that a lot of personal growth I gained from the National Session had simply vanished within the last year, that I had ignored promises I had made to myself, and that I had to go through a big part of the learning procedure again.

Luckily, I had the chance to work with some of the nicest, most creative, and most respectful people I have ever met, and I learned more about myself and others than I could possibly imagine. I, again, made a lot of friends and learned a lot about important topics, but this time, I felt that the main change happened within myself. I felt that this time, I would not forget the things I learned immediately after the Closing Ceremony.

So, with both EYP sessions in mind, I can say that, for me, EYP is about two things: Meeting good people and, **together**, becoming even better.