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The status of minorities

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France:
The status of minorities
Jean-Marc Dreyfus

It may appear a paradox to discuss the status of minorities in France, since minorities are not officially recognized in this country. The French state and the French administration do not recognise minority groups, be they religious, ethnic or regional. The idealized vision is of a country made up of citizens united in a common endeavour: namely, the Republic. The Republic only recognizes citizens (and, at the same time, foreigners, legal or illegal aliens living on national soil). Each citizen is supposed to be equal to an administration and a state blind to differences and groups. It is fascinating to see that, at the beginning of the 21st century, the term 'communitarian' often has very negative connotations and may also be used as an insult. A 'communitarist' may be influenced by the United States, where, supposedly, the interests of different groups are of major importance, but where the 'common good' is neglected. This strong view, that is shared by some on the left as well as on the right in France, dates back to the Revolutionary period and has evolved and adapted to the different chapters in the tense history of the evolution of a stable political system. Painful chapters of history are still used today, in an ever changing way, to justify the necessity of maintaining a unified Republic that should not surrender to particularist interests.

The French Revolutionaries wanted to suppress all the intermediate bodies, which they saw as a useless legacy of the Ancien Régime. The Chapelier Law, introduced in June 1791, banned the guilds. The fight against the Catholic Church was a decisive moment in the strengthening of the Third Republic. This regime permitted the wider integration of Jews and Protestants into the political arena. Immigration policies implemented from the 1880s onwards, when masses of foreigners started to migrate to France, did not recognize any rights to the groups as such. The repulsive memory of the Vichy regime also includes the endogenous antisemitic laws, which were the only ones to separate a group – in this case the Jews – from the Nation. In recent French historiography, that was as 'colour-blind' as the state, the main 'minority' problem to be described was that of the working class. The two electoral victories of the left, in 1936 and 1981, are seen as necessary steps to further 'integrate' workers into the body of the Nation[1].

Nevertheless, the situation is more subtle than that. Local authorities have been working for a long time with associations of immigrants, or of French citizens of foreign origin, whether they are Jews (half of the Jews living in France in 1939 were foreigners), Italians, Spaniards or Armenians etc. To give one example among many, while the National Assembly recognized the Armenian Genocide on May 29 1998, numerous monuments to the victims had already been built before that date, by municipalities, mostly in the Parisian suburbs and in cities of the Rhone valley, where Armenians settled after the First World War. It is also a tradition at the municipal level, and sometimes at the level of the department, to have one representative from the main minorities, Jews or Spaniards, the latter, for example, in the south-west of France, where the votes of Spanish Republicans and their families are important to win the ballot.

And one must not forget that among the 'problematic' minorities in France were the indigenous 'regional people', who fought for their rights and even their cultural autonomy within the Republic. Their campaign started as early as the 1880s, when the Republic felt strong enough to start its fight against the cultural differences[2] in the provinces, the unified school system being at the forefront of this battle. But this fight never attracted a majority of voters. The more 'autonomist' movements (in Flanders, Brittany, Alsace or even Burgundy) were discredited by their involvement in the Vichy regime or by their collaboration with the Nazis (such as Brittany[3]). The movements of the 1960s and 1970s

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1   On this question, see : Gérard Noiriel, *Les ouvriers dans la société française : XIXe-XXe siècle,* Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1986.
2   Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914, Stanford Cal., Stanford University Press*, 1976.
3   Arzalier, Francis, *Les perdants. La dérive fasciste des mouvements autonomistes et indépendantistes au XXème siècle*, Paris, Ed. La Découverte, 1990.

mostly claimed to defend their regional cultures, languages and dialects. The socialist government also fulfilled some of their wishes in 1981, by allocating space to regional languages in the school system and on public radio and television.

However, this debate on minorities has taken a new turn in the last twenty years. First of all, the political arena was 'polluted' by the rising influence of the National Front. If the overtly racist (and less overtly antisemitic) far-right party, headed by Jean-Marie Le Pen, never gained a majority of votes, even at the most local level, it managed to impose the question of immigration on the national agenda of mainstream politicians[4]. The question of immigration became topical once again when the country had to get used to a high unemployment rate and when the policy of family reunification made Arab immigrants more visible in French daily life. Rising pressure from Muslims living in France, a majority of whom came from North Africa, confronted the state with the lack of organization of a religion that might account for as many as 5 million of 'Muslim origin'. Though a maximum of 1 million may be regular followers of Islam, many more now identify as Muslims. The second most important religion in France lacked a proper framework to organize itself and represent its followers to the state. After 9/11 and the rise of a defiant attitude towards Islam, the administration had to deal with the problems caused mostly by the rigid system of the 1905 Law, which strictly separated state and religion, and also by the diverse ethnic, religious and political backgrounds of Muslims. The French Council for the Muslim Religion was finally set up in 2003, by Nicolas Sarkozy, then Minister for the Interior, and it has functioned with great difficulty until now (but the Regional Councils seem to have much less problem in fulfilling their task, which is to officially organize the religious practice). Many questions have not been solved, such as the training of French imams[5]. On paper however, the

French Council is slightly more democratic than the old CRIF, the umbrella organization which represents the French Jews politically, the consistories created in 1808 by Napoleon to organize their religious practice. The CRIF was created clandestinely in early 1944, to unify associations of French Jews and of foreign Jews. Though still not recognized politically, minorities in France have been more 'visible' since the 1970s. The term 'visible minority' has been in use for ten years. It is considered a problematic term. The longing for 'blindness' is so strong that one can quote black people who claim not to consider themselves 'black', because they do not identify with a so-called 'black culture', whether it be African or Caribbean, or ... from a suburban ghetto.

Have the minorities in France really become more 'visible'? As early as the 1970s, Jews were criticized for becoming too 'visible' in the public space, as they moved towards greater orthodoxy and a more vocal support of Israel. The same happened with Muslims, at first politically, with the 'Marche des beurs', when second generation young French of North African origin marched around France to demand their right to be completely integrated into society and denounce the difficulties (racism and silent discrimination) they and their parents had to face. But Islam also became more visible, and even activist, for a minority of young Muslims in the banlieues, with a stronger sense of identification to Islam and an imported radicalized version of it[6]. It led a handful of French-born youngsters to enter terrorist cells. The most famous case was Mohamed Atta, who is believed to be the 20th terrorist of 9/11. This fear of radical Islam and also the unease of French mainstream society with the rising visibility of Muslims led to the debate about the veil. After an ongoing debate which was begun as early as the 1980s by some Muslim teenagers who refused to take off their veils in the state schools they attended, Jacques Chirac finally instigated a law forbidding any 'visible' religious signs in schools. But this only applied to schools, not to all public buildings, as is often wrongly reported

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4   On the National Front, see : Nonna Mayer, *Ces Français qui votent Le Pen*, Paris, Flammarion, 2002 ; Mayer, Nonna, Perrineau, Pascal, ed., , *Le Front national à découvert*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1989.

5   On Islam in contemporary France, see, among many books: Laurence, Jonathan, Vaisse, Justin, *Integrating Islam:*

political and religious challenges in contemporary France, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2006.

6   Kepel, Gilles, *Les banlieues de l'Islam. Naissance d'une religion en France*, Paris, Ed. du Seuil, 1987.

by foreign commentators, for whom the law was incomprehensible). This law was passed on 14 March 2004. It led to a crackdown on all religious symbols in schools, such as kippot (skullcaps worn by Jews). There is now talk about creating Muslim private schools in the country, which the law would permit, but apparently, there are not enough Muslim worthies, or they are not sufficiently involved in their community life, to support the creation of such schools.

One surprise in France has been the rise of a politically organised 'black' community. The CRAN was created on 26 November 2005, in one of the rooms of the Parliament building (which shows its desire to be an 'official' lobby). It is an umbrella organization aiming to unite all the 'black' organizations in France. It is obviously modelled on the Jewish CRIF. The CRAN is a surprise, since black people living in France are even more divided than the Muslims. Between the Caribbeans, who have been French for generations, and the recent immigrants from Africa, themselves divided between Christians and Muslims, what could be the common platform? 130 associations are represented and the CRAN frequently overestimates the number of 'black' people living in France for its own political purposes. It seems, though, that, after great interest was shown by the media and some politicians, the CRAN could not achieve its goal of being influential at the political level.

If the CRAN can play with figures, it is because the 'blindness' of the Republic goes so far as to forbid statistics about ethnicity. Though pollsters and researchers can produce such figures, no official census of Muslims, Jews or blacks exists. In the recent presidential campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy went from a more 'liberal' point of view on communities and minorities in France – even talking about the possibility of changing the 1905 law and advocating a policy of affirmative action – to stricter 'Republican' considerations. There were speeches in the campaign about permitting statistics about ethnicity and also introducing a kind of affirmative action, to alleviate the silent discrimination the French of African origin have to face in their daily life. These projects are no longer on the agenda.

What is my personal opinion, as a French historian

of the Holocaust, teaching in a British university, involved in many projects all over Europe? The prism of Holocaust Education is quite telling in itself, in order to appreciate the question of multiculturalism and minorities in Britain and in France. In France, Holocaust Education wants to be an acknowledgement of the responsibility of the French state and administration in the persecution of the Jews and also a 'duty of memory', to remember those who perished. In Britain, it is much more 'dis-historicized' and 'decontextualized', and is considered as a recognition of Jewish identity in the country, the same way other minorities receive attention and consideration once a year, through their sufferings or their culture, from the local authorities and the state. In Britain, Holocaust Education is also seen as part of interfaith dialogue, mostly a Christian-Jewish one, but more and more also a Muslim-Jewish exchange of experience.

As far as the status of minorities is concerned, a major political and ideological change is not considered desirable in France. The weight of history, but also the advantages of 'Republicanism' do not advocate a major move to a more multiculturalist perspective. After all, all opinion polls and sociological research show that the integration of recent immigrants is functioning in France and that 'race relations', to use an American term, are better than in other countries, better than in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands, for example. Defiance towards Muslim citizens is much more widespread in those two countries than in the strict Republican system. France is a liberal society, where the state does not control the cultural production as tightly as it did until the 1980s. In consequence, Paris is even more than London the world capital of African music and the raï is flourishing in the French suburbs. There has been a 'recognition' of different minorities, not so discretely, in the last 15 years, thanks to the politics of Jacques Chirac. Muslims have a representative body now, as do blacks. The harkis (Muslims who fought for the French in the Algerian War) have a national day of commemoration, etc. The Republic could be slightly more generous in this symbolic recognition, especially within the school system, but the traditional 'republican' view of the Nation, as a coalition of equal individuals, should

be preserved; this view should permit the integration of all individuals in the Nation. The communitarist perception of the Nation seems useless, as the communities would enter into a sterile and endless war for prominence. Nevertheless the 'blindness' to differences can prevent the social problems that minorities face from being tackled. Everyone knows that the banlieues are in a derelict condition and that foreigners and citizens of foreign origin (but not all of them, Arabs more than Portuguese, for example) face serious obstacles to entering the economic arena and the job market. A form of 'affirmative action' should be introduced in France to leverage the difficulties. It already exists in the school system, where schools in 'ZEP', in the most difficult areas, receive more state funding and teaching staff. Some other limited attempts have been made, such as the 'zones franches' in the banlieues, allowing tax cuts to firms that create jobs in the most impoverished districts (this attempt has proved unsuccessful to-date). The most visible initiative taken by Sciences Po, the prestigious and elitist Institute for Political Sciences in Paris, to admit students from 'ZEP high schools' on a separate track, is a real success, permitting young people from depressed areas to enter one of the elite higher education institutions. In France, attempts to modify the consensus on the national model could just be a justification to avoid facing the serious economic inequalities among different minorities of the country, as was too often the case in the US (the country which celebrates Martin Luther King's day widely, but where African-American citizens cannot get health insurance).

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Germany:
The status of minorities
Sergey Lagodinsky

Over the past decade the attitude of German society to its minorities has undergone a considerable transition. This development reflects a society trying to meet three main challenges: to understand the backgrounds, cultures and attitudes of minorities living in this country, develop a comprehensive set of policy measures to deal with them and above all, to try to define, or redefine itself, in the light of the ethnic diversity with which German society is slowly coming to terms. In different phases of this development the public stressed various aspects of these components with different intensity, so that we can speak of three recent incarnations of the minorities debate in Germany.

The three incarnations of the German minorities debate

The longing for self-definition is a cornerstone dimension of this process and it is not only a metaphorical one: for years German political elites struggled with the question whether their country may or may not be called an 'immigration country' (Einwanderungsland). What seems to be an exercise in linguistic fetishism focusing on specific immigration issues, was, in fact, one of the early attempts to define Germany's identity in the light of its unexpected diversity. The question at the heart of the debate was not only (and probably not so much) how Germany should deal with those who wish to immigrate, but also with those who were already here. How open should German society be towards numerous – mostly immigrated – minorities living within its borders? This incarnation of the minorities debate was the immigration debate. The conservative Christian Democrats have long resisted the term 'immigration country', especially under Chancellor Kohl, while the Greens were its most vigorous proponents. After the new immigration law was introduced by the red-green coalition with the support of the CDU, and even more so after their return to power under Chancellor Merkel, the Christian Democrats warmed towards the previously controversial term. Nevertheless, many of them, such as Interior Minister Schäuble,

continue to question its validity.

With immigration streams to Germany decreasing during the late nineties, the controversy shifted to where it belongs – within the state borders and towards the question of the relationship between Germans and their diverse cultures. The second incarnation of the minorities debate was a culture debate. Both political elites and the public in Germany were polarized amidst the clash of two extreme concepts: the open concept of multiculturalism advocated mostly by the Green party and the conservative concept of a 'leading culture' (Leitkultur) presented by the CDU. While the former envisions a future of Germany as a simple addition of various equally legitimate cultures, the latter underlines the predominant role of the host culture to which others have to submit. The Social Democrats were the last to enter the culture debate when they introduced the term 'culture of (mutual) recognition' (Kultur der Anerkennung) into their party programme in 2008. However, the proponents of the concept are still struggling to give it a clear definition beyond referring to it as a middle ground between the cultural conservatism of the Christian Democrats and the cultural relativism of the Greens. Meanwhile, the culture debate itself is fading out as both extreme concepts lost their most influential political advocates. The notion of multiculturalism – the brainchild of left-leaning elites which, from the very beginning, remained suspicious to the vast majority of Germans, was ultimately shelved in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and subsequently reduced to a ridiculed leftist fantasy. On the other hand, in its attempts to lean closer to the political centre and attract voters with a migrant background, the CDU under Merkel avoids overemphasizing the conservative concept of Leitkultur. The culture debate – problematic as it might have been – has achieved one thing: it shifted the public status of ethnic minorities living in Germany from the temporary state of 'guests' to the permanent state of residents, with an essential role to play in the culture of this country. One of the results of this shift is that the term 'foreigner', used towards most ethnic minorities, has been replaced in public discourse by terms such as 'people with a migrant background', or 'with a migrant history'.

Against this background the weight of the minori-

ties debate in Germany has shifted once again. The third and most recent incarnation of the minorities debate is an integration debate. While the previous two openly focused on the self-understanding of the German society and thus touched upon the very foundations of its identity, the present debate treats the issue largely as a technical matter: its premise is that minority issues can be solved through a mixture of governmentally sponsored measures, mostly in the area of social and labour market policies, given the willingness of minorities to accept the rules of the overall societal game.

The obvious problem of this discourse is that it overlooks the larger structural obstacles that do not fit under the categories of social policies. Neither de facto discrimination nor cultural tensions can be discussed in depth using the language of integration politics. And as often happens in politics, things that cannot be discussed do not exist. The discussion about Germany's identity is largely overshadowed by the integration technicalities.

No wonder that the integration burden is largely skewed towards 'migrants', who are required to intensify their efforts in adhering to the rules of the host country and are asked for a lot of personal transformation (from language to values!). The majority, on the other hand, has readily delegated the integration work, on its part, to the government. As a result the contemporary minorities discourse centres around the relationship between an allegedly readily integrating state and supposedly non-integrative minorities. The popular mantra that integration is 'not a one-way street', constantly repeated by public officials and journalists in this country, implies that minorities are not doing enough to embrace the culture and values of the 'host' society. This feeling has intensified since a heated debate over the speech by the Turkish Prime Minister in Cologne, who declared in front of thousands of Turkish-German listeners that, while engaging in German society, they should resist the pressures to assimilate. This warning caused a storm of protests in the *German press* and by politicians, who saw it as a proof of the unwillingness of the Turkish diaspora to integrate in Germany.

Education, participation, naturalization – the three upcoming issues

Nevertheless, the discussion about the place of minorities in Germany can only be productive if issues of German identity, and not only those of minorities themselves, are on the table and the systemic problems of the host society are honestly and thoroughly confronted. Regardless of its various discursive forms, three major topics will determine the near future of the minorities debates. For all three of them such an in-depth understanding of minorities issues is a prerequisite. These topics can be summed up as the trio of education, participation and naturalization.

The high social segregation within the three-tired German schooling system is breeding ethnic segregation, with migrant children cut off from access to high quality education and subsequently to employment opportunities. Sooner or later the systemic wrongs of the current school structure will have to be corrected to prevent the total collapse of the increasingly diverse society.

While the policies of the state are aiming at accelerating the social integration of ethnic minorities, their political participation is lagging behind. Identifying and promoting political leaders of migrant background and engaging minorities in political debates on all issues of societal importance will be the next challenge for Germany.

Finally, as a new generation of children of foreigners living in Germany will be approaching the age of eighteen, they will be required to give up either their German citizenship that they acquired by birth, or the citizenship that their parents have passed on to them. Such is the requirement of the reformed Naturalization Act, which introduced ius soli, but endorsed the public reluctance towards the concept of dual citizenship, which it tries to restrict. The tension evident in this law is not sustainable and the question of dual citizenship will very soon become one the most debated issues: a topic that will touch upon the hidden and unresolved issues of fearing double loyalties and dealing with multiple identities.

A new step in the minorities debate?

We will only be able to address these and many other issues if we begin framing the next stage of the minorities discourse, in which technical and pragmatic politics will merge with an honest process of self-redefinition of the German society as a whole and not cloud it. The European dimension of our new and diverse 'self' could become a valuable catalyst along this path.

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The Netherlands:
The status of minorities

Minding the minorities: a brief look at the public debate on migrants in the Netherlands

Crista Huisman

Shortly before Barack Obama was elected as the next president of the United States, it was announced in the Netherlands that a Dutch national of Moroccan origin would become mayor of one of the Netherlands' biggest cities. Mr Ahmed Aboutaleb, who emigrated to the Netherlands at the age of fifteen and who holds both nationalities, will soon be inaugurated as the Mayor of Rotterdam. As in discussions surrounding Obama's candidacy, both supporters and opponents strongly emphasize Aboutaleb's background. At issue are not his knowledge and experience, but the fact that he is also a Moroccan. 'He comes from Amsterdam and supports Ajax Amsterdam football club, but the worst of it is that he holds two passports[7]', says Ronald Sørensen, the chairman of the Rotterdam-based political party Leefbaar Rotterdam, which is ideologically related to the assassinated politician Pim Fortuyn[8]. Dries Mosch, municipal council member for the party, said 'Aboutaleb has dual citizenship and is a Muslim besides. So of all people, he is the one to run a city in which a large part of the immigrant population categorically refuses to integrate? It's unbelievable![9]'. It is striking how the appointment of a mayor of one of the largest cities in the Netherlands prompts a discussion that concentrates on the candidate's origins instead of his qualities. Many seem to think that suitability for the job is (in this case) a matter of background, rather than of assets such as vision and experience.

The foreign media regularly reports that the Netherlands has lost its reputation for tolerance and seems instead to have turned sharply towards xenophobic sentiments. Indeed, international comparative surveys reveal that Dutch nationals are more negatively inclined towards Muslims and

Islam than nationals of other non-Muslim western countries[10]. The issue of ethnic minorities is at the forefront of public debate. The theme continues to feature prominently, from the Dutch round table meetings on the Res Publica to a succession of research reports. Thus, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations concluded in 2006 that the theme of 'social cohesion and the integration of minorities[11]' is one of eight challenges facing Dutch democracy. The theme also prompted a parliamentary inquiry into the integration policy of the Dutch government[12].

This article discusses how Dutch citizens respond to ethnic minorities and how this affects Dutch society as a whole. Why has the appointment of Mr Aboutaleb as Mayor of Rotterdam provoked a discussion that concentrates almost entirely on his Moroccan descent?

The Netherlands has always been an immigrant nation. Ever since the Golden Age, migrants have migrated to the Netherlands for work or to settle permanently. This has given the Netherlands its reputation for hospitality. Yet this reputation is largely due to the fact that the Netherlands has always needed immigrants for its workforce. Broadly speaking, whenever employment opportunities declined, so too did Dutch hospitality, while the public debate on immigration grew louder. The current debate on minorities focuses particularly on the arrival of Turks and Moroccans. They came as migrant workers during the second half of the 20th century and the general assumption at first was that, in time, they would all return to their home countries. For that reason, efforts were made to ensure that these immigrants remained on the margins of Dutch society. In the 1990s, however, the emphasis shifted to participation and individual skills, on the assumption that these immigrants were in the Netherlands to stay. With policy and public debate centring on 'migrants', not much distinction is made in terms of their cultural and social background.

7 *Algemeen Dagblad*, 17 October 2008
8 Pim Fortuyn mobilized large numbers of voters in 2002, in part through a negative attitude to Islamic newcomers and migration.
9 NRC, 17 October 2008
10 WRR-report 'Dynamiek in islamitisch activisme; aanknopingspunt*en voor democratisering en mensenrechten*', 2006
11 Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, '*De Staat van onze Democratie 2006*', 2006
12 The Blok Commission, '*Bruggen Bouwen*', 2004

Despite its reputation as a tolerant country, Dutch acceptance of foreigners has always had a pragmatic motive. Migrants were tolerated as long as they did not pose a threat to the position of the Dutch people themselves. However, as soon as the opportunities for employment decreased, the tendency to stigmatize and shut out migrants rose. From the farmers' party of farmer Koekoek in the 1960s, the openly racist NVU that was founded in 1971, and the Centrum Partij from the 80s onwards, the public debate on immigration increased sharply. In 1991, this debate received a powerful impetus through the argument of the then leader of the VVD liberal party, Frits Bolkestein, that Islam and western values were incompatible. This marked a turning point in the public debate, and from then on the term 'migrants' basically referred to Muslims and Islam. It was therefore not so much the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 that sparked off the debate about Islam, as many people seem to believe, but it went further back to the remarks made by Bolkestein (among others), and to the article about 'the multicultural drama' by sociologist Paul Scheffer, published in 2000. In this article, Scheffer sharply criticizes the immigration policy of the Dutch government and warns against its effect on Dutch Muslims. In his view, Islam in its 'pure' (fundamentalist) form constitutes a threat to Dutch identity.

Along with other worldwide developments in economic and political areas, particularly relating to trans-national institutions such as the European Union, the arrival of immigrants in the Netherlands has provoked a search for Dutch identity. This quest is characterized by a distinction between 'us' and 'them' and, more specifically, between Dutch identity versus Islamic identity. Problems affecting Dutch society such as criminality and (the threat of) terrorism are directly linked to Islam as a whole and placed in direct opposition to Dutch values. This social dichotomy largely goes unquestioned in the public debate; Islam has become an umbrella concept and is addressed as such. As one survey reports: The public debate projects an image of Islam that is based on the conviction that there is such a thing as Islamic culture[13]'. But what is this 'Islamic culture'? And how are we to define this Islamic culture in the Netherlands, which has become home to Muslims from every corner of the globe and of various religious and political persuasions? Despite the many different viewpoints and the intensity of the public debate, practically no mention is made of the variety and diversity of Dutch Muslims.

International developments, in which the tension in the Middle East and the war in Iraq feature prominently, necessitate a refinement of the debate in the 21st century. Where discussions first centred on migrants and later on Islam, in recent years it has become clear that the idea of a single, uniform Islam is untenable, and the public debate is starting to recognize distinctions in terms of background. The debate currently centres on Moroccans, a group that has increasingly been the subject of negative publicity. High criminality rates among young Moroccans are prompting politicians to make bold statements and are fostering discrimination in all sorts of areas. This situation, which suggests an improvement in the position of other (ex-)migrants, is a step backwards for Dutch Moroccans. An additional problem is that the youngsters under scrutiny have long since lost their intimate ties to Morocco. Although their parents or grandparents may have come from there, these youngsters were born and raised in the Netherlands and their links to Morocco are largely symbolic. Stigmatizing and ostracizing Moroccans means that some of these youngsters feel driven to provoke and disrupt the world from which they feel excluded. As a result, they are recreating a situation from which most Moroccans are attempting to escape[14]. In this way, the debate only fuels a vicious circle.

As explained, in recent years the public debate on minorities in the Netherlands has shifted focus and now increasingly concentrates on Dutch Moroccans. Despite this shift, the discussion continues to lack nuance, as the meaning of terms such as 'migrants', 'Islam' and 'Moroccans' is barely addressed. The debate focuses on problem-

13   R.Th. Smit '*De tragiek van het multiculturalisme*', 2005

14   E.G. Blommestijn '*Leven tussen Nederlanders; Processen van mentaliteitsvorming- en ontwikkeling bij Marokkaanse jongeren in Nederland*', 2004

atic issues and the lack of nuance actually tends
to exacerbate the problems due to the adverse
response of some members of the group to the dis-
cussion. While seeking a solution to the problems,
the current debate instead seems to encourage a
far-reaching stigmatization and discrimination of
a specific group within Dutch society. The only way
to prevent this is to conduct a discussion which
is informed by facts rather than assumptions.
We all have a stake in a balanced discussion that
acknowledges problems due to socio-economic,
cultural and other factors, while keeping sight of
the diversity within population groups (Moroccans,
Muslims, migrants). In this way too, we can prevent
entire communities from suffering on account of
a small, yet vexatious, group of delinquents. This
plea ties in with people like Aboutaleb who, time
and again, insists that he should not be defined
by reference to his ethnic background, but be
assessed for the quality of his ideas. Aboutaleb per-
sonally sees his nomination as mayor from a wholly
different angle: 'Rotterdam is a world city, and I am
a citizen of the world'[15]. Superfluous labels such as
'Moroccan' only seem to serve those who wish to
further social divisions and undermine the public
interest.

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tor.*

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15   *De Wereld Draait Door*, 4 November 2008

Poland:
The status of minorities
Ireneusz Krzemiński

We must start with the description of the kind of minorities we are going to discuss. First of all, this concept is associated with national and ethnic minorities, but in a modern society we can also talk about other minorities — cultural minorities, mainly the LGBT minority (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual people). We can further distinguish the minority of disabled people, as well as other particular minorities, which stand out in the life of a society. Let us start, however, from the case — perhaps most essential for the European res publica — of national and ethnic minorities.

The Minorities Bill, passed in 2005 after very long debates, states that those groups of Polish citizens who are not ethnically Polish, but who have states of their own belong to national minorities (this includes Czechs, Lithuanians, Slovaks but also Jews; all in all the Bill lists nine nationalities). An ethnic minority is an ethnic group, distinct from Poles, which has no state representation. The Polish Bill lists four such minorities: Roma, Karaims, Lemks and Tartars. It is to the credit of this Bill that it makes it possible to extend the list of national minorities. So it gives a chance to new immigrants (for example, a sizeable Vietnamese minority). Research — mainly by Sławomir Łodziński[16] — shows that the Polish Constitution of 1997 and the subsequent Minorities Bill were very well received by national minorities and provided special rights for them, mainly the development of schools in their languages and subsidies from the state budget to secure and develop their cultural heritage. But national and ethnic minorities are really very small in contemporary Poland; according to the latest census of 2002, only 1.23 per cent declared a different nationality. Researchers estimate that minorities are bigger now, but not

more than 3-5 per cent of the whole population[17].

Social attitudes, however, differ from acts of law. Just the fact that work on the Minorities Bill took such a long time is significant. The discussions in the Polish parliament proved that Poles are very attached to their national identity as a purely civic identity and consequently, to their language. Of course, the Bill gives Kashubians the right to use their own language, but the right to bilingual geographical names was passed only with difficulty and was quite restricted. The dramatic history of Poland can justify that, but my own research shows that a significant part of the Polish population only reluctantly accepts the principle of equality of all citizens' rights being extended to minorities. Moreover, Poles are in general very happy about the fact that their society consists of such a huge national homogeneity. It is rather only a relatively highly educated minority who points out the size of the contribution of national and ethnic minorities to the social and cultural life of Poland. This minority maintains that the presence of numerous groups representing other cultures is more enriching than threatening.

I think that at the same time the attitudes of Poles are in the process of very significant change. Firstly, research from the beginning of the 21st century showed, on the one hand, the presence of negative national stereotypes towards the traditional minorities residing in Poland. It also showed that a significant part of the citizenry understands the national and state identity in a characteristic way in which 'others', ethnically 'non-Poles', are generally treated with suspicion. They are always singled out and labelled 'they' and are not entirely 'ours' even if there is no questioning of their formal civic rights. I think that this labelling is very hurtful for immigrants to Poland, especially those whose skin colour and other physical features make them stand out visibly. At the same time negative national/ethnic stereotypes are used by some Poles to mark specifically Polish features to distinguish themselves in comparison to other, self-evidently 'worse', nationalities. Both Jews and Germans are special, imagined national minorities that play an

16   S. Łodziński, '*Równość i różnica. Mniejszości narodowe w porządku demokratycznym w Polsce po 1989 roku*'. Scholar, Warsaw 2005.

17   S. Łodziński, op. cit., charts p. 95-95.

important role in Poles' self-definition: a Pole is not like a Jew (or German), because he does not behave like one. 'They' always act in their own self-interest, but a Pole is faithful to the promises he has given, even against his own interests. The perception is, therefore, that this is why Poles have suffered so heavily throughout history; they suffered because of their faithfulness to moral values.

On the other hand research has shown that there has been a growing attitude contrary to the one just described, which casts aside the traditional anti-Jewish, antisemitic and anti-German stereotypes. Young Poles define the national identity differently, mostly not in opposition to others and not based on the idea of 'suffering for values'. At the same time the younger generation of Poles, especially in the past few years, is taking advantage of open borders and our presence in the European Union. This experience is greatly changing popular ideas and social attitudes. It reveals the national and ethnic differentiation of the world, and it seems to me that it significantly influences the growth of a practical tendency of tolerance towards otherness.

Generally speaking, the situation of national and ethnic minorities in Poland, especially traditional ones, is rather good. The greatest problems are with the Roma, whose stereotypes do not get challenged by encountering them in everyday life, unlike those of the symbolic Jew and German. The Jewish minority is growing especially rapidly, and it is worth mentioning a surge of young people returning to their Jewish roots, often against the wishes of their assimilated parents. There are also a significant number of associations, mainly local, which work against antisemitism and prejudices towards other nationalities, as well as reconstructing the presence of Jews and other minorities in their towns or regions.

The situation of other minorities, mainly lesbians and gays, is different. Young, politically committed sociologists even maintain that the national/Catholic tradition (a pre-war ideology created by a nationalistic formation, National Democracy) has changed the target of its prejudice. The traditional enemy of a Pole/Catholic – which used to be a 'Jew' – is supplanted now by a 'gay' ('the judaization of homosexuality', according to Adam Postolski,

speaking at a conference organized a few years ago at Warsaw University). Indeed, the social movement of lesbians and gays is particularly treated by representatives of Polish Catholicism as an enemy of the 'natural' social order and the newspaper Nasz Dziennik compares it to communist and fascist movements which wanted to destroy the European tradition. The analysis of public Catholic discourse in Poland shows the occurrence of hate speech towards gays, or more generally, towards people from the LGBT category.

Attitudes, as well as social behaviour, are closely bound up with politics. The two-year rule of Law and Order, a party drawing on the national/Catholic tradition, activated anti-gay and anti-lesbian actions and also mobilized anti-German opinion. Now we can observe the consequences. With the advent of the new government, manifestations of hostility towards sexual minorities and anti-German or anti-Jewish actions almost completely disappeared. Research from spring 2008 shows, for example, that a year after the fall of the Law and Order government, the number of attacks on lesbians and gays had fallen by several per cent. Admittedly, it does not mean that very negative and humiliating stereotypes of sexual minorities have disappeared from public debates, but voices of solidarity and support for them are also present.

I think, however, that we have a process of very significant change, even towards sexual minorities. But the attitudes of people in Poland differ in cities and small towns and among the educated and uneducated, and there are also important regional differences. Certainly the eastern part of the country is much more inclined to show hostile attitudes and behaviour towards 'the Other'. Generally speaking, people there are less tolerant. I think it is an important fact that intolerance in Poland is closely connected with national identity. Intolerance is the effect of the ruthless defence of the 'good name' of Poles and Poland. The very traditional image of a moral Pole/Catholic, of a faithful patriot, is strongly linked to the dislike of 'misfits' of all descriptions!

Poland is very divided, and I think there are deep divisions within the Catholic Church and Catholic society, though there is too little public debate about it. The attitudes of tolerance and intolerance,

of openness towards others and of a patriotic and xenophobic pride are tightly woven into politics. It may not be a direct link, but it is important. Admittedly, the nationalist slogans are not explicit during election campaigns, but nationalist attitudes are clearly bound to particular political parties, while the attitudes of openness and a patriotism that is not hostile towards other nations are associated with the voters of other parties. It can be said that world-view and national identity play a vital role in determining voting behaviour and are surely taken into account during campaigns, but are generally not explicit in electioneering slogans. If so, one can say that politics can also play another role in shaping voters' attitudes: not only can they exploit existing divisions in world-views and national attitudes, but they can also intentionally influence and strengthen openness towards others and pride in their own nation, without dislike and hatred towards others. However, at present in Poland such politics are weak.

That is why an important and new phenomenon associated with Poles going abroad is comforting. Even if those are temporary residences in order to work — living in England, Ireland and many other countries of the European Union — they significantly change the attitudes of Poles, especially young ones. Therefore one thing is certain: the open attitude of Poland and Poles towards Europe, the very positive judgement of Poland's membership of the EU and the huge mass of Polish citizens going abroad to work — all those factors are changing Poles (and all the more so those who are less educated and come from small towns or villages) in a direction that makes them good candidates for members of the res publica. Thanks to this, a huge process of changing attitudes towards others is clearly forming, both towards other nations and towards minorities. This is a spontaneous grass-roots process that is perhaps more important than the weak efforts of politicians and the state to support open attitudes towards others, attitudes that are sympathetic and directed towards co-operation and the acceptance of difference and otherness.

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Sweden:
The status of minorities

The emergence of a migrations discourse in Sweden
Qaisar Mahmood

Introduction

Sweden has always been a country of immigration and Swedish society has always been marked by its diversity of lifestyles. There are two widespread misconceptions in Swedish society; the first is that immigration is only a modern phenomenon and the second is that in the past, Sweden was always an ethnically homogeneous country. However, there are two conceptions that are correct – the first is that comprehensive immigration has changed the composition of society over a short period of time; the second is the growing acknowledgement that the effects of immigration need to be dealt with by the political process.

Two questions have, to varying degrees, been the focus of policies during the last 50 years.
1) How can we create an equal and fair society for all our citizens, regardless of birth, or the colour of their skin or hair?
2) How can we create cohesion and participation in a society marked by diversity?

The answers to the questions have varied through the ages, but a historical recap of how ethnic and cultural diversity has been handled politically from 1975 onwards shows that 'we-and-they-thinking' has always been present, although the official rhetoric has been dressed up in new words. Until now, inquiries and policies have always been intended to deal with the situation 'for others' rather than trying to update and adapt the official institutions and general policies to a new population set.

They should change to become like us

The first official descriptions of Sweden as a society characterized by ethnic and cultural diversity appeared in public documents in the 1950s. Members of Parliament started to address issues relating to minorities and the status of immigrants and other so-called native minorities in parliamentary bills (SOU 1996:55, page 26). However, it took another decade before comprehensive policies were formulated to address what was perceived as a multicultural society. During the 1960s immigration was dominated by demands for a larger labour force to meet the needs of the expanding Swedish industry. About the same time the Swedish welfare model was being expanded in order to meet the social needs of the residents. The purpose of the introduction of the general welfare policy was to iron out differences in economic and social conditions.

During the expansion of the welfare state, no specific measures were introduced for immigrants that were perceived as any different from those for the rest of the population. As far as their rights were concerned, foreign nationals with the right to reside in the country were treated, in principle, on equal terms with Swedish citizens. The same applied to obligations. The same demands were put on Swedish and foreign citizens. The only exception was the obligation to do military service. The policies and procedures were, in other words, with some exceptions, the same for all who lived and worked in Sweden.

The same obligations and rights did not mean, however, that there was no difference between those who had immigrated and native Swedes. Those who had immigrated were seen as exotic, and often as transient elements in Swedish society. The Swedes were the ones who were considered to share a national culture. Those who had immigrated were expected to adopt 'Swedish' values and customs. They were expected to adapt to the prevailing view of the Swedes and thus assimilate into Swedish society. The idea of assimilation meant that those who were perceived to deviate from the norm were expected to discard their specific character and adopt the values, customs and habits of those who were seen as part of an ethnic majority.

It is worth bearing in mind that the expectations of assimilation were based on good intentions, because the objective was to improve the social status of immigrants by making them more like the

majority population. Unfortunately, even if the intentions of assimilation are good, it almost always leads to the personality of those who are expected to assimilate, directly or indirectly, being undervalued.

Those required to assimilate probably deal with this using three main strategies. The first strategy might be to tone down their perceived differences. This process can be both enforced and voluntary. For some individuals, however, it is impossible to choose assimilation, since their appearance sets them apart from the majority. A second approach might be to resist assimilation by creating a distinct subgroup, together with other individuals who are perceived to deviate from the norm. These subgroups create and maintain a separate group identity. This group can be used to make a political bargain for limited autonomy, for example, in religious, linguistic or local political issues. The third alternative can be separation, which involves the creation of more or less self-sufficient enclaves with other similar people.

They don't have to become us

In the mid-1960s the public debate centred more and more on the need for special social action by the state for those who were perceived as different, ie. immigrant or other linguistic and cultural minorities (SOU 1996:55, page 27). Experience showed that a general policy was insufficient to create equal living conditions between those who had immigrated and natives. During the 1960s a number of special measures was introduced to target immigrants. Language courses (Swedish for immigrants), which were introduced in 1965, were the first state measure aimed at immigrants. Shortly afterwards, for example, written information about Sweden was published in different languages, interpreters were provided and the first dedicated offices for immigrants were established. A special policy for immigrant and other linguistic, religious and cultural minorities began to take shape. They would no longer be like us; they would continue to be themselves.

The government at the time appointed a special immigration inquiry which had the task of identifying the immigrant and minority status and proposing measures to create equality in society. In the Bill of the investigation of immigrants and minorities (SOU 1974:69) guidelines were formulated which would later be the basis for the government proposal 'Guidelines for immigrants and minorities' (Prop. 1975:26). The special policy of immigrants and minorities was expressed in three main words: equality, freedom and interaction. The goal of equality aimed to give those who immigrated to Sweden the 'real prospect' to 'preserve and develop their language and their traditions'. The goal of freedom meant that the linguistic minorities, (that is, all groups in Sweden with a language other than Swedish as their mother tongue) would be given an opportunity to choose whether and to what extent they wanted to maintain and develop their original language and cultural identity. The goal of interaction was about mutual tolerance between the various immigrant communities and the indigenous population. The policy of Immigration and Minorities was introduced in 1975 to deal with differences, which were not perceived as normal. However, it should be noted that the inquiry on immigration assumed that immigrant communities would be seen as minority groups in Sweden.

However, with the creation of its new immigration policy, Sweden abandoned the goal of assimilation for a cultural, relativist and multicultural approach. In order to compensate for the general policy failures in these issues, specific measures would be directed at those born abroad and at their children. The development of Sweden into a multicultural country would be promoted by cultural and linguistic groups, which would be actively supported in order to preserve their language and cultural manifestations. The state proposed that it would have a clear responsibility to maintain those who were perceived as distinct cultural groups. They would be strengthened in their differences.

In the final report of the investigations inquiry into immigration two different types of measures for the creation of a multicultural society were advocated. According to the first type, activities would be directed at people who had recently immigrated and who needed help to adjust to the new society for a temporary period. In the second, the state would take steps to enable different immigrant groups and their children to preserve their original

language and cultural traditions in Sweden. Permanent help would now be provided to people of immigrant origin in their capacity as linguistic, cultural and ethnic minorities. By providing special financial assistance for the voluntary sector and specific linguistic measures (to help people to read their native language) the state would actively promote different languages and cultures that were considered to have their origin in immigration. In both cases, it was the immigrants and their children who were the target audience of this immigration policy.

During the late 1970s, critical voices were heard once again in the general public debate. This time it was about the so-called goal of freedom. Critics pointed out that there were limits to the cultural freedom of choice, that there were fundamental values of Swedish society that were not negotiable.

A new inquiry was appointed in 1980 with the mandate to conduct a review of the principles of both immigration and immigration policy. One of the findings of the investigation was that the goal of freedom should not be interpreted as meaning that immigrants would be able to preserve their life and their culture unchanged in Sweden, because this was not judged to be realistic. Instead, the aim was to ensure that those who immigrated had the opportunity to maintain and develop their mother tongues, and that they could engage in cultural activities in these languages. The limits of freedom of choice and the space for the cultural relativist approach were to be narrower than before. In the final report, for example, the following information was included about the limits of freedom: 'The rights of ethnic minorities are enshrined in the Constitution Act. The goal of freedom may not be construed as an acceptance of any values that differ from those which are reflected in our legislation, such as equality between men and women, or the rights of children '(SOU 1984:58 s.367).

Us and *them* should merge into a new *we*

During the 1980s and 1990s a public debate took place as to whether there should be general or specific policies and government programmes for immigrants and their children. The criticism was that the immigration policy had in all good faith

helped to point the finger at 'immigrants' as a homogeneous group that existed *per se*. In this way a discriminatory world, characterized by a 'we-and-they-thinking', was maintained. Society had been segregated by its breakdown into 'Swedes' and 'immigrants'.

A parliamentary committee was set up in 1994 with the mission to review the entire Swedish immigration policy, in order to submit a proposal for fundamental changes. In the Committee's report SOU1996:55, and the government's subsequent proposal Prop.1997/98: 16, the previous policy was criticized for having helped to link the status of immigration with the status of being different. Therefore in the new integration policy specific procedures for immigrants were to be avoided, for the benefit of a more general policy.

According to the new rhetoric it is the general policy that needs to be changed. Therefore it is not the immigrants who need to adapt but the institutions and policies that need to change and become adaptable for the entire population, including the immigrants. Two approaches were considered to justify the shift in emphasis. According to the first, Swedish society had undergone extensive changes over the last forty years as a result of immigration. Ethnic, cultural and religious diversity is now a permanent part of society and has created new conditions and needs. In order to be able to meet the needs of the population effectively the general policy must also change. According to the second approach, integration would be based on the recognition that the people who immigrated, or who are the children of immigrant parents, do not form a homogeneous group, but are individuals with different backgrounds and a variety of individual characteristics.

One of the cornerstones of the Swedish integration and minority policy, introduced in 1997 with the adoption of the Bill 1997/98:16, is that the Swedish population should not be divided into Swedes v. immigrants, as this is likely to increase segregation and cracks in society. Specific procedures based on the status of immigrants should not be introduced because the public rhetoric states that immigrant people do not form a homogeneous group. It was also considered important to distinguish them from

minorities and people with foreign backgrounds. A special set of policies for cultural minorities was created in 2000 in order to deal with specific activities, rights and obligations of the five specific national minorities – Sami, Tornedalians, Swedes, Roma, Jews (Government factsheet 2006:24).

The application of integration shows, however, that policy has largely consisted of special procedures. Nevertheless, people were given labels, such as 'Swedish' or 'immigrants'. The very concept of integration is used (in contrast to its original intention) as an adjective to describe whether the immigrant people have achieved a certain standard. Immigrants are expected to be 'integrated', which is the same as assimilated, to a standard which is perceived as Swedish. The concept of segregation is used to describe the situation, since immigrant people do not live or socialize with people who are perceived as Swedes.

The bill which supports the proposal for integration proposed that a number of terms would be replaced, the use of the term 'immigrants' in the legislation would be reviewed and the concept of multiculturalism would be exchanged for that of diversity. The term multiculturalism was considered to have become too loaded (Prop. 1997/98: 16 Page 1). Diversity was proposed instead of multiculturalism as it was considered to be a more general concept. The bill concludes: 'Because the concept of multiculturalism is loaded with so many different meanings, the government has increasingly moved to talk about the diversity of society instead. The diversity that relates to the assessments and proposals in this bill is not limited to ethnic diversity, but also includes cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.' (Prop.1997/98:16 page 19).

A concept that was introduced during the era of the new integration policy is the notion of ethnicity. In the general debate ethnic and cultural identity are often used as synonyms. The concept of ethnicity has its origins in the Greek word 'ethno', which means people. The most common approach to ethnicity, the primordial vision, is characterized by the idea that every person carries a sense of belonging within themselves which is attached to the markers provided by language, birthplace or biological criteria. This approach to ethnicity

assumes that human beings have an inherent tendency to focus primarily on promoting the survival of their own ethnicity. Ethnicity is assumed to be a part of the individual's innermost true essence (Hutchinson 1994 page 33). The concept of race comes from similar ideas that the people who belong to the same race have more in common with each other than with others who belong to other races.

The experience of the implementation of integration also shows that ethnicity is used as an acceptable concept to point the finger at people who have dark skin and hair, without the use of concepts such as 'alien' or 'immigrant'. In the integration process, it is therefore the concepts of ethnicity and multiculturalism which contribute to maintaining a 'we-and-they-approach'. Swedish historian Mikael Azar says, for example, that: 'It seems that the new obsession with pure cultures and ethnicity has simply replaced the notion of pure race with the notion of pure culture, without changing the racial thinking behind' (Azar, SOU 2005:41, page 169).

Historically, the concept of ethnicity has also been used to categorize people seen as primitive and inferior. In the United States the concept of ethnicity was frequently used in the late 19th century to describe the Jews, Irish, Italians and others who were regarded as inferior to the rest of the population who were mainly of British descent. In the same way, ethnicity in science is used in order to understand the strains or indigenous people of the communities who were perceived as primitive (Thomas Hylland Eriksen: 1998).

The same is true in today's Sweden, where something is defined as 'ethnic', which in turn is often a euphemism for something that is 'un-Swedish' or deviates from the norm. The 'other' is always someone who is ethnic or multicultural. Those who are perceived as the norm (Swedes) in society are defined either in ethnic or cultural terms. The Canadian researcher Carl E James has expressed this as follows: "Those who see themselves as being without culture also regard themselves as being without race and ethnicity. They simply identify themselves as 'Canadians'. For these individuals, culture is identified as that which is possessed by Others, by people with a particular

'look,' who are often characterized by their skin color and /or other physical features, as well as by dress (or costume), food, religious practices and other 'visible' factors." (James, Carl E.: 2003).

Swedish policies for immigrants and minorities have always fractured and divided society rather than integrating it into one unit. Nothing has actually changed during the past 60 years of different approaches to create a durable society characterized by its diversity.

Unfortunately a middle position in the public debate is missing: how everyone living in Sweden could become part of a new 'we-ness'; how the structures of society could be updated so they suit today's population and do not discriminate against all those who do not match the traditional picture of the blond, blue-eyed Swedish Viking.

The biggest challenge when it comes to working for a sustainable society is therefore not about how we can get more immigrant people into employment. It is about how we can facilitate the emergence of a new *res publica,* a new kind of Swedishness, which enables solidarity among Swedes regardless of colour, religious identity or place of birth. The feeling of togetherness and solidarity is important because it enables a community to develop where everyone takes responsibility for the common good. The notion of Swedishness is important because it indicates who can be a full citizen and who should be included. In order to achieve this without ending up in the trap of assimilation, it is of the utmost importance that one should be able to be parent, a Muslim, a football fan and Skåne at the same time as one can identify – and or be identified by others – as a Swede.

Swedish society and the perceptions of 'Swedishness' need to be modernized so that they are in tune with the contemporary population, which is marked by the diversity of its lifestyles, values and ideals. The future of integration, no matter what we choose to call it, should therefore focus on promoting an ongoing discussion about what should constitute the glue that binds all of us who live in Sweden together.

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The United Kingdom:
The status of minorities

The road from multiculturalism to integration or a non-summer in London

Rob Berkeley

I am writing this piece during what is soon to be officially ascribed the worst summer weather since records began. Yet it was a summer in London; a summer full of events and festivals, where the diversity of this city is paraded as a badge of honour, even in the rain.

This is an earnest attempt to describe the 'status of minorities'. Starting with reference to the weather at a series of outdoor parties may seem a rather glib beginning for such a serious topic. However, I want to argue that the status of minorities in the UK is defined by widespread acceptance and appreciation of an everyday, dynamic multi-ethnicity, coupled with leaden-footed policy responses that serve to create boundaries between people through failing to understand the dynamic and mutable nature of identities. It is within this context that a robust and vibrant *res publica* becomes even more crucial as the space in which citizens can be free to draw solidarity with others and be free to live out their complex identities. I want to reflect on the significance of two events – massively varied in scale – yet both with resonance for our understanding of the status of minorities in the UK: UK Black Pride and the Carnaval del Pueblo.

My summers, like those of many my age in London, are punctuated by a series of events and festivals. Some events reach my consciousness only through increased stress on the already hard-pressed public transport system. Others are significant dates in my diary. Some of these events are ethnically/minority group-based; from the London Mela, to the Brick Lane Festival, the Liberty Festival (celebrating the contribution of deaf and disabled people), Pride London and Notting Hill Carnival. Others are not; Shoreditch Festival (arts), Lambeth Country Show (community), Rise (anti-racism, until the intervention of our newly-elected mayor), or the London 2012 Olympic handover party. All of them offer the opportunity for Londoners to meet with each other, enjoy a shared cultural experience and

understand each other better. None of them acts as a panacea for all social ills.

Two relatively new festivals have joined the party. Carnaval del Pueblo (CdP)[18] is less than ten years old. In 1999, 4,000 people attended, in 2007, numbers had reached 13,0000. CdP claims to be '*the event of the year for all Latinos and lovers of their culture.*' UK Black Pride, (UKBP)[19] is an annual event created to promote unity among black people of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American descent who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual or Trans (LGBT). In their third year, the Pride event attracted over 1,500 people and was supported by a range of organizations, including the police, trades unions and faith-based organizations.

CdP is evidence of the hyper-diversity that is coming to typify London. Previous patterns of migration have occurred over longer periods, allowing for appropriate responses to be developed over time. The ease of international travel, the immediacy of international crises and the responses of individuals facing ongoing global inequalities, have made the speed at which patterns of migration can change much swifter. For Britain, the until-recent strength of the economy, and the primacy of the English language are assets, but also make it an attractive place to emigrate to. The arrival and impact of Latin American communities on London is signalled by events such as CdP.

Whereas policy on race equality has, in the past, been focused on white, black and Asian people, the realities of modern patterns of migration and diversity within these broad groupings and the speed of change, has meant that these categories are proving to be inadequate. Policy has been playing catch up rather than understanding the 'hyper' diversity of UK society[20]. If we are to understand the identifications and heritages that people have within our society we must move beyond a notion of Britain as black and white to a much more

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18   www.carnavaldelpueblo.com
19   www.ukblackpride.org.uk
20   See S.Vertovec (2005) *The Emergence of Super-Diversity in Britain Compas* Working Paper www.compas.ox.ac.uk Oxford: Compas

diverse community of communities and individuals[21].

UK Black Pride highlights the importance of understanding and responding to multiple identities. While people's ethnic backgrounds are often important to them, they are not the sum of anyone's experience or identity. The identifications with which we operate are shifting, mutable and dynamic. In terms of policy this becomes particularly salient where the communities with which we identify are marginalized – as women, people from minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, people with minority sexualities, or marginalized by our age. None of these influences is felt separately but combines to create a new experience, for example black women have a distinct experience based on their gender and race that is different to that of black men or of white women. The challenge for policy is to respond not to monolithic conceptions of 'race' but to appreciate the diversity of experiences. The current policy confusion about people of mixed heritage serves to highlight the urgency of this challenge. UKBP offers Black LGBT people an opportunity to articulate their common experiences, to seek solidarity, and to enable others in society to better understand their experiences.

Both of these festivals run counter to current trends in policy which seek to suggest that multiculturalism necessarily leads to social disintegration and that ethnicity and/or faith are in some way undesirable as motivators for action, in that they create exclusive, inward-looking communities that have little interaction or solidarity with their fellow citizens. Some minorities – Muslims in particular – are seen as inherently problematic because they purportedly emphasize their differences rather than highlight that which is shared in common. Nonetheless, these festivals are attended by significant numbers of Londoners. Policymakers must be perplexed by their ongoing popularity and indeed growth.

In 2001 we were right to be concerned. Politics had failed and people took their frustration out on to the streets. Engagement in some northern mill towns came to mean a static vision of cultures and ethnic groups that operated in parallel spaces rather than together and opportunities to communicate across ethnicized boundaries were few. In part this was a function of political expediency in static political spaces, but also a power play from those who wanted to police their communities, essentialize them and keep them 'pure'. (A recent trip to Northern Ireland confirmed the excessive damage such approaches engender). Identity politics were being used, not as a means of freeing the potential of all and promoting equality, but to put up barriers, carve up resources and resist change. This was hardly the multicultural dream!

Yet, in our concern about Muslim exceptionalism and disorder in the streets, I wonder whether we compounded hasty conclusions about the problem and then, subsequently, the solutions. In the wake of the terrorist atrocities of 9/11, famously, a lot of bad policy has been adopted (remember Iraq?). Could an over-emphasis on Muslim communities and 'integration' be a mistake? The discourse of integration which has impacted most heavily on Muslim communities has affected to varying degrees the way in which all visible minorities are viewed in Britain.

Engagement around integration alone is difficult and it is understandable why. The benefits for any group of there being integration without equality and diversity are pretty thin. It is being asked to 'integrate' without a clear picture of what it is that you are being asked to integrate into. It is being asked to integrate on the basis that you leave behind what you already have. It is being asked to integrate without any acknowledgement that you will be able to influence the shape of the whole. It is being asked to integrate into power structures that may leave you in a disadvantaged position.

Minorities are being exhorted to integrate, but despite the festivals and parties, they are being asked to integrate in a context in which many face discrimination in employment, housing, health, education and the criminal justice system. Cohesion and integration are not the *only* values for a good society. In particular, fairness, rights and social justice are valuable for their own sake and

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21 See *Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (2000) London: Profile Books

should not be defended only because they realize a more cohesive and integrated society, however valuable we may think this is. Cohesive societies are not good in themselves unless the grounds for that cohesion are morally acceptable.

Hence an understandable reluctance from many quarters to engage with a seemingly endless debate on 'Britishness' which reinforces structures that have never delivered for marginalized communities, but kept them in thrall to a racist discourse which denies their humanity and agency.

This summer, while standing in a series of muddy fields, wearing shorts but carrying an umbrella, I saw a side of Britain that policy struggles to keep up with. People were forming their identities as Londoners *and* as members of minority groups – offering a constant challenge to the administrative urge to essentialize, define and control them, but exploring what it might mean in 2008 to belong to a number of communities that make up our community of communities and citizens. For the lesbian and gay Muslims at UK Black Pride, or the young white women from the largest social housing estate in South London dancing to Latin hip hop at CdP, identity is far from static, and far from settled; identities being formed and re-formed in the *res publica*.

Like the weather, multiculturalism forms the everyday backdrop to our experiences. The policy retreat from multiculturalism in favour of integration is in part an admission that minorities offer a challenge to policy-making that struggles to be sensitive to rapid change and dynamic identity formation. As winter draws in and the non-summer fades, the task for a *res publica* is to create spaces in which our common struggle for better lives is not obscured by those who would, like King Lear on the heath, curse the weather for the shared challenges that we face.

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