WORKING GROUP ON SMART INDICATORS FOR COMMUNITY COHESION ACTIONS

Lublin, 11-12 June 2019

Meeting report

Background

Interculturalism was born based on the recognition that the usual provisions set in place as part of an integration process (access to rights, services and welfare) are important as they deliver individual outcomes - level of education, employment, income, health, housing etc. Closing the gap between newcomers and the host population in these areas is generally considered the key goal of integration. To this end, the success of integration policies is most often measured using indicators of gap closing.

At the same time, interculturalism was also based on the recognition that, while these conditions of living are an important source of well-being and self-fulfillment, symbolic, emotional, psychological aspects associated with living in society, such as sense of belonging, of being accepted across cultural differences, community cohesion, attitudes to diversity, levels of perceived discrimination, are also extremely important dimensions of integration[1].

Only recently have attitudes and perceptions of the "other" and diversity in general become the explicit target of public policy, particularly at the local level.

By analysing **personal interaction stories,** a clear common narrative is shaped: people want not only to be safe and "successful", they want to be a real part of the society. These stories tell us how important it is for newcomers to feel welcomed for who they are without judgement and prejudice. Real integration requires from the host society **patience, openness, welcoming, reciprocity, respect, cultural recognition, human recognition, readiness to empower...**

Interculturalism is a policy framework that allows for these human and cultural dimensions to be included in the discussion about integration and inclusion.

Interculturalism has at its heart the **symbolic, interpersonal aspects of integration**, and a sophisticated doctrine of diversity management.

As a matter of fact, the **key tools of interculturalism** for diversity management are:

1. A **pluralist political narrative** establishing the equal dignity and importance of cultural change, interaction and hybridisation.
2. The recognition of **diversity advantage** not only in words but in practice - opening up institutions and decision-making to diverse inputs.
3. **Public space and institutional design** aiming to promote mixing and interaction, based on the contact theory.

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[1] See https://www.ies.ee/iesp/No4/Zepa.pdf

4. An **emphasis on multi-level policy-making**- because rights, equality and citizenship are defined by law and state-level institutions but mixing and interaction need to be engineered locally.
5. A demand for a type of competence: **intercultural competence**.
6. An explicit and continuous pedagogical work with the broader community about its pluralist and changing identity.

Interculturalism **demands efforts for reciprocal acculturation, hybridisation, cultural competence and permanent intercultural interaction** so that the pluralism becomes more than just tolerance between distinct groups but a process of internal pluralisation of the cultural fabric, a certain transculturalism as a basic value, an understanding that identity is plural and in continue development.

Interculturalism is a socio-cultural doctrine before becoming a political doctrine. **Not the purity and unchanging nature of cultures is wanted but their permanent mutual influence and change**. Interculturalism is a doctrine of cultural change.

It is not a surprise that when, societies' identities are challenged by more diversity, more equality, the demise of the traditional gender roles and class structure, the hierarchies of knowledge, the practice of democracy, many people no longer know how to define themselves. Migration and cultural diversity concentrate these frustrations as it offers a clear and tangible culprit. It has been established by social science that xenophobia is caused by feeling of powerlessness.

Interculturalism is about redefining individual and collective identities by deliberately negotiating them in an everyday context. Public policies of interculturalism are about creating spaces, opportunities and competent leadership to guide this work.

The workshop held in Lublin on 11-12 June therefore wanted to explore how the impact of intercultural integration policies could be measured.

An indirect analysis of intercultural policies has been achieved through a study performed by the Migration Policy Group in 2017[2], which established that **cities that perform better according to the Intercultural cities' index also perform better in terms of trust in public administration, public perceptions of safety, access to jobs, quality of public services and acceptance of diversity as a positive fact.**

At the same time, a more sophisticated analysis should be put in place if an evidence-based approach could be considered the norm for policy-making.

While hard data - demographic, employment, education levels etc. is relatively well available, soft data on attitudes, beliefs, or segregation is rarer and less reliable.

The **first challenge** is therefore to **identify indicators and data sources that can prove the overall effectiveness of intercultural policies in terms of community cohesion**. Ideally, it should be possible to measure continuously the community cohesion climate via some kind of "barometer".

Nowadays, most of the time cities do not measure outcomes/impact of overall intercultural policies. The Basque country in Spain, with its community cohesion regular survey is an exception.

Secondly, the heart of interculturalism being interaction (based on the contact theory), brings the need to be able to **proof what types of contact activities work best, at the micro leve**l.

Cities organise several different types of activities (festivals, exhibitions, debates, sports events, community gardening, community dinners, intercultural walks, intercultural bus, human libraries, leadership academies, intercultural workshops etc.). Therefore, it would be critical to know which intervention works better, in

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[2] How the Intercultural integration approach leads to a better quality of life in diverse cities

which context and for whom. How could this be measured? Which effect or change should be analysed at the personal level? Could it be done in real time, cost-effectively, using readily available data instead of surveys?

Some cities collect information about participants to different activities (with some demographic characteristics such as age and languages spoken), sometimes asking for their feedback/satisfaction after the event (cf. Melton). However, this is in the best case measuring outputs, not impact. Rarely cities (eg Montreal) assess via an in-depth questionnaire the reactions and attitude changes of participants in intercultural events. And in almost no case do they check the sustainability of the changes, by following up on the initial questionnaire.

A genuine impact measurement instrument would allow to assess the results both of activities which have been deliberately designed to optimise contact, and of regular activities in which diverse people participate by default.

Such a measurement would help assess the "quality of interaction". It would also help understand what factor contribute most to the desired effect - the level of diversity, the existence of a common goal, other factors such as the spatial design. It is also interesting to know if, as some research suggests, spontaneous contact activities work better than engineered activities.

A control group, as well as a baseline data would be necessary to do all of this.

The discussion was then devoted to what possible indicators could be used to measure individual-level outcomes which can indicate that specific contact activities have increased sense of belonging, reduced distance, mistrust or fear across difference and have thus contributed to greater community cohesion.

Some suggestions were:
- Frequency of smiles
- Self-reported sense of well-being/happiness
- Levels of health
- Self-reported lower levels of fear
- Greater spatial mobility
- Number of cross-cultural friendships
- Levels of culturally targeted hate speech on social media[3]
- Portrayal of some ethnic or religious groups in media or in social media (eg using a multi-lingual machine learning tool like the one created by IDS).

Towards a Cohesion Climate Barometer

The Barometer was discussed as a tool based on two types of tools:

- one which would measure the immediate impact of contact activities
- one which will measure globally and continuously the evolution of intercultural perceptions, attitudes and relations

The tool to measure the impact of contact activities will consist of:

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3 It must be noted that it is however for now impossible to disaggregate the data at the level of a city or district. An idea could be to perhaps track specific hashtags that are related to local life

1. An app that residents can download (incentives and heavy promotion are required, cf the BBC pandemy app, or the Urban mind app from Cambridge university). Furthermore, if the app is marketed as a tool to measure the level of well-being of the community, it can become popular.

   The app will allow to geo-localise people to see if they have participated in a particular event, and then ask them a few questions (while also asking the same questions to a control group).

   App users will receive regularly quick questions about their social relations, contacts, friendships, views on diversity, perhaps some value questions, perception questions about diversity etc.

   It would be ideal if the app could also measure the social media engagement of the users. Technology allows from social media activity to find out what people buy and « like., what they watch and draw conclusions about how their opinions are changing. Cambridge Analytica has shown that it is already possible to decode people's values and views from a set of online behaviors (eg. if they are watching sensationalist news). This kind of engagement data is much more accurate than survey data because is not based on self-reporting.

   When signing up the users should provide some basic demographic data (year of birth, place of birth, language(s) spoken at home, religion (to be discussed according to national legislation), nationality, gender, etc.

   These functionalities could also be added to an existing app, a city planning tool, a social engineering tool. It can be linked to public transportation or parking app, or the school results app, or provide tangible incentives for using it.

   It is very important to use plain language and pictogrammes instead of a lot of words (cr the Braga app).

2. The second element of the Cohesion Climate Barometer will be a statistical tool using data that most cities are already collecting. For example:

   - The quantity and internal diversity of associations and sports clubs
   - Number of mixed couples
   - Neighborhood nuisance complaints

The data will be selected based on the following "cohesion indicators": feeling of safety, inclusiveness, trust (between and within communities), interaction and well-being.

Data:
   - **Safety**: crime levels and location, neighborhood nuisance, hate crime reporting, unproper reporting based on discriminatory perceptions.
   - **Inclusiveness**: Geographic distribution of services across cities and communities (also mixed and separate facilities for communities); demographics of schools and performance, disability access, unemployment and disaggregate by demographics, IPL integration index
   - **Trust**: unproper reporting, household survey with a few regular questions about perceptions and attitudes to diversity (see for example the questions recommended by ICC/IPSOS).
   - **Interaction**: number of mixed marriage and birth rates, responses to hate speech, friendship across groups, diversity of culture and restaurants in neighborhoods, school and neighborhood mixing.
   - **Wellbeing**: access to and use of health services, access to child care and domestic abuse demographics.

Next steps

- Discuss to be held about the specifications of the possible app and to develop a list of characteristics for a possible new app development or adaptation of one of the existing apps.

- Work with statisticians from ICC cities on the availability of data and specifying further the exact data to be provided for the Barometer.

- Developing the app and the statistical tool. If necessary, depending on the cost, additional fundraising.