INTERCULTURAL CITIES

Joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission

CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERCULTURAL CITY

This paper does not seek to review all possibilities for citizenship and participation of migrants or members of ethnic minorities at the local level. For instance, issues such as migrants' and minorities' participation in political parties and trade unions or as elected members of local assemblies, although relevant, have been left outside the scope of this paper since they depend on nationally defined rules and conditions. The focus here is specifically on methods and procedures which cities can adopt to help increase intercultural dialogue and interaction.

According to the Migrant integration policy index on political participation[1], if one country adopts all of the best examples of migrant participation practices across the EU member states, participation opportunities for migrants in this country would like this:

"A migrant has opportunities to participate in public life which conform to Europe's highest democratic principles. The state guarantees her political liberties to form an association, even a political one, to join political parties, and thus participate in civil society. As a legal resident, she can vote and stand for local elections, just like EU-nationals. She can also vote at the regional level. At local, regional, and national levels, migrants or migrant associations independently elect representatives to structural consultative bodies that discuss the policies that most affect them. The state implements policies that actively inform her of her political rights and offer migrant associations funding or in-kind support under the same conditions as other associations."

These participation rights and opportunities are essential but insufficient for governance and participation in the intercultural city. Taken on their own, they do not resolve the fundamental issue of community trust and engagement in cities with diverse populations. Even though foreign nationals might have the right to stand in local elections, they may never be elected if the local community regards them as a nuisance or a threat. Migrant associations could be very active but their demands and suggestions could be systematically ignored if the process of interaction between migrants and host community is not managed in an intercultural way.

This paper presents some key principles for intercultural participation and consultation and raises questions about the way in which participatory structures and processes can be reviewed from an intercultural perspective.

1. Principles of intercultural consultation and participation

The Intercultural approach is founded on the understanding that modern cities should be seen less as places of distinct communities marked by clear and fixed boundaries, but rather as local public spheres with multi-dimensional connections, which overlap and conflict. As such, citizens cannot easily be ascribed to one, homogeneous group, but

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[1] Migration Policy Group & British Council, http://www.integrationindex.eu/topics/2588.html

may be part of several. How then can policymakers and planners try and understand what a community of this kind really thinks and wants? To be intercultural means being able to listen to and understand other cultural perspectives, and in the process of place-making, therefore, consultation cannot simply be a one-off and standardized exercise but a continuous process of informal discussion and engagement.

The traditional, multiculturalist, approach to public consultation requires that communities are defined by their ethnicity and consulted in isolation (i.e. 'the Jewish community'; 'the Roma community' etc.) as if ethnicity is the only factor influencing the way in which people will lead their lives in the city. Such an approach is increasingly flawed. Our research in numerous culturally-diverse settings has identified a set of problems which often characterise (either singly or in combination) consultation processes. They are often:

- based upon a crude understanding of ethnic difference, with small numbers of 'community leaders' accepted as the voice of specific ethnic communities overlooking the internal diversity of such communities

- limited by a perspective that recognizes the views of the majority population as the cultural norm and the views of ethnic minorities as inevitably different or aberrant – while hybrid identities and complex intercultural views are not anticipated, and therefore not sought

- undermined by weak and overly prescriptive consultation and participation strategies disconnected from complex intercultural relations between people.

- damaged by an approach that prioritises speed and efficiency over quality and respect.

- standardised to elicit views on a 'community by community' basis rather than exploring overlap between communities and, more significantly, the combinations of perspectives of intercultural communities where ethnicity and race are not the determining factor.

In this sense, the pursuit of consultation solely with neatly identified 'ethnic minorities' is misguided. Markers of identity are proliferating and reconfigure sense of community and place in the contemporary city. Notions of the 'Bangladeshi' (or any other) community can clumsily ascribe individuals to a notional 'community' without appreciating that individuals have affiliations with a number of communities simultaneously and that ethnicity or 'race' might not be the primary basis of those ties.

For example, a person may be of Bangladeshi parentage but born in London, they may identify themselves as a Muslim, but it may be of equal importance to them that they are female or disabled, that they work as a lawyer, that they are in a mixed race relationship or that they support a particular football club.

The process of intercultural consultation and engagement was explored through an intercultural lens in a case study of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The Council is

acknowledged as a leader in this field (having been designated with Beacon status by Government for community engagement). The policy implications of our findings relate to techniques which other cities might employ in future intercultural consultative exercises[2]. The main points of good practice include:

- Conducting more consultation in 'intercultural spaces' rather than ones which are mono-ethnic. These spaces might be found by using intermediaries such as health professionals, refugee organisations, civic associations and by exploiting internet networks. Such processes – in the comfort zones of and at convenient times for - diverse residents and stakeholders–aim to build interaction and lead towards trust.

- Framing intercultural questions which require the respondent to think beyond the needs of their co-ethnics in formulating answers.

- Building strong networks of continuous community engagement at a local level so that future consultation does not feel 'parachuted-in'; ensure those networks are not defined by ethnicity.

- Providing interpretation, if required, to diverse communities rather than bring communities to interpreters.

- Highlighting multiple benefits, such as the way in which participation in consultation can also strengthen community and civic responsibility – with the intercultural nature of the community a key theme.

- Identifying short-term interventions that can be made to show that the Council is listening and responding because without micro actions, engagement with macro issues will be unfulfilling and undermined by a lack of trust.

- Consulting creatively through a wider range of media, techniques such as *Planning for Real,* using artists and community workers as facilitators in a collaborative process which hands over ownership of the process to the intercultural grouping itself.[3]

- Introducing a range of innovative methods to encourage dialogue, through an intercultural lens – combining ethnicities and generations to engage with a physical proposal.

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[2] Tom Fleming. (2006) London Borough of Tower Hamlets: Intercultural Consultation for a Global City District. Comedia

[3] "We organised a community consultation session about the future of our borough. We hired a facilitator. We put effort in to attracting people from diverse communities. But we could not get people to move around and they stuck with people that they knew. This meant that – as an example – the Bangladeshi men all sat together and had to comment on parks. The result is all our public consultation on parks comes from the views of these men and their views are not included in any of the other important areas." From Planning and engaging with intercultural communities, Comedia & ASC, 2006, http://www.ascskills.org.uk/hcms/files/intercultural_communities.pdf?file.id=EB6421AE-EA7A-457A-8D9C-221D2BD4C4F3

- Asking questions of existing norms (that may have been protected over many generations by the majority) that relate to notions of say 'aesthetically pleasing', 'safe', 'dynamic'.

- Consulting in more informal contexts – such as on the street, in bars, at health centres, in schools, libraries, swimming pools and parks– i.e. in intercultural spaces and places.

- Promoting the consultation process as part of a longer-term, iterative process of gathering opinion, asking direct questions, and evaluating responses. Decision-making and implementation processes should be seen as part of a flow of engagement where the engagement itself is as important as the practical translation into policy action.

- Holding networks as ongoing 'listening circles' where intercultural participants talk about their locality and community. This is not formal consultation but it is essential for building trust and for advancing local knowledge so that planners know how to frame questions in future consultation rounds.

- Connecting different groups together so that they are consulted across boundaries of ethnicity, faith, gender and generation. Thus make sure they are not mono-ethnic or of the same age or gender, and keep mixing groups as workshops continue.

- Re-framing questions in the way that local people – as intercultural agents – are asking, because statutory consultation processes usually frame questions in terms of what planners want to find out from consultees.

- Experimenting with the use of different writing styles, promote in a much wider range of responses.

- Finally, it is vital that officials work cross-departmentally prior to statutory consultation processes so that they can build their knowledge of the intercultural reality of the location they are seeking to plan for.

Once an issue or a problem has been reframed as something which is shared and experienced across ethnicities it becomes possible to conceive of solutions which are predicated upon a shared approach.

2. Structures and processes of local governance

The Council of Europe Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level urges state to guarantee to foreign residents, on the same terms as to its own nationals, the "classical rights" of freedom of expression, assembly and association, including the right to form trade unions and make efforts to involve foreign residents in processes of consultation on local matters.

The Convention opens the possibility of creating consultative bodies at local level elected by the foreign residents in the local authority area or appointed by individual associations of foreign residents.

2.1 Foreigners' right to vote in local elections

The Convention provides also that the Parties may undertake to grant to every foreign resident the right to vote in local elections, after five years of lawful and habitual residence in the host country, and to stand for election.

Only a few European countries have ratified the Convention, sometimes with reservations, in particular as concerns the right to vote of foreign residents and very few have granted such a right: the Swiss Canton of Neuchâtel (1849), Ireland (1963), Sweden (1975), the Swiss canton of Jura (1978), Denmark (1981), Norway (1982) and the Netherlands (1985). In all of these countries, there is a minimum residence requirement, ranging from three to ten years.

In countries that give migrants and refugees the right to vote and stand for election, issues of integration and non-discrimination are placed higher on the political agenda with politicians becoming more responsive and aware of the concerns of these groups. This leads to a more balanced public debate, less stigmatising of migrants and refugees and policies that are more conducive to integration. Intercultural relations are thus more likely to be dealt with through the mechanisms of liberal democracy and intercultural policies encouraged. Indeed, genuine and sustained intercultural dialogue is unlikely to happen if some groups in society have restricted civil and political rights.

Granting the right to vote and stand in local elections to foreign residents after is therefore an essential precondition for a truly intercultural community.

Allowing foreigners to be elected on permanent or ad hoc local consultative bodies, even when they have no right to vote in local elections can help local community accept foreigners as participants in mainstream institutions, as well as and be a training ground for them. It can thus be a first step towards full citizenship rights.

2.2 Consultative bodies for foreign residents

Consultative bodies (assemblies, councils and associations) have been set up by several states to enable immigrants to voice their opinions on issues which concern them as residents. They are the main type of participation or exist in addition to local voting rights (where such rights are granted). Their common objective, despite differences in structure, composition and resources, is to promote discussion and dialogue between the representatives of immigrants and state officials and launch initiatives relating to the problem of migration. They offer two advantages: firstly they involve immigrants in political decision-making processes and secondly they accustom the national population to the idea of foreigners' participation.

It is possible to distinguish between two types of consultative body, according to the manner in which members are designated, i.e. whether they are elected or appointed. Members may be elected either directly by the population (as is the case of foreign elected representatives in France, Italy and Germany) or within federations or associations, or they may be appointed by the body they represent or directly by the authorities.

The aim of such bodies is to make representations to the municipality on behalf of immigrant communities. **They are, however, only consultative and their powers are generally limited to matters directly concerning foreign populations**.

The report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the Participation of immigrants and foreign residents in political life in the Council of Europe member states provides a brief overview of the history of consultative bodies:

> Initially, in the 1960s, foreigners' consultative participation was considered a prerequisite to obtaining the right to vote in municipal elections. It was in this spirit that the first councils were set up in Belgium in 1968. In the 1970s immigrant consultative bodies mushroomed in Western Europe: they numbered between 600 and 700 in Germany, almost 30 in Belgium and each municipality in Luxembourg had its own consultative council.
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> Very rapidly, however, disputes arose as to what was to be expected of these bodies. Several currents of opinion held that they should replace the right to vote and, as a result, the defenders of consultative councils became more reticent. Furthermore, initial assessments showed that the consultative councils' success was limited as immigrant communities attached relatively little importance to them. Another criticism addressed to such bodies is that they are very representative since there is a tendency to nominate the same candidates each time, which leads to stagnation and repetition As a result several councils have been disbanded.
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> Advisory councils for foreign residents have been criticized as separate structures tending to reinforce the exclusion "separating" concerns of third country nationals from those of naturalized immigrants from the same communities.

Examples:

In 2006, migrants of non-EU origin who fulfilled certain conditions could for the first time in Belgian history vote in the elections of October 8th, 2006. They had to hold a residence permit valid for 1 to 5 years with possible prolongation. They also had to have 5 years' continuous legal and main residence in Belgium. In the weeks before the elections NGOs and other refugee organisations tried to make refugees aware of their new political rights, and to convince them of the importance of registering.

In Italy, two different systems of political representation for foreigners have been introduced at the local level: the Consultative Body of Foreigners and the Associated Counsellor (Consigliere Aggiunto). The first is a collegial body composed of a certain

number of foreigners directly elected by foreign residents. The Consultative Body can only give non-binding advice on policies. Its President can be invited to participate in the Council Assembly. Foreign residents also directly elect Associated Counsellors. The number of Associated Counsellors differs in relation to the size of the municipality and the proportion of foreign residents. Unlike the Consultative Body, Counsellors have the right to participate in every Council's Assembly. However, both are consultative posts and therefore do not have the right to vote.

Source: Policy briefing on the civic and political participation of refugees and migrants in Europe **NGO Network of Integration Focal Points**

Lisbon has set up a Municipal Council of Immigrant Communities and Ethnic Minorities, comprising 10 associations. This Council was established in 1993 and meets four times a year. It does not have an official consultative status with the local authorities but the latter do take account of its views in matters concerning migration.

In France there are a number of bodies (councils, boards and committees) which have consultative status with the municipalities. They promote contact and exchanges between immigrant communities and the local authorities.

In the Netherlands, there are consultative councils at local level, composed of members designated by associations.

Source: http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe/9812.html

Questions for discussion:

a) Are local consultative bodies of foreign residents beneficial for intercultural governance? Under what conditions? What are the alternatives?
b) What lessons can be drawn for communities where the main factor of diversity are not migrants but minority groups (national minorities, Roma…)
c) Who should have the right to be represented on advisory bodies? In some countries only members of "recognised" minority groups have this right.
d) Consultative can be effective only if the migrant and minority communities are organised and have been able to train and produce activists to take up the functions, have resources (communication, staff, premises) and are well-networked with other organisations. How can one make sure that this is the case?

2.3 Councils and advisory groups focusing on inter-cultural or inter-religious issues

There are very few examples in Europe of structures dealing specifically with relations between cultures and religions at the local level.

The **Leicester** Multicultural Advisory Group is a forum set up in 2001 by the editor of the local newspaper, the Leicester Mercury, to coordinate community relations, with members representing the council, police, schools, community and faith groups, and the media. http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/cre/about/sci/casestudy5_leicester.html

The group involves leaders from a range of backgrounds: media, faith communities, voluntary organisations, schools, academics, the City Council. The group does not have official membership and mandate and thus can remain flexible about their agenda. They meet once a month to discuss current issues and developments concerning inter-community relations and make decisions on possible action.

Since 2005, the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia has managed the Interreligious Centre of Barcelona (CIB), a service of the Department for Civil Rights of the City Council of **Barcelona,** which is open to all religious entities and individuals. As a lay organisation, the CIB strengthens specialised knowledge about the religions in the city, helping interaction of different opinions between religions and within the city in a non confrontational way. This helps improve participation and involvement in community development and ensure good social cohesion and respect for freedom of conscience and religion.

The city of **Madrid** has taken the lead in conferring local citizenship on migrants and establishing local electoral and legislative structures, see: Mesas de Diálogo y Convivencia Distritales de la ciudad de Madrid. http://www.mdcmadrid.org/ and the Guía de convivencia Intercultural de la Ciudad de Madrid at www.munimadrid.es/observatorio.

The Centre for Migration and Intercultural Coexistence seeks, inter alia, to increase dialogue and interaction between all neighbours in Madrid via organised forums and district discussions on coexistence, as outlined in the Madrid Plan for Social and Cross-cultural Coexistence. In the framework of this plan, forums and boards of dialogue and intercultural coexistence are being set up and proposals collected for the attention of municipal organisations and institutions.

The city of **Oslo** has established a taskforce of representatives of NGOs, the municipality, youth workers, etc. who offer guidance and advice in conflict situations.

Questions for discussion:

a) What are the advantages and disadvantages of such bodies?
b) What are the conditions which can ensure their adequate contribution to the development of an intercultural community?

2.4 Support for NGOs and ethnic community organisations

Ethnic community and migrant organisations have an important role in providing advice and support to newly arrived immigrants, and ensure the preservation of the language, culture and traditions of ethnic communities. At the same time, it could be argued that if

such organisations maintain too strong a grip on individuals which may be in precarious situations, or try and prevent interaction with the host community, they may have a negative impact on integration and social cohesion. Generalist civic organisations also have a responsibility to involve and encourage migrants into their work and thus facilitate their inclusion in society.

Many cities have a policy of providing financial support to NGOs and ethnic community organisations – either as structural grants or as a contribution to their projects. Naturally, when such financial support is provided, it stimulates the development of migrant associative life but, some argue, could have as effect to reduce the incentive for migrants or minorities to join "generalist" professional and associations such as trade unions, Red Cross, the Scouts etc.

From an intercultural point of view, there needn't necessarily be an opposition between ethnic and generalist organisations, neither need the success of ethnic community organisations lead to segregation and communitarianism. Public financial support for ethnic community organisations is necessary and important, especially if it is partially targeted to, and conditioned upon an intercultural opening of organisations, can be an element of the intercultural dynamic in a local community. At the same time, in the intercultural city, public financial support to civil society organisations could be made conditional, at least to some extent, on an intercultural opening of these organisations.

Criteria for intercultural functioning of civil society organisations (both ethnic and generalist):

- membership and activities open to all, regardless of civic status or ethnic origin

- a special effort to recruit as staff, members of the leadership and participants persons with different ethnic origins and foreigners, or members of the host community in the case of migrant associations activities organised in partnership with (other) ethnic community organisations and aiming at encouraging inter-cultural exchange a special effort by the organisations to manifest symbolically their attachment to interculturalism such as using different languages in their communication, images representing population diversity, providing different types of food at social events etc.
- a special effort to counter discrimination and make migrants of minorities feel welcome in the organisation (language assistance, internal discussions on diversity, racism etc.).

- it seems useful to try and provide a common space (preferably funded by the city) for ethnic community associations and other NGOs to have their offices. The "house of associations" model, extended to ethnic community associations, could encourage interaction and joint activities between cultural groups.

Questions for discussion

a) What are the best means to encourage civil society organisations to adopt the principles of interculturality?

b) What would be the implications of interculturalism for relationships of public authorities with NGOs?

2.5 Participatory processes at the neighbourhood level

In the Netherlands, several cities have been practicing Results-based accountability (RBA). This involves large-scale consultation processes aiming at letting residents decide on priorities for their neighbourhood. They receive detailed data about the state of the neighbourhood: crime, school absenteeism, teen pregnancy etc.) and then develop their own plan of action and activities. Annual evaluations show the results of their efforts and residents can decide on adjustments as necessary. The effects of residents' policies and plans are continuously communicated though the media. This approach takes the concept of empowerment to a new level. Citizens develop their own performance indicators and benchmarks and work closely with social services to achieve their goals. As a result, social services become less bureaucratic, more responsive to local needs and embedded in the community. Residents play a key role in the implementation of long-term plans which emerge from the consultation process. They also carry out low-budget projects, co-operate with business community and housing organisations, and media.

Examples:

In Kruidenbuurt, a neighbourhood of 6000 inhabitants in Tilburg, the Netherlands, a pioneer groups has been founded, called the Local Board. This is a group of 30-35 people of different origins - membership changes frequently according to their qualities and availability. They recruit young residents from the area for the implementation of activities and administrative tasks. Their main goal – tackling poverty and unemployment, is being achieved through the snowball effect of multitude of micro-projects such a a women's catering group, food parcel provision, clothes sales, etc. Gradually banks and companies became interested, many young people found jobs, there is a much better relationship with the job centre and the police, a different kind of atmosphere is felt on the streets…The premises of the board have become a meeting space for people across cultures and generations…

Berlin Neukölln Neighbourhood management (NM)

Since 1999, neighbourhood managers in Berlin have been successfully activating the commitment of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and developing numerous projects, which are implemented with the help of governmental funding and private resources. The objective of the self-help support programme is to counteract growing social segregation tendencies and the resulting problems on location. The challenge is to open new opportunities for the neighbourhoods.

Main objectives of the programme:

- Being a central player in the area, each NM team is found on location.

- The administration levels are networked in a comprehensive and interdisciplinary manner. In this way the resources can be bundled.
- An integrated development and implementation concept for each area describes strengths and weaknesses and concretely formulates what needs to be done.
- The main objective is the integration of the people into this programme. The inhabitants must be given an opportunity to actively assist in shaping their community (empowerment).
- A resident fund places financial reserves at the disposal of a neighbourhood jury. This fund makes it clear to the residents that their voice is being heard and that they can participate in the decision-making process. This creates an additional incentive to participate in the procedure.
- Powerful partners directly on location – companies, educational facilities and social institutions in the respective neighbourhoods are to take over a leading role and bring in their know-how and resources. [4]

Questions for discussion

a) How can one make sure that neighbourhood participation structures and mechanisms are truly open and inclusive, that they do not empower some communities and some groups within communities (e.g. men), to the detriment of others.
b) How to ensure the sustainability of such projects and arrangements once the initial enthusiasm and financial resources have run out?

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[4] Extracts from the publication "New opportunities for 33 Quarters. Neighbourhood management in Berlin", edited by the City of Berlin, Senate Department for City Development, 2005

TOWARDS GUIDELINES FOR INTERCULTURAL GOVERNANCE
NOTES FROM THE WORKSHOP

Intercultural principle	Implications for:		
	Consultative bodies	Inter-cultural and inter-religious councils	Neighbourhood participation
Conducting consultation in 'intercultural spaces' rather than ones which are mono-ethnic.			
Framing intercultural questions which require the respondent to think beyond the needs of their co-ethnics in formulating answers			
Building strong networks of continuous community engagement at a local level and ensure those networks are not defined by ethnicity.			
Providing interpretation, if required, to diverse communities rather than bring communities to interpreters			
Highlighting multiple benefits, such as the way in which participation in consultation can also strengthen community and civic responsibility – with the intercultural nature of the community a key theme.			
Identifying short-term interventions that can be made to show that the Council is listening and responding			
Consulting creatively through a wider range of media, techniques, using artists and community workers as facilitators in a collaborative			

process which hands over ownership of the process to the intercultural grouping itself		
Introducing a range of innovative methods to encourage dialogue, through an intercultural lens – combining ethnicities and generations to engage with a physical proposal.		
Asking questions of existing norms (that may have been protected over many generations by the majority) that relate to notions of say 'aesthetically pleasing', 'safe', 'dynamic'.		
Consulting in more informal contexts – such as on the street, in bars, at health centres, in schools, libraries, swimming pools and parks– i.e. in intercultural spaces and places.		
Promoting consultation as part of a longer-term, iterative process of gathering opinion, asking direct questions, and evaluating responses.		
Holding networks as ongoing 'listening circles' where intercultural participants talk about their locality and community. This is not formal consultation but it is essential for building trust and for advancing local knowledge so that planners know how to frame questions in future consultation rounds.		
Connecting different groups together so that they are consulted across boundaries of ethnicity, faith, gender and		

generation. Thus make sure they are not mono-ethnic or of the same age or gender, and keep mixing groups as workshops continue.		
Re-framing questions in the way that local people – as intercultural agents – are asking, because statutory consultation processes usually frame questions in terms of what planners want to find out from consultees		
Experimenting with the use of different writing styles, promote in a much wider range of responses.		
Finally, it is vital that officials work cross-departmentally prior to statutory consultation processes so that they can build their knowledge of the intercultural reality of the location they are seeking to plan for.		