Introduction: the conceptual conundrum around intercultural dialogue

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In our increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, multicultural societies are exhibiting new and complex forms of diversity that are creating new opportunities, as well as anxieties, as communities experience the effects of major transformations relating to security, the economy, climate change and diversity (Giddens, 2003; Hage, 2012; Turner, 2010). Challenges associated with cultural diversity and social cohesion, in particular, are becoming more salient and requiring new and more effective policy frameworks. Such new frameworks and intervention paradigms are needed to provide better calibrated policies for managing diversity at all levels, in particular the local level, where everyday encounters with difference take place (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006; Mansouri, 2015; UNESCO, 2013, 2016; Zapata-Barrero, 2015). This is the concrete aim of UNESCO's (2016) International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022).

Yet, and in spite of the growing diversity of academic literature on all things 'intercultural', there remains an urgent need to clarify the conceptual contours for 'intercultural' initiatives and to test their capacities for policy interventions and empirical applications, in particular as these applications need to take place within increasingly super-diverse settings (Kymlicka and Norman, 2000; Mansouri and Halafoff, 2014; Young, 2000).

Current research suggests that state-centric approaches (many of which are framed within civics education policies) have been limited in their capacity to increase positive levels of intercultural understanding and social cohesion (Kamp and Mansouri, 2010; Mansouri and Jenkins, 2010; Noble and Watkins, 2014). Some of the ongoing deficiencies within such approaches have been the lack of emphasis on local initiatives and city-specific strategies; the lack of appreciation of individual agency, in particular among youth (a disposition explicitly promoted within intercultural understanding literature); the almost exclusive focus on migrant and refugee youth in various government policies; and the routine exclusion of youth from Anglo-

Australian and Indigenous backgrounds. Even within the few educational programmes that supposedly target all youth cohorts, the learning process itself is often delivered through top-down pedagogical models rather than building on young people's capacities as reflexive intercultural practitioners and globally connected citizens in diverse social spaces (Walton, Priest and Paradies, 2013).

More broadly, the discourse on diversity management has seen a number of major historical shifts that have tried to posit models – both philosophical and concerning policy – to govern diversity and the consequent variant social implications. These have ranged from the forced assimilation ideologies of the Chicago School in the United States to the White Australia policy in Australia and its emphasis on ethnic screening within the country's migration policy. However, following the civil rights movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, these policies were gradually replaced with more egalitarian approaches articulated through a new emphasis on minority rights, cultural diversity and multiculturalism (Mansouri, 2015). And despite its early promises and relative success in a host of culturally pluralist societies such as Australia and Canada, multiculturalism itself came under significant criticism, in particular in relation to new security threats associated with Muslim migrants living in Western cities. This signalled a gradual shift towards alternative models that incorporate migrants and minorities, as well as towards managing the complex dynamics of diversity within securitized policy agendas. Indeed, many theorists, public commentators and political leaders have made various, and at times contradictory, attempts to at least 'rethink' multiculturalism, if not 'abandon' or 'reject' it altogether. In the context of Europe in particular, and as Taylor (2012, p. 414) states:

> anti-multicultural rhetoric in Europe reflects a profound misunderstanding of the dynamics of immigration into the rich, liberal democracies of the West.

In this regard, it is increasingly argued that multiculturalism, as a policy that called for cultural identities to be supported and maintained rather than forced to assimilate, has led to increased communitarian segregation and societal divisions. Therefore, and in order to prevent the entrenchment of divisions within the same societies and communities, alternative policies are being explored that would encourage communities and individuals to interact reflexively, engage cross-culturally and become more competent interculturally.

Yet, and despite a recent explosion in the academic and policy literature on all matters 'interculturalism', there remains a lack of conceptual clarity around what the term itself (and its many variants) actually means. As some have argued, there is persistent imprecision and diversification around the term as it has developed over time (Levey, 2012), ranging from a focus on relations between citizens and groups in civil society, to a more state-oriented endeavour in recent times in the context of the global war on terror and the resultant 'Muslim question' (Mansouri, Lobo and Johns, 2015).

Therefore, this book aims to provide rigorous theoretical explorations, contested policy articulations and aspired practical interventions around intercultural dialogue from divergent global perspectives, while reflecting apparent conceptual shortcomings and practical challenges. It includes different but thematically synthesized contributions from many UNESCO Chairs members of the UNITWIN Network on Inter-religious Dialogue and Inter-cultural Understanding (IDIU), as well as from experts working in the broad areas of interculturalism, multiculturalism and inter-religious dialogue. The collective contributions, therefore, reflect disciplinary diversity as well as geographic specificities, and are all guided in a systematic manner by the following three questions:

- How is intercultural dialogue (ICD) understood and conceptualized philosophically in the academic literature?
- Are there specific spatial and temporal variants (attributed to locale/social milieu) that shape the way ICD activities are approached? How are these reflected in articulated public discourse and policies (if any)?
- How does ICD and its local manifestations contribute to addressing emergent social fissures and intercultural tensions (as per UNESCO's own Cultural Rapprochement agenda)?

These interlinked questions reflect the ongoing debate about the meaning, domain and application of ICD and its many variations. The questions are examined and explored rigorously and systematically across the book's three main sections dealing respectively with theory, policy and practice.

Book structure

The overall focus of the book is on ICD as a broad conceptual and policy tool that seeks to harness and develop the potential of diversities emerging from everyday spaces to generate conviviality, cooperation, reciprocity and care.

The book has three main sections pertaining to theory, policy and practice/practical interventions from different fields and geographic locations. The conceptual section lays the theoretical foundations for the book and engages with the depth and breadth of literature on 'interculturalism'. The chapters offer reflexive/critical insights and reflect both the disciplinary and geographic diversity of approaches towards ICD. The policy section explores the link between the conceptual articulation of ICD and various policies, highlighting regional divergences and field-specific articulations. The third and final section on ICD in practice highlights case studies of ICD initiatives translated into systematic practice, especially in educational and cultural practice settings. The case studies vary across regions, as well as fields of action ranging from education, inter-faith interventions, media and local governance.

In the first section, Fethi Mansouri and Ruth Arber locate the book's key themes within broader cross-cultural encounters and intercultural relations, as these reflect an increasingly globalized and interconnected world shaped by transnational migration and human mobility. This chapter focuses on how intercultural understanding has been understood internationally and in Australia, as a way of interrogating the ways in which it can be formulated, operationalized and implemented. This is particularly important in the context of education, where intercultural understanding is an important vehicle for introducing and sustaining positive attitudinal orientations among teachers and students alike, and for managing increasing levels of diversity in contemporary schools. One of the dilemmas encountered in this context has been the extent to which a focus on intercultural understanding can be balanced with a more proactive anti-racism agenda. The chapter raises the critical question of whether ICD can indeed be pursued successfully without a systematic shake up of pre-existing structural inequalities, the underlying notional and institutional frameworks that support them, and the entrenched ethno-specific privileges and oppression that are so often their enduring outcome.

Adopting a more reflexive approach, Steven Shankman's chapter interrogates the very terms 'intercultural' and 'transcultural', arguing that, at least in the humanities, the term 'transcultural' may be preferable because it implies 'a beyond' of the very concept of culture, which has so often been posited as the *nec plus ultra* in literary and humanistic studies in today's academia. Shankman asks whether culture can truly have the first and last word, or whether it rather reflects a notion of ethics – one that

is situated both before and beyond culture, as Emmanuel Levinas would argue, and that allows an evaluation of culture and cultural expression.

Going beyond an ethical exploration of culture and dialogue, Mike Hardy and Serena Hussain's contribution examines intercultural dialogue as an object of concern in response to conflicts, and the extent to which this can be used to resolve conflicts or at least minimize their likely occurrence. This chapter locates the discussion of intercultural dialogue firmly within the conflicts and desired transformations characteristic of contemporary Europe in which connection enables exchange and engagement and disconnection risks indifference, at best, or conflict. Hardy and Hussein argue that conflict is not an inevitable by-product of cultural difference; rather they assert that differences often lead to confrontation, or, as we are seeing in contemporary Europe, are used by politicians, media or ideologies as weapons of competition in the battle for resources or of ideas. Indeed, as globalization and political alignments have made national borders more porous, cultural borders and boundaries have sharpened and become increasingly visible and, in some case, more separate. This dynamic context for dialogue in Europe demands a new assessment of both concept and context, requiring not only well-intentioned words and statements, but more importantly new social compacts with clearly delineated economic, political and social requirements.

It is within this new dynamic context that Tariq Modood's chapter considers the role of public intellectuals in engaging with fellow citizens on civic as well as academic concerns. This public intellectual engagement, as Modood argues, can take the form of explaining the triggers of multicultural or intercultural conflict, and the possibilities for re-framing current dominant understandings of this complex situation within a larger – both temporal and intellectual – horizon than is usually presented by civic and political actors. This form of public intellectual engagement, which is a feature of civic or republican traditions, and aspires to be normative and contextual, is elaborated in two ways. The first relates and contrasts this engagement with other modes of intercultural/interfaith dialogue including: ethical-philosophical dialogue, public diplomacy as in 'the dialogue of civilizations', and micro-level encounters and the sociability of everyday multiculturalism. The second expresses this dialogical engagement in the form of an interview – itself a dialogue – in which Modood explains how he has tried to engage as a public intellectual, and how this relates to his sense of being as at once a British Asian Muslim and a multiculturalist.

The second section of the book focuses on the policy articulations of ICD, and is framed by Geffrey Levey's chapter on the pitfalls and possibilities of intercultural paradigms in the Australian context. Levey reminds us that ICD takes place in Australia in a plethora of ways, even if it remains very much part of the national context of Australia's multiculturalism regime. This means that, contrary to some conceptions of ICD in Europe and elsewhere, ICD in Australia operates largely on the basis of a background majority/minorities duality, rather than its repudiation. Levey's chapter examines two case studies of attempted ICD that reveal the inadequate application of the concept by political leadership in the context of the struggles of minoritized groups for recognition and justice. Levey discusses two high-profile cases where the protection of cultural rights was contested, and argues that these cases are instructive and suggest that respecting the terms of Australian multiculturalism, far from undermining ICD, would actually help to make it possible. Indeed, Levey contends that ICD, if implemented, could contribute to improved policy outcomes for all Australians.

The Australian context also provides the background for Gary Bouma's chapter on the often-overlooked differences between packaged and lived religion(s) in the consideration of diversity policy. The practice of ICD too is shaped by the ways in which religions are conceived. Once again, the failure to recognize the many ways that people are religious denies a great deal of richness, while channelling energy largely towards attempts to encourage various packaged religions to converse through top-down communication and directives. Bouma argues that all forms of religion and religiosity need to be involved in ICD for it to achieve the aims of enhancing mutual respect and decreasing intergroup tension and peace.

Extending the geographic reach of the book beyond Australia to neighbouring New Zealand, the chapter by Paul Morris explores the place and understanding of religion in key ICD policy documents, discussions and debates. The chapter traces both the radically different accounts of 'culture' utilized at different levels (EU, national and local), and the equally diverse and sometimes contradictory notions of religion. Morris contends that effectively managing religious difference requires models of religion beyond 'ideology', and policies beyond de-radicalization, 'secular' education for citizenship and empowering women, and advocates for a more nuanced and evidence-based understanding of religious affiliation and commitment that is clearly distinguished from culture.

Ricard Zapata-Barrero, in the context of the EU, outlines the paradigm shifts that have catapulted the saliency of ICD across super-diverse societies. He argues that the recent debate about multiculturalism and interculturalism illustrates the onset of a gradual process of policy paradigm change. Zapata-Barrero analyses the key features of this new policy trend by examining why it has become attractive to policy-makers.

Moving away from theory and policy articulations, the third section of the book zooms in on key challenges facing ICD in practice. Taking the debate about ICD away from Europe, Priyankar Upadhyaya's chapter examines ICD in South Asia. This chapter explores in particular how multicultural rituals and everyday practices facilitated a peaceful transaction of intercommunity demotic superstitious and local practices and led to the rise of such spiritual traditions as Sufism and Bhakti. Such spiritual traditions exemplify ICD in the way they blended and coalesced the orthogenetic and heterogenetic elements of the great interreligious traditions of Hinduism and Islam, thus blurring the difference between the two religions.

Along similar lines, Hassan Nadhem's chapter examines the role of the literary canon in the multicultural and multi-faith society of Iraq, focusing on concepts of cultural capital and the possibility of bridging diverse cultures through the revival of literary icons. The chapter focuses on the great literary icon Fuẓūlī, whose multi-lingual writings in Arabic, Persian and Turkish provide contemporary connections between these diverse cultures and leave an enduring legacy for maintaining social peace within a volatile multi-cultural region.

It is in this context that Fuẓūlī and his literary works in Arabic, Persian and Turkish represent an opportunity to open up a dialogue among the cultures and peoples of Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

Amineh Hoti's chapter examines the challenges and practical outcomes of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan and the UK, with a special focus on the role of women. Hoti provides personal reflections that examine the challenges and possibilities offered through ICD and reports on innovative intervention courses designed to change students' perspectives and mindsets on intercultural and interreligious relations. From a broader perspective, Amanuel Elias examines ICD as a potential anti-racism intervention tool.

Elias explores the utility of ICD as a concept that can emphasize the importance of a 'respectful exchange of views' among members of different ethnic groups, in order to mutually understand each other's values and practices, ways of life and worldviews. The chapter approaches ICD as a

concept for de-emphasizing a focus on cultural minorities, and promoting inter-group dialogue rather than intra-group closeness.

Alon Goshen-Gottstein's chapter provides a systematic review of the practical work of the Elijah Interfaith Institute in convening think tanks of scholars from diverse religions to examine issues that are either of concern to contemporary society or relevant for sustaining the interfaith movement. These practical interventions have been published in the *Interfaith Reflections* publication series, which offers critical reflexive tools for various audiences from the academic, religious and public spheres interested in ICD and, in particular, inter-faith rapprochement.

Taking a historical and more critical perspective on intercultural encounters in Africa, Charles Amone's chapter critically examines the Euro-centricity inherent in conceptions of ICD in the case of Uganda's Acholi peoples and their experience with British colonialization. The colonial encounter was constructed as a 'civilizing mission' by the British – a kind of discursive sugar-coating of what was essentially economic imperialism, presented instead as a benevolent discourse purportedly aimed at transforming Black Africans into a civilized race, in order to end hitherto negative cultural practices. In the process, Western European culture was superimposed onto African culture. Such cultural imperialism practised against the people of northern Uganda, shows that intercultural encounters can be discursively constructed and manipulated by states and other groups to justify oppressive practices against vulnerable groups.

The postscript chapter by Fethi Mansouri and Ricard Zapata-Barrero synthesizes much of the theoretical and empirical insights contained in this book in a critical future-oriented manner. It argues for ICD as an emerging paradigm for diversity management – one that is urgently required in the current international context on the basis of theory-driven, policy and ethical arguments. The question is no longer whether interculturalism is superior to multiculturalism, or whether it should replace it; rather, it concerns the promise of intercultural paradigms as they focus on contact and interaction between individuals at the local level within city-based initiatives, rather than state-centric directions.

Today, most societies across the world are witnessing rising levels of social and cultural diversity brought about by globalization and, in particular, increased human mobility and significant advances in information and communications technologies. The dilemma, therefore, has been how to best manage the resultant diversity and what optimal social policy

paradigms to adopt towards this end. Assimilation, multiculturalism and, presently, interculturalism have all been proposed as possible policy conduits for managing socio-cultural diversity. This book in focusing on the latter concept, and in particular on its ICD manifestation, offers at once theoretical examinations, policy discussion and practical explorations of its uptake across the world. The core argument connecting the book's three distinct sections is that while assimilation in its racist manifestation is no longer a viable option in today's world, ICD within existing multicultural settings has much to offer. In particular, it has the potential to enshrine diversity as a social pillar for regulating social and political affairs, and for ensuring social inclusion and political engagement are achieved in the most productive ways among all individuals regardless of culture, religion, gender or any other personal attribute that distinguishes a person.

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