

Metropolis plenary session 3: Convergence or Divergence?

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I shall make three short points on policy at the local level.

The first may be heresy at a Metropolis conference! It is that we should not over estimate the impact of policy on the integration process. If the overriding factors in integration are the capacity of the labour and housing markets to provide jobs and homes; the willingness of employers, service providers and neighbours to open up opportunities to participate; and the capacity of migrants to take advantage of those opportunities – we shouldn't over estimate the extent to which policy can make a difference.

End of multiculturalism?

It follows that we should not necessarily assume that policy is *to blame* when we do not succeed. Across Europe and beyond the policy which *is* taking the blame is multiculturalism. It is criticized for objectives that its proponents never had – separate communities, leading parallel lives. And it is blamed for outcomes for which it is not responsible, like segregated housing which research shows is largely the result of income inequality in the housing market and, for instance, migrants' fear of moving into residential areas where they will be unwelcome.

I would argue that, in the United Kingdom, there have been some significant failures in *implementation* of multiculturalism:

- ◆ lack of political leadership – in contrast to Canada – to portray to the public a positive, confident vision of an inclusive, shared, citizenship
- ◆ a failure to address discrimination effectively and deliver that bedrock of good community relations - equality of opportunity
- ◆ too much emphasis on *ethnic* identity at the expense of other identities, including gender

- ◆ too little emphasis on civic participation – to bring people together across community divides

So the policy was in need of *adjustment* and that I would argue is what we are getting. The *rhetoric* may be the ‘end of multiculturalism’ – and the word itself, in Europe, *is* dead – but the practice on the ground tells a different story. Yes, there are some new policies, like citizenship education and ceremonies, and initiatives to promote more contact and understanding. But the core practices of what was once called multiculturalism remain: like consultation with ethnic and faith groups to inform policy and services; accommodation of differing diets, dress codes, and religious holidays to ensure that people feel valued and able to participate; and recognition of differing cultural and religious sensitivities in service provision so that migrants are able to access services that meet their needs.

These practices continue because they are necessary. They facilitate integration in jobs, services and community engagement. And the ‘we *treat everyone the same*’ approach, ignoring diverse needs and the barriers that people of a migrant background can face – would not.

CLIP project: Cities Local Integration Policies

This is what we found when we reviewed the integration policies and practices of 25 European cities in relation to access to their own jobs and services. The cities came together to learn from each other under the auspices of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. The project produces, with the help of five research centres, separate reports on what each city is doing and an overview report, to be published this month.

The 25 municipal authorities ranged from capital cities to provincial towns; from Copenhagen to Valencia, Dublin to Budapest. They have differing migration histories and national traditions on integration. But, significantly, each municipality is either the largest or one of the largest employers in their area. And

they are major providers of services central to integration, from education and health through to services that can give rise to community tensions, like rubbish disposal.

The cities would not *call* what they are doing multiculturalism. But their experience shows – and this is my second point – that a *level* of accommodation of difference is necessary; that there is some convergence in practice in relation to their own jobs and services; and that these are areas of policy intervention where cities can make a difference.

We found that the cities were driven to act by a range of pressures:

- ◆ Labour shortages
- ◆ The need to comply with national anti discrimination laws and integration policy
- ◆ Pressure from migrant service users – their differing needs in schools, libraries, hospitals & leisure facilities – which made it necessary for services to adapt
- ◆ Evidence of disadvantage which the cities felt a responsibility to address
- ◆ Fear of community unrest

Cities differed in emphasis on what they were trying to achieve. Some focused on the rights and needs of migrants: the importance of ensuring their equal access to jobs and to services that meet their needs; and hence the need to dismantle barriers they may face in doing so. Other cities placed greater emphasis on maximizing the benefits that migrants can bring as a resource for the city administration and hence focused on improving the intercultural competency of their staff and their successful management of diversity. Finally, some focused on maximizing the benefits of migration for the city itself – on promoting a positive image of a cosmopolitan city so that it could attract skilled

workers, but also the need to avoid community tensions by promoting a shared, common citizenship.

The CLIP project found that those cities which have been proactive have:

- ◆ targeted advertising at migrants looking for jobs and apprenticeships
- ◆ visited community locations, including schools, to tell people about the jobs and services available
- ◆ translated information – so that newcomers can read it
- ◆ reviewed their recruitment procedures and asked themselves whether all of the criteria they use to select new staff and apprentices are necessary?(Is it really necessary to speak Finnish *and* Swedish to work in a Finnish municipality or English *and* Irish to work in a Dublin library?)
- ◆ Consulted migrants and involved them in identifying the barriers they face and workable solutions
- ◆ Provided advanced language courses, training or mentoring
- ◆ Created an environment that is welcoming for a diverse staff, pupils or patients – with diversity in the staff menu, for instance, or a multi faith prayer room
- ◆ Adapted mainstream services where possible and provided targeted services where necessary
- ◆ Inserted similar standards into contracts with organisations providing services for them
- ◆ Collected data to monitor progress, and
- ◆ Established systems of accountability for departments and senior staff to ensure they deliver

Significantly, cities which had taken even some of those steps could show that they had made a difference. Like, Malmo, which raised the proportion of its staff from a migrant background from 13% in 1997 to 25% in 2006; Frankfurt, where 18% of apprentices last year were from a migrant background and Wolverhampton where people from ethnic minorities are now found in more than

7% of their senior posts in the top income bracket. Cities could also show results in service outcomes – that more pupils had passed the school leaving exam, for instance, or had used primary health care or library services.

The report also highlights the reasons why cities couldn't do more, from national law preventing them from employing non EEA nationals in key posts, through lack of data, resources and staff time, to fear of staff or public resistance. But the big picture was encouraging, including the willingness of cities to learn from each other and a growing recognition of the role that they can play in integration processes.

Identity

This brings me to my final point – the role of cities in that often forgotten but key dimension of integration – *identity*: the process of identifying with, and feeling that you belong to, the place in which you live. There is some evidence – I am thinking of studies in Rotterdam (Phalet et al 2000) and Frankfurt (Strassburger 2001) – that migrants can find it easier to identify with the city or neighbourhood in which they live than the country. And some evidence (eg from the city of Bradford, Alam and Husband 2006) that a strong local identity can sit alongside a sense of belonging to the country as a whole. This suggests that cities could not only be key players in access to jobs and services but also in enabling migrants to feel valued and welcome, if the leadership brand the city as valuing a diverse, inclusive local citizenship and ensure that newcomers can participate in the activities that the city promotes. It is by participating as an equal, alongside their neighbours, that a sense of belonging is born.

To conclude:

- We should not overestimate the impact of policy but it can make a difference
- The term multiculturalism may be dead but its core elements remain because they are necessary in a successful integration strategy

- We see this at city level across Europe in the steps municipalities have taken to ensure migrants have access to jobs and services within their control
- We should recognise the contribution cities can make in promoting access for migrants to jobs, services and a positive place identity - if national policies, and national rhetoric, allow them do so!
