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Abstract

In this policy paper we outline some of the prevailing ways in which interculturalism is being positively contrasted with multiculturalism, especially as a set of political ideas, in European contexts of post-migration diversity. We argue that while some advocates of a political interculturalism wish to emphasise its positive qualities in terms of encouraging communication, recognising dynamic identities, promoting unity and critiquing illiberal cultural practices, each of these qualities too are important (often foundational) features of multiculturalism. We begin by exploring the four areas contrast identified above, before turning to the implications of this discussion for existing citizenship regimes. We conclude that until interculturalism as a political discourse is able to offer a distinct perspective, one that can more persuasively speak to a variety of concerns emanating from complex identities and matters of equality and diversity, it does not eclipse multiculturalism and should instead be considered as complementary to multiculturalism. To illustrate this further we offer five policy orientations relevant to the European context.

Keywords

Citizenship, Culture, Dialogue, Equality, Interculturalism, Multiculturalism, Unity

Background*

When David Cameron declared in February 2011 that multiculturalism had failed, he was echoing the sentiment of a number of politicians in 'old' immigration countries, especially France and the Netherlands. Addressing the Munich Security Conference, his comments came not long after the German Chancellor Angela Merkel had declared 'multiculturalism has failed, completely failed', despite Germany having never adopted a multiculturalist policy agenda. In Cameron's case, those multiculturalist policies the UK has developed broadly remain intact even though an anti-multicultural rhetoric has now achieved traction and that the concept of multiculturalism is politically embattled. The reasons for the wider anti-multicultural turn are various, but include the view that multiculturalism has facilitated social fragmentation and entrenched divisions; for others it has displaced attention from socio-economic disparities; or encouraged a moral hesitancy amongst 'native' populations. Some even blame it for international terrorism.

Alongside these anxieties over multiculturalism a number of other political orientations promoting unity have come to the fore, including the discovery or rediscovery of national identity, notions of civicness, or in a resurgent – 'muscular' - liberalism. Several governments also speak of social or community cohesion, and hovering above all these is 'integration'.

Yet one 'competitor' term has been little explored despite both its frequency in public discourse and that it appears to retain something of what multiculturalism is concerned with. This is the concept of 'interculturalism' and the related idea of 'intercultural dialogue' (Meer and Modood, 2012). For example, both the Council of Europe and UNESCO have been promoting the concept as a preferred mode of integration to multiculturalism, and it is now frequently found in places as diverse as German and Greek education programs, Belgian and Quebec commissions on cultural diversity, and Russian teaching on world cultures. A symbolic example is how 2008 was designated as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID), with the European Commission's stated objective being to encourage 'all those living in Europe to explore the benefits of our rich cultural heritage and opportunities to learn from different cultural traditions'.

It is worth stepping back from these fine sentiments to consider what distinguishes these efforts from others concerned with recognising cultural diversity. Is interculturalism, as some have suggested, an 'updated version' of multiculturalism? If so: what is being 'updated'? If not, in what ways - if at all – is interculturalism different, substantively or otherwise, from multiculturalism? We suggest there are four.

Four Key Issues

1. Beyond multicultural co-existence?

Firstly, *communication* is said to be a defining characterisitic of interculturalsim. The question is to what extent this can be claimed as either a unique or distinguishing quality of interculturalism when dialogue and reciprocity too are foundational to most, if not all, accounts of multiculturalism.

Take Charles Taylor's essay *The Politics of Recognition* (1992), widely seen as a founding statement of multiculturalism in political theory, and in which he characterizes the emergence of a modern politics of identity based on an idea of 'recognition'. In it he emphasises 'dialogical' relationships and argues that it is a mistake to think people form their identities 'monologically'

* For a fuller version, see our chapter in M. Barrett (ed) *Interculturalism*, Council of Europe, October, forthcoming.

(without dependence on others). As such he maintains that we are 'always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us'.

Another landmark text is Bhikhu Parekh's *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000). His argument is that cultural diversity has an intrinsic value *precisely because* it challenges people to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own cultures and ways of life. He distinguishes his multiculturalism from various liberal and communitarian positions which may recognise that cultures can play an important role in making choices meaningful for their members, or host the development of the *self* for the members of that culture. Parekh's argument that cultures other than one's own have something to teach us, and that therefore members of minority cultures should be encouraged to cultivate their moral and aesthetic insights for humanity as a whole, is largely built upon a prescription of intercultural dialogue.

For both Taylor and Parekh, then, communication and dialogue are in different ways integral features to their intellectual and political advocacy of multiculturalism (Meer, 2010). The point is that to consider multiculturalists who draw upon these and similar formulations as being unconcerned with matters of dialogue and communication is to profoundly misread and mischaracterize their positions.

Moreover, even amongst those who do not elaborate a philosophical concept of dialogical multiculturalism, dialogue is important at a political level. Whatever their varying views about the importance of say entrenched rights, democratic majoritarianism, special forms of representation and so on, they all see multiculturalism as the giving of 'voice' in the public square to marginalized groups. Specifically, these authors also argue that dialogue is the way to handle difficult cases of cultural practices such as clitoridectomy, hate speech, religious dress and so on. So, whether it is at a philosophical or a political level, the leading theorists of multiculturalism give dialogue a centrality missing in liberal nationalist or human rights or class-based approaches – and missed by interculturalist critics of multiculturalism. The multiculturalists assume, however, that there is a sense in which the participants to a dialogue are 'groups' or 'cultures' and this leads us to a second point of alleged contrast with interculturalists.

2. Less groupist and culture bound

It is said that the diversity of the locations from where migrants and ethnic minorities herald, gives rise not to a creation of communities or groups but to a churning mass of languages, ethnicities, religions all cutting across each other and creating a 'superdiversity'. An intercultural perspective is better served in these sociological realities, it is argued, in a way that can be contrasted against a multiculturalism that emphasises strong ethnic or cultural identities at the expense of wider cultural exchanges.

Notwithstanding this problematic description of how groups feature in multiculturalism(which is fundamentally inconsistent with how they do indeed feature in ideas of multiculturalism) (Young, 1990), we need here to distinguish between two different politics of interculturalism. Discourses of interculturalism in Europe tend to be relatively apolitical, civil society based interculturalism of local encounters, conviviality and everyday life to critique multiculturalism without explicitly offering an alternative politics to it (Zapata Barrero, 2013). To find an explicit political interculturalism we need to turn to Quebec, to authors such as Alain-G. Gagnon and Gerard Bouchard. Gagnon and Iacovino, for example, contrast interculturalism positively with multiculturalism, but the interesting aspect for our discussion is that they do so in a way that relies upon a formulation of groups, and by arguing that Quebec has developed a distinctive intercultural political approach to diversity that is explicitly in opposition to Federal Canadian multiculturalism. Their positive argument for interculturalism can be expressed in the following five stages.

Firstly, there should be a public space and identity that is not merely about individual constitutional or legal rights. Secondly, this public space is an important identity for those who share it and so

qualifies and counter-balances other identities that citizens value. Thirdly, this public space is created and shared through participation, interaction, debate and common endeavour. Fourthly, this public space is not culture-less but nor is it merely the 'majority culture', all can participate in its synthesis and evolution and while it has an inescapable historical character, it is always being remade and ought to be remade to include new groups. Fifth and finally, Quebec, and not merely federal Canada, is such a public space and so an object to which immigrants need to have identification with and integrate into and should seek to maintain Quebec as a nation and not just a federal province (the same point may apply in other multi-national states but there are different degrees and variations of 'multi-nationalism').

These interculturalists make a moral and policy case for the recognition of relatively distinct sub-state nationalisms. As such they're less concerned with the diversity of the locations from where migrants and ethnic minorities herald, or the 'superdiversity' that this is alleged to cultivate therein. Its emphasis on multi-nationalism does distinguish it from post-immigration multiculturalism (and post-immigration interculturalism) but not multiculturalism per se.

On the other hand, the less macro-level interculturalism which focuses on nineighbourhoods, classroom pedagogy, the funding of the arts and so is not a critique of multiculturalism but a different exercise. Unfortunately, it is offered as or used to play an anti-multicultralist role. It is politically deconstructive of the alleged essentialism of multiculturalism without a constructive politics of its own except for a celebration of cultural mixing and the local. It leaves an empty space where there should be national discourses, policies and belonging.

3. Committed to a stronger sense of whole

A third related charge is that far from being a system that speaks to the whole of society multiculturalism speaks only to and for the minorities within it, and so fails to appreciate the wider framework for its success. It thus encourages resentment, fragmentation and disunity. This can be prevented or overcome through an interculturalism that promotes community cohesion on a local level and the subscription to national citizenship identities.

What such sentiment ignores is how all forms of prescribed unity retain a majoritarian bias that places the burden of adaptation upon the minority, and so is inconsistent with interculturalism's alleged commitment to 'mutual integration'. Much of the literature on national identity in particular has tended to be retrospective to the extent that such contemporary concerns do not enjoy a widespread appeal (while the opposite could be said to be true of the literature on citizenship). It was this very assessment which, at the turn of the millennium, informed the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain's (CMEB) characterisation of British national identity as potentially 'based on generalisations [that] involve a selective and simplified account of a complex history.' Chaired by Bhikhu Parekh, it feared such an account would be one in which '[m]any complicated strands are reduced to a simple tale of essential and enduring national unity' (2000: 16)'.

The CMEB was alarmed at how invocations of national identity potentially force ethnic minorities into a predicament not of their making: one in which majorities are conflated with the nation and where national identity is promoted as a reflection of this state of affairs (because national identities are assumed to be cognates of monistic nations). For in not easily fitting into a majoritarian account of national identity, or either being unable or unwilling to be reduced to or assimilated into a prescribed public culture, minority 'differences' may therefore become negatively conceived. The multicultural objective here was to place a greater emphasis upon the unifying potential of a renegotiated and inclusive national identity. In contrast to localist interculturalism, this is a genuine concern for a national citizenship, albeit perhaps a more pluralist one than Quebec-style interculturalism. While the latter point is welcomed by some commentators who had previously formed part of the pluralistic Left, the bringing of previously marginalised groups into the societal mainstream is, at best, greeted more ambivalently.

4. Illiberalism and culture

The fourth charge is that multiculturalism lends itself to illiberality and relativism, whereas interculturalism has the capacity to criticise and censure culture (as part of a process of intercultural dialogue), and so is more likely to emphasise the protection of individual rights. In Europe this charge assumes a role in the backlash against multiculturalism, and is particularly evident in the debates concerning the accommodation of religious minorities, especially when the religion is perceived to take a conservative line on issues of gender equality, sexual orientation and progressive politics generally (something that has arguably led some commentators who may otherwise sympathize with religious minorities to argue that it is difficult to view them as victims when they may themselves be potential oppressors).

For these reasons Muslim claims making has been particularly characterised as ambitious and difficult to accommodate. This is the case when Muslims are perceived to be in contravention of discourses of individual rights and secularism, and is exemplified by the way in which visible Muslim practices such as veiling have in public discourses been reduced to and conflated with alleged Muslim practices such as forced marriages, female genital mutilation, a rejection of positive law in favour of criminal sharia law and so on. This suggests a radical 'otherness' about Muslims and an illiberality about multiculturalism, since the latter is alleged to license these practices.

Will Kymlicka identifies this as central to a 'liberal-illiberal' front in the new 'war' on immigrant multiculturalism.

It is difficult, however, not to view this as a knee-jerk reaction that condemns religious identities rather than examines them on a case-by-case basis, while on the other hand assuming that ethnic identities are free of illiberalism. This is problematic given that some of these practices are not religious but cultural. Clitoridectomy, for example, is often cited as an illiberal practice in the discussions we are referring to. It is, however, a cultural practice among various ethnic groups, and has little support from any religion; indeed, religious condemnation may be the most effective way of eliminating it. So to favour ethnicity and problematise religion is a reflection of a secularist bias that has alienated many religionists, especially Muslims. It is therefore much better to acknowledge that the 'multi' in multiculturalism will encompass different kinds of groups and does not itself privilege any one kind, but that 'recognition' should be given to the identities that marginalized groups themselves value and find strength in, whether these be racial, religious or ethnic (Modood, 2013).

Taken as a whole the interculturalism v multiculturalism debate is one strand of wider discussion on the proper ways of reconciling cultural diversity with enduring forms of social unity. We maintain that interculturalism, and other concepts such as cohesion and indeed integration, need to be allied to multiculturalism rather than presented as an alternative.

Implications

What this means is that while advocates of interculturalism wish to emphasise its positive qualities in terms of encouraging communication, recognising dynamic identities, promoting unity, and challenging illiberality, each of these qualities already feature (and are on occasion foundational) to multiculturalism too. Moreover, multiculturalism presently surpasses interculturalism as a political orientation that is able to recognise that social life consists of individuals and groups, and that both need to be provided for in the formal and informal distribution of powers, as well as reflected in an ethical conception of citizenship, and not just an instrumental one. As such we conclude that until interculturalism as a political discourse is able to offer an original perspective, one that can speak to a variety of concerns emanating from complex identities and matters of equality and diversity in a more persuasive manner than at present it cannot, intellectually at least, eclipse multiculturalism.

That, then, is the intellectual argument, and Kymlicka (2012) shares it in his view that interculturalism is not sufficiently different from multiculturalism to be an advance, yet has argued that there may still be a pragmatic case for pretending otherwise. As it is clear that as some of the advocates of broadly multiculturalist policies, especially those able to influence European governments, have given up on the term 'multiculturalism' in favour of 'interculturalism', progressive intellectuals should consider abandoning the term 'multiculturalism' to promote their policies and join the interculturalist bandwagon (or 'fad', as he calls it).

Kymlicka understands better than most the dynamics of intellectual-political engagement, and as a leading publicly engaged scholar from whom we, as indeed very many others, have learned a great deal, this is a forceful observation. In our view, however, he overestimates the political power of the term 'interculturalism' in Europe. Kymlicka argues, by reference to the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue issued by the Council of Europe in 2008 after consultations with various experts, NGOs and stakeholders and signed by Ministers from the forty seven member states, that by 2008 'there was a clear political consensus that we need a post-multicultural alternative, to be called 'interculturalism'. While we acknowledge that not all European countries are in the same position on interculturalism, we would emphasise three issues in particular. Firstly, the Council of Europe is a forum for international discussion but has no powers and is certainly not to be in any way confused with European institutions such as the European Union and its Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Secondly, it is simply not the case that there is a consensus amongst European governments in favour of interculturalism, nor have European governments made much if any effort to promote the White Paper (a Google search on 15 October, 2011 showed that out of the first 100 items listed by Google, there were no newspapers, popular magazines, TV or radio channels endorsing interculturalism, only the Council of Europe and various NGO, think-tanks or related networks websites). We suggest that this is because 'interculturalism' belongs to certain kinds of NGOs and not to those making or implementing policies or the media which comments on them. When we do hear Western European politicians such as Merkel, Sarkozy and Cameron talk about multiculturalism, as they most conspicuously and loudly did in the winter of 2010-11 to denounce it, they did not mention let alone offer any advocacy for 'interculturalism'. The most favoured alternative term to 'multiculturalism' is 'integration' and its synonyms in various languages. Given that this is the case, it is not obvious that the best political strategy is to subscribe to the intellectually shoddy 'interculturalism myth' (as Kymlicka describes it). A better strategy is to ensure that multiculturalism is presented as one, amongst other, modes of integration. Just as some politicians have recognised that 'assimilation' is too politically damaged to be resuscitated and so have preferred to use terms such as 'cohesion', 'integration' and national identity while giving them an assimilative interpretation, so advocates of multiculturalism should contest those meanings and demonstrate that these concepts are capable of multiculturalist interpretations. In so doing it is not unreasonable to point out to interculturalists that whilst they have good reasons for wanting some aspects of multiculturalism reformed, they should not be joining the pillorying of multiculturalism, as they do not have good reasons, intellectual or political, for abandoning multiculturalism. Our final point is that we do not understand why Kymlicka offers the advice that he does to Europeans but does not act on it himself in respect of Canada. He says that he can continue to advocate multiculturalism in Canada because it has, in contrast to Europe, substantial support there. Yet he is fully aware that the majority of intellectuals, politicians and publics in Quebec reject Canadian multiculturalism in favour of interculturalism. So, on the basis of 'do as he does, not as he says', we prefer to follow his example of continuing to argue that an intellectually persuasive critique of multiculturalism has not yet been made by interculturalists.

This is not to say that interculturalism has not found some traction amongst policy commentators who are sympathetic to the idea that in large metropolitan centres, qualitatively novel policy questions are posed by 'super-diversity' across Europe e.g., Amsterdam, Antwerp, Berlin, Birmingham, Copenhagen, Marseille and Malmo, amongst others (cf Open Society Institute, 2010). Hence Ted

Cantle has combined a previous interest with social cohesion in such contexts, with interculturalism. Drawing upon the argument put forward by Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah (2010: 5), Cantle in particular sounds 'superdiversity' as a death knell for multiculturalist policy. In Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah's (2010: 5) view, 'people do not identify around single identities and feel conflicted allegiances (if any allegiance at all) to predefined groups, activism around particular 'strands' seems irrelevant to many people and may not even be that effective in addressing the true causes of inequality' As we have elaborated in a recent debate (Modood and Meer, 2012), it is clear that people do identity with groups, and though they do so in a number of ways that may give emphasis to different subjective boundaries (which in turn may shift over time), it is implausible to suggest that group identities based around 'standard identifications' have withered away. In particular, in their reading, Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah (2010) appear to retreat to a 'choice' based view of social identity which, to take one example, ignores how processes of racialization may create new groups not necessarily chosen by minorities themselves (though of course how a minority will respond to this process of racialisation will vary). This has implications for conceptions of interculturalism, as super-diversity understood as the undermining of group categories, appears politically naïve and analytically simplistic. No less important, however, is how some proponents of super-diversity understand and use the concept as a means to add to and broaden out (instead of eliminate) the role of standard group categories.

Much of course hangs in super-diversity on what is in addition to multiplicities of ethnic categories, religions, languages and other cultural differences; namely that which is conceived as novel that super-diversity is seeking to explain. To this end, Vertovec (2007) identifies some core features, from which three related characteristics stand out. Each, however, are arguably more about registering and taking seriously the implications of diversity rather than pointing to qualitatively new experiences of it. One, for example, turns on the following possibilities for methodological innovation:

> Research on super-diversity could encourage new techniques in quantitatively testing the relation between multiple variables and in qualitatively undertaking ethnographic exercises that are multi-sited (considering different localities and spaces within a given locality) and multi-group (defined in terms of the variable convergence of ethnicity, status, gender and other criteria of super-diversity) (Vertovec, 2007: 1046).

So a concern with superdiversity would be more responsive to space, multiplicity, and flux than conventional registers of diversity. One question this raises is whether this is best pursued by replacing or refining existing approaches. For example, in one study of capturing super-diversity in survey and census questionnaires *where an ethnicity question is posed*, the author concluded that the most viable approach would necessarily be 'paired with traditional categorical question [e.g., what is your ethnic group] only where space on the schedule and human resources permit' (Aspinall, 2012: 362). Notwithstanding the methodological discussion of what is plausible and meaningful in terms of data collection, being sensitive to superdiversity has implications for policy formulation in a number of respects, not least minority participation in governance regimes. Here channels of engagement and representation need to be alert to 'smaller, less (or not at all) organized groups' in addition to larger and well established associations (Vertovec, 2007: 1047). This includes the danger that 'new immigrant populations are effectively ''squeezed out'' of local representative structures and consequently wield little power or influence' (quoted in Vertovec, 2007: 1047). It is a question of participation which spans a range of sectors 'concerning the assessment of needs, planning, budgeting, commissioning of services, identification of partners for collaboration and gaining a broader appreciation of diverse experiences in order generally to inform debate' (ibid. 1048). What is striking, however, is that such an activity requires a significant governmental commitment that is facilitated by a wider political consensus that is supportive of the kinds of comprehensive examination of superdiversity's implications for public services that Vertovec would like to see. To a large extent then this depends on a deepening and enriching commitment to many of the core features of multiculturalism, e.g., tailoring social policies for the needs of different groups more precisely, and targeting them more accurately.

Policy Orientation

We offer five key policy suggestions to promote inclusion and participation in multicultural societies:

1. The work undertaken by different kinds of multiculturalists in debates over remaking national identities across different national contexts, including in terms of common membership and meaningful forms of integration, should be recognised as on-going tasks. If – as some argue – European societies are becoming even more plural (or 'super-diverse'), then advocates for pluralist modes of integration will need to build on past successes rather than seek to erase them.
2. In both theory and practice, Equality and Diversity go hand in hand. Policy makers cannot pursue programmes of equal treatment without registering and accommodating features of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Recognising diversity alone, however, is an insufficient means of tackling socio-economic and political disparities. Policy makers must therefore register that disadvantage is sometimes experienced differently by different groups. Moreover, this cannot be overcome by way of polices configured to individuals alone, in a manner that ignores how disadvantage occurs at a group level. Experience throughout the EU shows that the most effective policies are those which take community context into account.
3. A genuinely democratic public sphere can only thrive if minorities (as well as majorities) feel confident enough to participate and are audible when they do. This includes religious minorities too. Europe is an increasing religiously diverse continent which, more often that not, has given religion a place within the public square. Newer religious minorities should not therefore be deterred from developing publically recognised infrastructures. This can generate forms of civil society capital that are able to contribute to the well being society as a whole.
4. Political leaders at local and national levels should bolster consultative forums so that minority voices can become more audible. This means listening to and encouraging the participation of representative groups from ethnic and religious minority communities no less than non-ethnic or religious minority communities (e.g., Lesbian, Gay and Trans-Sexual Groups; Women's Organisations and Disability Rights lobbies).
5. Meaningful data collection is key, and some research is better than none. Policy makers should therefore seek to collect information on the social and economic experiences of minorities through general (e.g., Census) or dedicated (e.g., research study) investigations. This should be a routine activity which updates not only the data that is generated but is also open to revising the identity categories through which this information is collected.

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