

Multiculturalism and transnationalism

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, debates on multiculturalism have been one of the most controversial debates in social sciences and public policies. For some, multiculturalism refers to equality, recognition and representation. For others, on the contrary, it is related to “tribalism” and perceived as challenging the national unity that is guaranteed by the state. For some, it serves to thwart nationalism and for others, inversely, it serves as the basis of national sentiments and expressions.

Multiculturalism as concept and applied policy is facing an important challenge: the power of transnationalism and its effect on citizenship and integration. On a macro and/or micro level, multiculturalism is developed as a theory, a narrative and political paradigm in response to the management of cultural diversity within the nation-state in order to redefine citizenship, equality and solidarity. Transnationalism has been developed as an experience of migrants and minorities, settled in different national societies interacting with each other beyond borders, making explicit multiple memberships and questioning the very concept of citizenship in a single political community, territorially bounded, as well as a trans-border solidarity and identification. On the one hand, transnational practices help to escape national policies, on the other, they reinforce solidarity on a “communal” identity, creating a sense of “peoplehood” unbound and non territorial.

Such a dynamic affects the relationship between territory and the nation-state; citizenship and identity; states and nations. Is the new rhetoric to be found in the understanding of citizenship and integration? Would a conceptual language be found in transnational dynamics that affects the boundaries between majority and minority and their reciprocal representation, a new narrative on the multiple sites of citizenship and on a sense of solidarity and the understanding of integration “here and there” as characteristic of all societies de facto multicultural.

Biography

Oliver Bakewell is Reader in Migration Studies at the Global Development Institute, University of Manchester. His work focuses on the intersections between migration and mobility and processes of development and change, with an empirical focus on migration within Africa. He is the Research Co-ordinator on Migration and Development for the Research and Evidence Facility of the EU Trust Fund for Africa (Horn of Africa). Prior to joining GDI, he spent over a decade at the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. He was one of the founding members of the International Migration Institute and became Co-Director and then Director. Before taking up this role at Oxford, Oliver spent many years working with migrants and refugees both as a researcher and as a practitioner with a range of development and humanitarian NGOs. He holds a PhD and MSc in Development Studies from the University of Bath and a BA in Mathematics from the University of Cambridge.