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Session: Diversity, Super-diversity and Belonging

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Thank you for inviting me to give a European perspective on these issues.

If our goal is public comfort with diversity, we have a major challenge in Europe. The polls show attitudes to migration that are consistently negative over time – and attitudes in the UK often the most negative of all.¹

This matters. Negative public attitudes are a barrier at all levels of integration – to migrants' access to the labour market, to social integration, to civic participation and for a sense of belonging. And negative attitudes matter because they can spill over into hate crime and disorder. In today's economic climate there has to be a danger that attitudes harden.

So I find it surprising that debates on integration in Europe so frequently focus on *migrants* – on their perceived 'failure to integrate' - and not on this great barrier to integration, negative public attitudes, and what could be done to address them.

Addressing public attitudes

Yet attitudes are not like the weather! There is something we can do. And the challenge in Europe is less stark than it seems. If we dig down into the data we find greater acceptance of migrants than of migration; and that the most positive attitudes are in some of the areas with the greatest experience of diversity. We see that some of the countries in Europe that have experienced the most rapid increase in migration over the past decade, like Spain and Ireland, have not seen the rise in support for the far right that we might have feared. A majority of Europeans, moreover, see migrants as culturally enriching and accept that migrants help fill jobs when there is a shortage of workers.ⁱⁱ Even in the UK more than four out of five people agree that people in their area get on well together.ⁱⁱⁱ So while a minority are unlikely ever be convinced, there is a wavering majority in middle with mixed views who can^{iv}. The million-dollar question is how.

I suggest that if we want to shift negative attitudes towards migrants in Europe we need to address what underlies them: the feeling that governments have lost control of their borders; the lack of confidence that multiculturalism can work; and a perception of unfairness, that newcomers are taking more than their share: a task made more difficult by misinformation, neighbourhood misunderstandings, and the polarity and heat of public debate.

I would like to use my few minutes to suggest practical steps that government at national, regional and local level can take to address negative attitudes. I do so, on the basis, first, of the emerging findings from a European project (known as AMICALL) exploring, with colleagues in Germany, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, and Spain, what local and regional authorities *are* doing^v; from an analysis of the migration policy process in the UK from which the public has effectively been excluded^{vi}; and finally from my experience as Chair of the network of national equality organisations in Britain, the Equality and Diversity Forum, which brings together those working on age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and broader human rights issues – including, in recent times, migrants and refugees.^{vii}

I do not underestimate the scale of the task in building confidence and acceptance of diversity. But we need to try.

Loss of confidence in border control

We need to start with the deep seated sense among European publics that their governments have lost control of their borders; that some migrants are coming or remaining who should not be there; that their governments consistently promise tougher controls but don't deliver.^{viii} The public has been

given no explanation, no rationale: why, in the UK for instance, when government promised two years ago that it would bring net migration below 100,000 did we hear last week that it is still running at 250,000 a year?^{ix}

The reason, of course, is the cost we would incur if government were to shut the door – to the economy, to public services that need skilled professionals, to the tourist industry if it were made yet more difficult to get a visa; to our universities if we did not compete with you here in Canada and recruit international students; the cost to families and to those facing persecution, and to our international reputation if we turned them away. And the government has not shut the door because operating full proof border controls is easier said than done.^x

But successive governments have not shared this with the public; they have not drawn them into debate on the tough choices to be made.

And they have over promised, and under-delivered.

If we want to address that sense that immigration is out of control, one part of the solution is to engage the public in that debate – to be honest about the options and what can and cannot be delivered. To spell out the economic, social and personal costs of tighter controls: the trade-offs implicit in managing migration.

I suspect that there is greater public understanding of this here in Canada where your government has a statutory duty to consult the public on the details of immigration policy - though tell me if I'm wrong! In Europe, building understanding of *why* migration persists – that there are good reasons – may help to counter the fears that it is out of control, a threat. And that is the necessary basis for the next step – to build confidence that we can live together, that multiculturalism can work.

Loss of confidence in multiculturalism

The trouble is that we are repeatedly told by our political leaders that multiculturalism has failed. Our own Prime Minister said in Munich a year ago that Britain had got it wrong, that 'state multiculturalism' had been over tolerant and should be replaced by 'muscular liberalism' – reinforcing a stronger British identity with an expectation that minorities respect our values.

I agree with Will Kymlicka, in his paper *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure and the Future*^{xi}, published last week, that the 'chorus of political leaders' in Europe who have declared multiculturalism a failure have used a caricature of

multiculturalism as an unquestioning celebration of diversity that it never was; and have exaggerated the extent to which it has been abandoned.

Political leaders should be highlighting the substantial evidence of Europe's success in accommodating diversity; talking up the plentiful examples of communities living in harmony, the contribution of migrants and commitment of the vast majority to liberal values – while conveying confidence of course that they are addressing instances where it is lacking.

Misinformation

One of the challenges that they face is misinformation: like the widespread overestimates of the number of immigrants and what they receive from the state. Here the AMICALL project is finding that it is not central government but cities and rural authorities that are taking the lead, in multi media campaigns to address the myths and counter rumours – using every means from YouTube and comic strips to film and radio shows.

But they are finding that this approach can hit the buffers if the public do not believe what they hear; if the message is drowned by coverage of national political leaders with hostile views; or if their own message is not consistent, some of their own staff expressing negative views.

So we are finding examples of authorities across Europe, from Scotland to Catalonia, that are now training their front line staff and service professionals – in health and social care for instance – whom the public do respect, to counter myths and get accurate information across face to face. And some of the cities like Barcelona which are putting across the message that 'this city is for everyone' are harnessing not-for-profit organisations (NGOs) or community volunteers to help spread the word: messages to the general public about migrants and to migrants that they are welcome. In the Shetland Isles, which has had a declining population, even the taxi drivers have been roped into the campaign: 'Be nice to visitors' they are told, 'we need them to stay!'

But we know that communication alone is not going to solve this.

Tensions at community level

Negative attitudes can arise from personal experience. As Demetri Papademetrios from the Migration Policy Institute in Washington said in a report last week, *Rethinking National Identity in the Age of Migration*, not all public concerns are illegitimate and if governments ignore them, it may only serve to inflame'.^{xii}

Migrants can upset their neighbours through behaviour that breaches local norms: tensions over noise, from houses of multiple occupation; about where rubbish is left, in ignorance of the local system; or even, in our case in the UK, from migrants eating fresh-water coarse fish that they have caught instead of throwing them back!

So we have found Environmental Health Officers taking the lead in rural Norfolk, running advice surgeries for migrants in local cafes; mediation schemes from Bologna to Peterborough, which are proactive in resolving complaints; and initiatives to foster personal contact through shared activities - on the basis that if we know each other better we shall like each other more - some initiatives, crucially, targeting residents who might otherwise be among the most resistant to the pace of change in order to build a shared ownership of the integration process. These are all familiar activities here in Canada. What is relatively new is the extent to which cities in Europe are now taking the lead.

The evidence suggests that anxiety about migrants derives more from perceptions of national impact than local experience. Nevertheless addressing actual tensions on the ground must be part of the solution, whether arising from such misunderstandings or, more problematic, from perceptions of unfairness - on who should be entitled to what: that the migrant, the 'other', is getting access to resources before those perceived to have a greater entitlement. This is a perception so pervasive that in the UK white people are more likely than any other ethnic group to believe they are likely to be discriminated against by their local authority in the allocation of public housing.

As a result some authorities in Europe are now determined not to single out migrants for special treatment but to emphasise that access to every service is determined on the basis of need and need alone. Not to whitewash migrants from their agenda - although that happens too. But to argue that the diversity of migrants is simply adding to the diversity of need in a population already nuanced by gender, class, age, disability and sexual orientation and to bring migrants into their already diverse equality and inclusion agendas.

'Super-diversity'

This is where I wonder whether we, in our concept of super-diversity, as scholars, have slightly missed the point and inadvertently reinforced the sense of migrants as *other*? While super-diversity accurately and importantly portrays the plurality of countries of origin, ethnicity, and faith among migrant

populations, have we nevertheless reinforced the artificial separation from other residents by failing to acknowledge that migrants also share with them identities as women, disabled people, older people, children, Gays and Lesbians?

By defining diversity narrowly in terms of ethnicity and faith, have we down played those other forms of diversity within the migrant *and* host communities which may in practice provide a *stronger* sense of identity, and identities which *unite* rather than divide? Have we overlooked commonalties they experience, like discrimination, hate crime and social exclusion, and hence solidarities they could share?

'Integration'

As academics, policy makers and not-for-profit organisations do we then compound that perception of difference when we refer to the processes that migrants experience as ones of 'integration' but use terms like inclusion, or equality of opportunity, for other marginalised groups – when their experiences of overcoming the barriers to participation may have more in common with those of migrants than that different terminology suggests? This is our experience in the network of equality organisations, the Equality and Diversity Forum, that is working to bring migrant and refugee issues into the equality agenda. We had, in the past, worked in silos, with migrant and refugee organisations outside of the equality and diversity agenda: separate organisations, separate advocacy agendas, missing the points that connect.

Where government bodies bring these agendas together we may fear the loss of a specialised focus on the particular barriers that migrants face. But *if* they can avoid that danger, are they in fact taking an important step towards ending the perception of "them and us", of migrants as separate and different, that underpins the negative attitudes towards newcomers that we so urgently need to address?

Shared sense of belonging

We have governments in Europe that are convinced that they can foster a shared sense of belonging top down; by requiring migrants to take courses and tests, to demonstrate that they know our rules and espouse liberal values. The UK government, in a new Integration Strategy published this month, proposes to revisit the test requirements for Citizenship and permanent residence to that end. ^{xiii}

I think it more likely that shared identity comes from shared experiences; and a sense of belonging from whether we are treated as though we belong. And that applies not only to migrants but to other marginalised groups.

We have a long way to go in Europe to get to that point, but, to sum up, I have argued that if we:

- Engage the public in debates on the trade offs and choices to be made in developing and enforcing migration policy
- Rebuild confidence in multiculturalism by acknowledging its successes, and reinforcing the conditions on which that success depends
- Ensure front line staff counter misperceptions about migrants
- Arm migrants with the information they need to avoid transgressing local norms
- Address perceptions of unfairness by ensuring that services are seen to be provided to the whole population on the basis of their diverse needs
- Foster a mutual sense of belonging by treating people as though they belong, and, as some organisations already beginning to do -
- Bring the 'integration' of migrants within the broader policy agenda for equality and inclusion, while recognising the particular barriers that migrants can face

We shall have taken some of the steps we need to take to get there.

ⁱ *Transatlantic Trends Immigration 2011*; <http://trends.gmfus.org/immigration/key-findings/>

ⁱⁱ *Transatlantic Trends Immigration 2011*; <http://trends.gmfus.org/immigration/key-findings/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Citizenship Survey 2008-09, reported in Communities and Local Government (2010) *Our Nation's Civic Health, Main Report*, p15. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1519846.pdf>

^{iv} *Hopes and Fears, The British Future State of the Nation Report 2012*, British Future.

<http://www.britishfuture.org/publication/hopes-and-fears-the-british-future-state-of-the-nation-report-2012-2/>

^v Attitudes to Migrants, Communication and Local Leadership project (Amicall), <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/research/urbanchange/amicall/>

^{vi} Spencer, Sarah (2011) *The Migration Debate*, The Policy Press: Bristol

^{vii} See http://www.edf.org.uk/blog/?page_id=7999

^{viii} Transatlantic Trends 2011 report: 4. 68% Europeans think governments are doing a poor or very poor job

^{ix} <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/feb/23/net-migration-britain-record-levels>

^x For a development of this analysis see Spencer (2011) *The Migration Debate*.

^{xi} Kymlicka, Will (2012) *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure and the Future*, Transatlantic Council on Migration

^{xii} Papademetrios, Demetri (2102) *Rethinking National Identity in the Age of Migration*, Transatlantic Council.

^{xiii} Communities and Local Government Department (2012) *Creating the Conditions for Integration*.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/2092103.pdf>