

1 Contextualising multiculturalism in the twenty-first century

Boulou Ebanda de B'éri and Fethi Mansouri

Introduction

The implementation of multiculturalism, in its various policy guises, presupposes a capacity to policing a heterogeneous cultural society that should, theoretically at least, help nation states achieve a sense of social cohesion that goes hand in hand with basic democratic principles (Young 2000; Benhabib 2002, 2004). In contemporary émigré societies, cultural diversity is an empirical and demographic fact. From this particular perspective, multiculturalism should be a fait accompli in particular for liberal democratic nation states, but also for those nations that have not openly embraced the notion of cultural diversity. Indeed, the aims of multiculturalism as a policy for managing cultural diversity are simple: first, to allow migrant communities the possibility to claim certain collective cultural rights; and second, to guarantee for all within liberal norms an equitable access to all of the nation state resources (Rawls 1971). Paradoxically, the underlined meaning of such an ideal is the explicit recognition of cultural as well as social imbalance within the liberal democratic nation states. Therefore, the two key principles of multiculturalism as stated above explicitly recognise the existence of power dynamics between the minority/majority cultures and provide disempowered individuals and groups with the possibility of claiming a politics of difference (Benhabib 2002). This seems to be where many of the negative appraisals of the concept arise, as has been the case with recent global debates where multiculturalism is critiqued for not supporting common national values as key conditions for social harmony. However, as Kymlicka (2001) argues, in these debates, ‘the majority then labels the minority as illiberal, and reinterprets the debate over multiculturalism as a debate over how to accommodate illiberal groups. The resulting “dialogue” is generally pointless, if not actually counterproductive, since it is based on an initial misunderstanding’ (Kymlicka 2001: 63). It is from this field of contestation that this book attempts to offer contextualised analytical and empirical insights into the complex phenomenon that is multiculturalism today.

The book's aim and approach

Indeed, the overall aim of this book is to examine the multiple meanings of 'multiculturalism' in our increasingly complex and translocal societies in the twenty-first century. Here, engagement with the notion of multiculturalism resembles what Karim H. Karim (2009) terms the 'dark room of the pluralism pundits' pachyderm', an 800-year-old inspired Persian tale. Simply put, our 'owned-version' of this tale goes like this: many people went into a dark room to visit an exposed elephant, but since nobody could see but only touch part of this animal, everyone left with a different impression and expression of what the elephant might be like. In the end, 'wherever any one heard a description of the elephant, he understood only in respect of the part that he had touched' (Rumi, in Karim 2009: 702).

The varied meanings attached to multiculturalism fully resemble this famed tale. Most of the time, we believe we – or our political leaders – are talking about the same thing but we are not; we produce different meanings relating to so-called multiculturalism. For example, although on the surface David Cameron, Nicholas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel seem to be making critical public statements about multiculturalism, all three approach this concept and its policy prescriptions very differently. In truth, the UK, Germany and France had nothing resembling a fully fledged multicultural policy. France is an *émigré* society that has pursued aggressive secular colour-blind policies, which suppress public claims for cultural and religious recognition. Germany is a multi-ethnic country but never really adopted a proactive multiculturalism policy, unlike Canada and Australia (Mansouri 2011; Fillion 2008). And while the UK has had a policy of accommodating cultural diversity, it nonetheless stopped short of adopting social and settlement policies to support the cultural aspirations of migrant communities. Therefore, if asked which of the facets of multiculturalism has failed in Germany and France, the answer would be obvious; both countries, despite having a growing level of cultural diversity, have no explicit social policy to manage, let alone accommodate, multiculturalism.

What the examples above show is that the 'concept' of multiculturalism can become rather confused and imprecise and in many cases ends up being hijacked by certain political agendas (Donati 2009). Perhaps, 'multiculturalism' cannot and will not in the future avoid a multiplicity of contested meanings and thus will endure as an ambiguous notion that cannot be fixed onto one particular, simple ideology or policy.

The content of this book deals with some of these contested dimensions of multiculturalism. Specifically, what the contributing authors attempt to achieve is an avoidance of the conceptual trap of fixing; instead the chapters in this volume engage openly and critically, with the notion of 'reframing' the multiple and complex manifestations of multiculturalism, particularly in the context of fast-changing twenty-first century realities. Thus, to reframe is to re-centre, to contextualise and to specify. This is precisely the reason why this book is not just another collection of essays but rather an original international endeavour of

leading scholars on the topic of multiculturalism, intercultural relations and cultural pluralism. The scholars here not only bring their respective disciplinary lenses but also, importantly, create a dialogue between three geographic regions: Australia and New Zealand; the Americas (Canada and Uruguay); and Europe, particularly the UK. In addition, these contributions range from examining the multiple applications of multicultural policies to forwarding epistemological critiques and reflexive reframing. In these discussions, multiculturalism is used as an analytical framework to deconstruct what has been termed ‘the dominant systems of meaning, absolutist claims to moral authority, and hegemonic versions of knowledge’ (Fleras 2009: 2). Indeed, for Fleras, multiculturalism is a turn to counter-hegemonic new world order centred on diversity discourses but which does not necessarily consent with the politics of difference and the ‘codification of multicultural principles into an inclusive governance’ (Fleras 2009: 2).

The multiculturalism examined in this book, therefore, encourages the acknowledgment of different levels of meaning in order to uncover authentic discourses – a way to contest and challenge dominant and limiting ideologies within public domains. As noted by Kymlicka (2007), the granting of minority rights emerges as an approach to address political challenges of identity tensions in multicultural states. The accommodation of minority rights is resurfacing as a key issue within international and intercultural relations as ‘ethnic conflict came to be seen as a serious threat to international peace and security’ (Kymlicka 2007: 587). For Kymlicka, therefore, ensuring that cultural minority groups receive universal human rights is a key response towards achieving social harmony and intercultural understanding. This is also a position shared by Parekh (2002) who contends that multiculturalism should not just be about minorities, because that would imply that the majority culture is uncritically accepted as the norm against which the claims and rights of minorities are defined. For Parekh ‘multiculturalism is about [addressing] the proper terms of relationship between different cultural communities’ (2002: 13).

Book structure

Against this policy and theoretical background, this book is organised thematically around two distinct but interconnected sections: (1) the epistemologies of multiculturalism and its historical development, drawing on a number of well-studied cases such as Canada and Australia but also less examined ones such as New Zealand and South America; and (2) reclaiming the multiculturalism debate at the level of policy and practice. The latter incorporates alternative frames and approaches to multiculturalism in practice with a few illustrative case studies dealing with ongoing challenges facing multicultural societies as an ideological project and as a social policy tool.

This volume, therefore, focuses on analysing some of the multiple representations of multiculturalism and its problematic, not only as praxis (applicability) but also as an epistemology (its historical philosophical nature). As an epistemology, multiculturalism is not a clear signifier; it does not project a coherent

representation of sociocultural realities, because it is inherently devoid of any one stable theoretical articulation or associated meanings. In fact, multiculturalism does not represent a social or political theory as such and therefore, the extent to which it can be elastic is infinite. This is what the chapters of the first section try to illustrate through an examination of different approaches to multiculturalism, and a systematic exploration of the 'fluid' nature of its epistemological foundations. Indeed, the contested nature of multiculturalism forces us to admit that our twenty-first-century global knowledge economy is inescapably pluralised due to the multiple realities engendered not only by increasing human mobility, but also by the cultural turn that shapes the contemporary politics of diversity.

The chapters in the second section of the book illustrate the ways in which everyday multiculturalism, as praxis, may manifest in a multiplicity of possibilities. Most importantly, each one of these chapters insists on the importance of the specific context on the applicability of multicultural policy. Here, the chapters collectively deal with divergent states' policies, various articulations of difference politics, all within context-specific systems of cultural representation. Both sections of this book help to expose, in part at least, two kinds of tension: (1) at the level of discursive representations, and (2) at the level of governance in the face of increased human mobility and from the perspective of a conservative ideological resistance within some émigré nation states.

Tension one: ambiguous discursive articulations

From a purely discursive point of view, multiculturalism has been represented by way of: (1) collapsing the diversity and complexity of ethnic identity group formations into an essentialised single form of identity; (2) coding practices of racism within binary modes of identification hidden in the language of 'cultural relativism' rather than racism; and (3) imposing race as a myth and pushing forward the idea of culture as the sole marker of identification (see Jiwani 2006). Yet, multiculturalism is a process of becoming, which is encouraged by often conflicting self-assertions and self-expressions of ethnocultural communities in contemporary modern societies (Ben-Rafael and Sternberg 2001). It is through this discursive tension that multiculturalism emerges as an 'institutionalised reality that represents power relations' in modern democratic societies as a way of legitimating and managing cultural diversity (Jiwani 2006: 10).

Tension two: inescapable 'glocalisation' of twenty-first-century societies

The increasing criticism against multiculturalism, mostly from conservative political ideologies, is linked to a perceived threat to the pre-existing power relations, threats which are accentuated by the current economic difficulties and security risks, as well as the negative viewpoints on the rise of transnational human mobility. Indeed, many émigré societies have traditionally relied on

multiculturalism not only as a social policy response to deal with migrant settlement and matters of cultural diversity, but also as a conduit for exhibiting cosmopolitan tendencies exemplified in an openness vis-à-vis the rest of the world (Appiah 2007; Delanty 2006). The ‘immigrant other’, in this case, can still be managed even when naturalised as a source for labour and a token of international representation (Žižek 1997). In recent times, multiculturalism has come under attack from politicians and public commentators alike, who have proclaimed it an ‘utter failure’ (Mansouri and Lobo 2011). Many have postulated that multiculturalism is now retreating gradually as a sociopolitical concept and as social policy framework for dealing with cultural and religious diversity. What seems to emerge from this second form of tension is the threat of ‘glocalisation’ as national borders become increasingly porous. This global/local nexus troubles traditional world views in forcing new world realities (Wilson and Dissanayake 1996: 2). The argument here is that the traditional nation states, shaped as they are ‘into an “imagined community” of coherent modern identity through warfare, religion, blood, patriotic symbolism, and language, is [*sic*] being undone by this fast imploding hetero-glossic interface of the global with local’ (Wilson and Dissanayake 1996: 3). This analysis fully symbolises not only the twenty-first-century reality of multiculturalism in liberal democratic nation states, but it also exposes the threat it can pose to dominant ideologies of homogeneity. Indeed, more than ever, multicultural realities become a serious threat to social cohesion and national identity even in supposedly identity-light, nation states such as Switzerland, Belgium, France and Germany, but also in strong identity holds such as Québec in Canada.

These global perspectives show that stronger nationalist discursive practices tend to encourage commitment to particular mainstream values of national identity at the expense of cultural pluralism (Barry 2001). Within such a contested version of multiculturalism, whose ideological trajectories seem to be moving away from cosmopolitanism towards assimilationism, migrant communities in these Western émigré societies, as well as Western nationals with visible and invisible non-Western markers, are increasingly engaging and challenging exclusionary notions of representations, national belonging and cultural identity.

It is in this context that citizens of multicultural nations are now struggling to construct an identity that bridges both their complex past with the uniqueness of their multiple cultural connections as well as their current transnational and *glocal* belongings. Indeed, in many cases, this struggle emanates from the limited success achieved by multiculturalism as a political structure aimed at institutionalising social justice and social equality. In many émigré nations, multiculturalism is being challenged, not merely because such politics of equality and social justice have failed to achieve their main objectives, but also because the ideal of such politics did not fully embrace the human capacity to resist, negotiate or reflect human ‘agency’. Increasingly, those who resist, negotiate or embrace multiculturalism are not so much for or against the concept of multiculturalism per se, but rather they question its underlying principles at the level of recognising ethno-specific rights within supposedly liberal polities. And herein

lies the paradox: indeed, critics of multiculturalism show a deep level of scepticism vis-à-vis all forms of communitarian claims for recognition in the public sphere. This is because in Western liberal democracies the emphasis has tended to be on according individual rights to citizens rather than collective rights to minorities. As Kymlicka (2001) notes, these tendencies are being challenged by the cultural minority groups who claim that their collective rights are not designed to undermine liberal values but contribute to solidifying the respect of the difference, a fundamental democratic principle. They insist that the communitarian claims of cultural minorities are nothing more than a different manifestation of the common binding social contract articulated through citizenship. Some of these debates are playing out in countries as diverse as Canada, Australia, South Africa, the Netherlands, as well as many other countries such as France and Germany where there is no institutionalised multicultural policy.

Content overview

The first section of this collection contains five chapters that engage with challenging theoretical questions pertaining to contested articulations of multiculturalism in diverse émigré societies. The chapters by Imbert, Rata, Arocena, Bilge and Marotta together highlight the problematic status of minorities and indigenous cultures vis-à-vis the dominant white society. Imbert's analysis of Columbian indigenous relations to the State constitution examines the extent to which multicultural policies conceived elsewhere in a country such as Canada are made applicable in the Columbian context.

The chapters by Bilge and Marotta open up the essentially white patriarchal ideology of multiculturalism to the question of gender and the transcultural possibility. Here, Bilge and Marotta target the process of reifying the 'Other' at the heart of mainstream multicultural epistemologies. Questions asked in these two chapters relate to the extent to which the gendered and ethnicised categories do essentialise – thus fix the meaning – related to émigrés in Western democratic nation states.

Bilge concludes her chapter by arguing that one of the best ways to challenge traditional methodologies is to produce oppositional knowledge that fosters research from intersectional and transnational perspectives. This can be achieved through an articulation of, up front, the politics of race, gender and nation that are played out through discourses of liberal rights, freedoms and equality.

More specifically, Patrick Imbert's chapter starts by invoking Kymlicka's (2012) recent argument that contemporary multiculturalism amounts to a morally progressive extension of existing human rights norms. Keeping this in mind, and after reflecting on the nuanced differences between Kymlicka's multiculturalism, Appiah's cosmopolitanism, Benhabib's internationalism, Bouchard's interculturalism and Benessaïeh's transculturalism, Imbert goes on to argue that major cross-cultural encounters may lead to zero-sum game situations, where one necessarily loses at the other's gain. This situation must be recognised, especially in the context of immigration in North America. Consequently, one would then need to

think more in terms of partial multicultural rights; where one group would gain by having an important right respected (for instance hunting on a certain territory), while being engaged in a process of transcultural encounter (as suggested by Imbert and Benessaïeh in this collection). The question then is to what extent a minority culture can engage and dynamise its customs without losing authenticity? This is especially important in the context of the legitimacy of geo-symbolic and knowledge-based displacements and in the process of global encounters in which every culture participates. The issues raised by Imbert are certainly critical to the ongoing debate about cultural relativism on one hand and cultural ostracism on the other.

This theme is also reflected, though indirectly, in Elizabeth Rata's chapter dealing with multicultural liberal contradictions. Using the case of biculturalism in New Zealand, Rata examines the relationship between the progressive ideals of liberalism and the politics of culturalism. She traces the source of the growing rejection of multicultural politics to two fundamental contradictions that produce an irreconcilable tension between culturalism in all its forms and liberalism. The first contradiction is that between a polity based on status and one based on contract. The second lies in the uneasy capitalism-democracy settlement of the modern period, a subject that is also examined by Paul Morris in this book. Like other countries, Rata argues, where cultural politics have produced unintended outcomes, the New Zealand experience has resulted in cultural closure between Maori and non-Maori as well as between tribalising Maori and non-tribalised Maori. It has also produced growing inequalities within the Maori population despite the initial social justice and redistributive goals of biculturalism.

Staying with the issue of cultural rights and the tension this poses for liberal democracies, Felipe Arocena brings a fresh perspective from South America. He argues that multicultural societies today require new concepts and solutions to problems of and claims for cultural rights that might well be considered unprecedented. The recent, and still ongoing, democratisation of cultural rights, the demands for recognition of ethnic groups excluded from the nation state, the record number of immigrants who also maintain a strong bond with their countries of origin, and the hybridisation of national cultures deepened with globalisation, are part of the challenges linked to multiculturalism in this century. For Arocena, then, the notion of 'context' is crucial for any multicultural application.

Broadening Arocena's take on cultural rights, Bilge reminds us about the absence of gender rights in multicultural debates. Bilge provides an insightful examination of the multicultural policy conundrum in Québec. Her chapter is particularly up-to-the-minute as there is still, in Québec, an endless debate on cultural accommodation.¹ Since its inception, multiculturalism has been contested in Québec for erasing Québec's distinctiveness within Canada. Indeed, multiculturalism was seen as a federalist (Canadian) trap equating the Québécois with any other ethnic group and in that process denying them their legitimate claim for a distinct nationhood. More recently, however, the moral grounds upon which multiculturalism is rejected are extended to include issues of gender and

sexuality. Focusing on the sowing of gender equality and the sexual freedom rhetoric to the already fertile soil of the nationalistic anti-multiculturalism in Québec, Bilge examines the particular ways in which Canadian multiculturalism has been framed in Québec as perilous to minority women, to their rights and well-being. This was exemplified in particular in recent debates on 'reasonable accommodation', which painted multiculturalism not only as un-Québécois, but also as inferior to the Québécois version of pluralism and interculturalism – or *interculturalité*. Such discursive constructions of national debates about cultural rights and cultural recognitions applied as they are in the context of gender issues engender a delegitimising process of multiculturalism, especially in contrast to alternative modes of regulating intercultural relations.

And it is exactly at this epistemological crossroads where Vince Marotta's contribution enters the fray. Marotta examines different conceptual approaches that have been used to understand the self and other conditions of encounter. He argues that the multicultural has been understood as the existence of separate cultures that are self-sufficient and incommensurable while the intercultural has been theorised as a situation in which different cultures recognise and understand each other. Advocates of the transcultural have argued that the intercultural and multicultural perpetuate a mode of interacting that reinforces an essentialist view of culture. In contrast, the transcultural acknowledges the inner differentiation and complexity of cultures and thus to be transcultural is to transcend the borders and think beyond the politics of identity. Marotta critically engages with this latter position and follows with Bilge, Imbert and Benessaieh to suggest that the transcultural subject is situated within the cross-cultural encounter rather than dwelling above it.

The second section of this collection contains six chapters that use original cases to study multiculturalism, either comparatively or contextually. For example, Kenny and Lobo's chapter takes up the tension of discursive denial at the level of racial assimilation. Their analysis questions the origins of the growing concerns about multiculturalism as a sociopolitical project. Drawing on empirical findings conducted in the cities of Melbourne, Australia, and Sheffield in the UK, they conclude by producing three models for managing cultural difference while illustrating the merits and deficiencies of each method. Instead of offering another ready-made medication to diversity management, they conclude their study by suggesting that effective policies need to be underpinned by a cosmopolitan ethics of care, trust and interdependence.

Craig and Lewis's chapter guides the reader through to the political and historical context within which debates about multiculturalism are set in the UK. Their analysis illustrates one of the key tensions at the heart of this book, namely the benevolent liberal discourses of denial that are inherent in governing policy associated with the concepts of assimilation and integration. Craig and Lewis conclude that the issue of social exclusion is critical not only because there are strong links between the levels of disadvantage and membership of many minority ethnic groups, but also because the welfare of Britain's minority groups measured by outcomes – which has been largely disregarded by the British state

– results in minorities facing ongoing systematic racism, social exclusion and injustice. This systemic discrimination is visible in the government’s action that ironically, on the one hand promotes social cohesion but on the other hand drastically reduces its budget for community cohesion programmes.

Peucker and Akbarzadeh examine the extent to which multiculturalism is still a suitable policy framework for managing diversity in the twenty-first century. Looking at the emerging critics from Europe and Australia, they have challenged multicultural ideals for their failure to foster social cohesion, especially in relation to the Muslim population. Their comparative analysis mobilises national policymakers in Germany, the UK and Australia to understand their distinct application to cultural diversity, equality, participation and social cohesion. Peucker and Akbarzadeh conclude that compared to European models of multiculturalism, the Australian model presents a successful approach to ethnic and religious plurality. This is because the cornerstone of Australian multiculturalism has been the celebration of diversity as an asset that enriches the nation state democratic principles far beyond tolerance and ad hoc accommodation claims suggested by Rata’s analysis in this collection. Following Peucker and Akbarzadeh, the Australian model of multiculturalism demonstrates a better track record in addressing issues of social and political integration.

Also looking at multiculturalism in Australia, Michele Grossman provides a sharply contrasted perspective to that of Peucker and Akbarzadeh. For Grossman, ethnocultural ‘difference’ is still seen as a risk or a threat to national security in Australia despite strong public commitments to cultural pluralism and social cohesion. Focusing on the Australian government, Grossman shows how policymakers have recently focused on ‘community resilience’ as a key element in countering extremism and enhancing emergency preparedness and response. Grossman mobilises the notion of ‘transcultural resilience’ to demonstrate the ways in which groups of people and communities, who can be very different with respect to racial, historical, cultural and social dynamics, navigate through the system of Australian diversity policy to survive, culturally. Invoking Benessaïeh’s articulation of transculturality, Grossman concludes that such an approach that combines proactive community resilience with proactive multiculturalism could help Australian governing bodies to acknowledge the struggle that racialised cultural minorities go through to fit in the mainstream society and secure their cultural identity.

From this first set of chapters in the section, it is clear that traditional systemic, assimilationist/integrationist multiculturalism very often disregards – or perhaps disqualifies – the emergence of alternative practices that may originate within the so-called émigrés identity group formations. While this is less obvious in Peucker’s and Akbarzadeh’s analysis, Craig/Lewis, Kenny/Lobo and Grossman clearly outline this systemic closure to cultural difference. What these chapters expose, above all, is a particular praxis of multiculturalism oriented to a predictable end result: cultural homogeneity or cultural assimilation.

The rise of assimilationist policies in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and many European countries points to a growing political anxiety about the

potential of transnational application of multiculturalism as a praxis. Some ethnocultural groups, such as the Muslim populations, seem to challenge not only the secularism claims so dear to liberal democracies but also the traditional nature of identity by constructing alternative systems of belonging. Kevin Dunn and Eleni Petrakis's chapter engages with a complex yet original form of belonging. Their data from Australia and Canada examines the relationship between transnational identity, movement and the ways in which systems of communication work between the migrant groups and their 'home'. Here, we see the emergence of the inescapable glocal articulation proposed by Wilson and Dissanayake (1996) as the practices of identity engaged by these collective transnational identities produce multiple, unprecedented forms of identification that Arocena in this collection suggests call for a new contextualisation.

Dunn and Petrakis's chapter is thus a solid methodological model on how to do a comparative, transnational research on the topic of multiculturalism. Their analysis brings forth an original examination of the structural conditions under which immigrants' experiences and subjectivities are lived, and the bulwark it offers against generalisations. Their conclusions force us to seriously consider the transcultural condition that is picked up in Benessaieh's original proposition suggesting an epistemological turn. She insists on rethinking the limitations of multiculturalism, by opening complex human interactions to transcultural conditions of possibility. For Benessaieh, the notion of transculturality allows for new, different forms of identity formation to be exposed in multicultural societies. Indeed, her edited book, *Transcultural Americas* (2010), she questions the traditional definition of culture to suggest a relational take on the unavoidable formation of new forms of identity implying a dialectical articulation of recognition. In her analysis here, the transcultural becomes located within a multidisciplinary field of studies, which are mainly concerned with cultural interactions under globalisation. Indeed, Benessaieh's *coup de force* represents an attempt to re-articulate the concept of 'culture' that anchors the distinctions between transculturality from other terms used as closed equivalents such as transculturation, multiculturalism or interculturality. For Benessaieh, transculturality suggests cultural processes and identity formations, contained in three main domains of application: (1) cross-cultural competence; (2) identity continuum or a plural sense of self; and (3) multiple cultural ascriptions experienced by individuals and communities in highly diverse contemporary societies. She concludes that transculturality strives for a deep multiculturalism, void of symbolic representation of cultural groupings. Transculturality represents the continuing creation of relationships between apparently different groups, and on the fluctuating, lively and unpredictable emergence of composite and shifting cultural identities as an outcome of the encounters and mutual transformation of those involved.

Paul Morris's reflection on 'The future of multiculturalism?' begins by addressing the high-level political discourse claiming the failure of multiculturalism and multicultural policies and tracing its origins and popular dissemination by journalists, academics and commentators. Before Morris calls for a redefinition of the notion of multiculturalism, he examines this new condition of

possibility in order to outline the criteria for claiming the failure or success of multiculturalism. Focusing on New Zealand with comparative reference to other polities, Morris concludes that successful debates on cultural and religious diversity in our contemporary democratic states require a nuanced deconstructing of the cultural from the religious; as the recent attack on multiculturalism is nothing more than a thinly disguised attack on religious minorities, in particular Muslim migrants post 9/11. And this is what led to the necessary twin contention alongside the failure of multiculturalism, that is, the affirmation of historical morality and values, associated most often with Christianity.

The last chapter by Mansouri and Muraca explores the discursive and conceptual dimensions of what has been termed 'post-multiculturalism'. They examine the sociopolitical context for the emergence of this term and reflect on some of its hidden agendas most notably an anti-democratic tendency to seek an erosion of the cultural recognition claims while not engaging with the fundamental issue of social exclusion and unequitable access to resources.

Conclusion

As the authors in this book collectively illustrate, the question remains as to the nature and utility of multiculturalism for us. What is the side of the elephant that this book proposes to represent? The term 'multicultural', first, describes the demographic nature of a society that is racially and ethnically multiple. Multiculturalism, as well, is a political strategy constructed around public policy. The two articulations above are well defended by Kenny and Lobo's contribution in this book, where multiculturalism exemplifies a normative discourse and a social descriptor of a particular, complex and diverse demographic reality (Parekh 2002; Turner 2006; Vertovec 2007). Following Modood (2007), Kenny and Lobo argue that multiculturalism should remain a clear commitment to the protection of different cultural traditions and should champion the idea of 'being true' to one's cultural heritage.

Perhaps what needs to be reinforced and clarified hereafter is that the multifaceted debate about multiculturalism must be dissected to reflect its ontological development and philosophical imprecision. From an epistemological perspective, there is a real need to distinguish between the various levels at which the concept of multiculturalism applies: the demographic, the political, the societal and the ethical. As a demographic state of affairs, multiculturalism is alive and well not only in Australia and Canada but even in those very countries that declared it 'an utter failure'. The strength and survival of multiculturalism is derived from the very people that carry it and practise it in their everyday lives (Werbner 2013). Many people now accept that cultural, and to a lesser degree religious, diversity is an advantage rather than an impediment to social development as well as to economic growth.

At the level of policy and politics, multiculturalism will continue to be exploited by the political classes that prey on their citizens' vulnerabilities during an era of profound change at all levels of our lives. Yet multiculturalism

as an ideal, with its emphasis on the peaceful coexistence of diverse cultures, on the inherent 'good' of intercultural understanding, on the ethical orientation of respecting and embracing fellow human beings, will continue to be debated, advocated for, critiqued and even dismissed as a utopian vision for an unrealistic society.

But a renewed emphasis on multiculturalism as a conduit towards social inclusion and active citizenship should be articulated in a discourse of contextual cosmopolitan values, rather than mere tangible economic advantages which end up instrumentalising the very nature of the multicultural praxis (Mansouri 2011). This new emphasis needs to start with the next generations of translocal citizens and citizenships – which will recognise and engage with the complex nature of multiculturalism that is brought by the diasporic, transcultural and transnational multiplicity and plurality in twenty-first-century societies. The pedagogical endeavour of a book like this one is therefore to initiate new reflections amongst youth and educational institutions. Only then can we all aspire to a more sustained inclusive agenda that affirms the primacy of rights, irrespective of cultural, religious, gender, socioeconomic or any other discerning variables.

Note

- 1 This threat for disappearance resulted in the submission of the Bill 60 to the National Assembly of the province, by the Nationalist Political party of Québec. Essentially, Bill 60 requests legislation that would legalise 'national' Québécois values under the concept of 'secularism'.

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