

# From multi-culturalism to interculturalism: data confirms the change

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As an alternative for the multi-cultural policy narrative that has been dominant throughout the last two decades, Ricard Zapata-Barrero argues that the intercultural policy paradigm is an opportunity for integration and socio-economic improvement. Characterised by its efficacy at the city-level and at multi-levels, its proximity and pragmatism, as well as its non-ideological nature, the author explains that the main target of the intercultural policy paradigm is to encourage contact among people, viewing diversity as an advantage and a resource.

The multi-cultural narrative policy has been dominant throughout the last two decades promoting the inclusion of immigrants into the mainstream by respecting their differences and recognizing their cultural practices, religions and languages and focussing on their economic and political participation (Kymlicka, 2010). All the intents to map multi-culturalism in terms of indicators (S. Vertovec, 2010; Banting and Kymlicka, 2013) provide us with at least three kind of information. Firstly, multi-culturalism has deployed most of its tools in terms of rights protection, as a container of exceptionalities. Secondly, it has legitimated specific structures and institutional arrangement, specific policies in terms of funding and affirmative action to ensure the non-alienation of specific groups. Third and finally, a certain group-based approach has been dominant in the application of the equality principle. It has in this way always been presented as part of a historical wave of democratization, liberalization and human rights protection (Kymlicka, 2015).

In migration studies, the diagnosis of the current situation is that after some decades of application, the multi-cultural policy has not clearly shown to be a factor on integration and of socio-economic improvement of immigrants. We register a lack of references for diversity management and an increase in the support for xenophobic political parties, most of whom are also Euro-sceptics, with populist narratives against migrants (Chopin, 2015). This, together with the associated increase in competition for resources between host and migrant communities, is reducing solidarity (Kymlicka, 2016).

It is in this context that I would like to place the emerging intercultural policy paradigm and focus on one of its pillars – the view of diversity as an advantage and a resource, and opportunity for community building.

## Promoting contacts within diverse societies

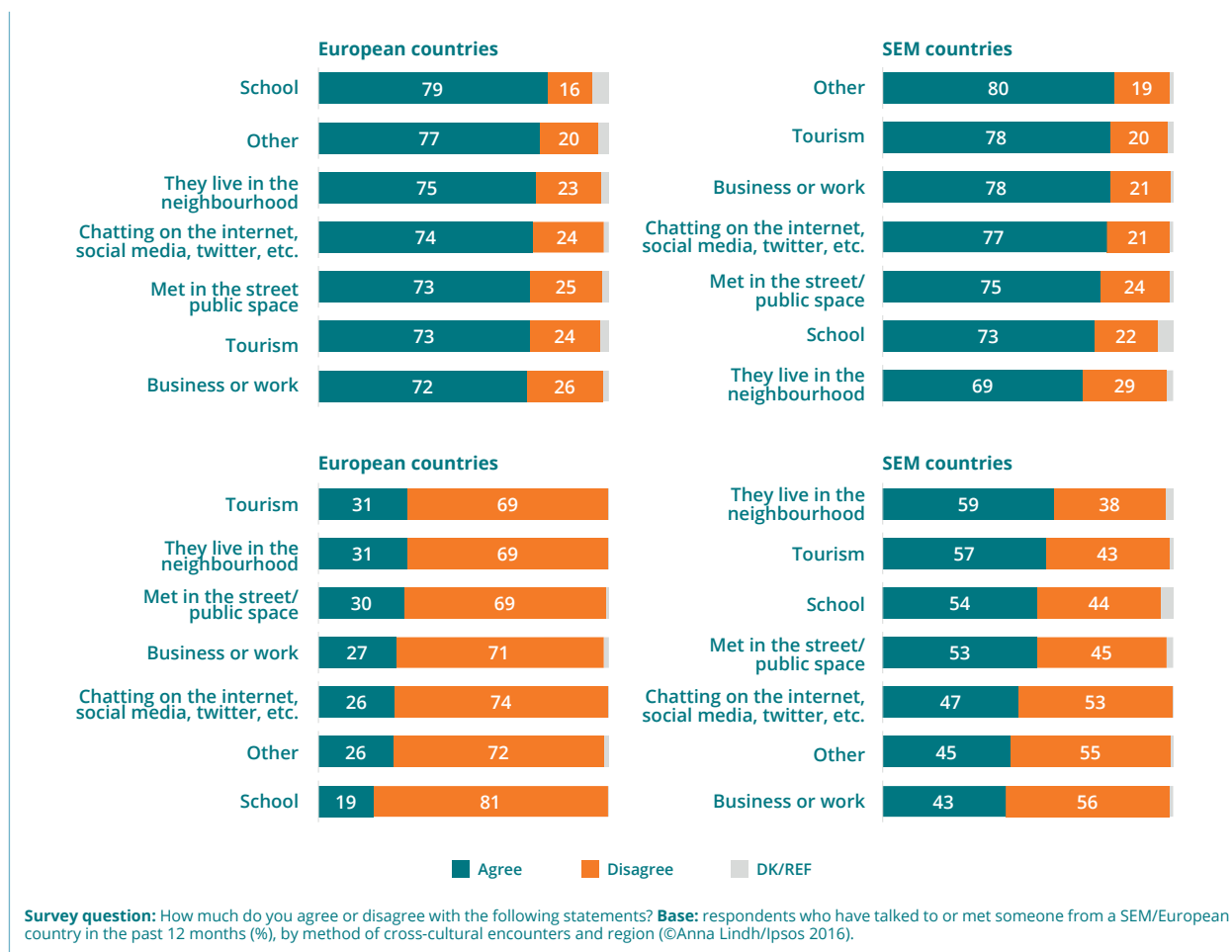
One of the distinctive features of the intercultural policy paradigm is its specific view of diversity as an advantage.

This normative driver is paramount to understanding intercultural policy strategies. We can say that interculturalism is a technique of promoting dialogue, contact and interactions between individuals from different backgrounds, including nationals. It sees contact-promotion as a way to avoid the confinement and segregation of people, which has as a last resort become an explanatory variable of social exclusion and social inequalities. This descriptive definition of interculturalism must be perceived in gradual terms, from circumstantial and sporadic communication in the marketplace, to inter-personal dialogue and interaction which implies the sharing of a common project; or even inter-dependence, which involves that in order to reach a purpose, people also need others' actions.

From the Anna Lindh/Ipsos Survey data carried out in 2016 we can also draw a correlation between the level of people's appreciation of diversity and the kind of intercultural interaction they have experienced. In particular, we register among European respondents that interactions happening through online chatting and within the schools are more likely to produce a positive change of view about the 'other' (37% and 32% respectively) and propensity of people to see diversity as a source of prosperity for society (74% and 78.5% respectively) and refuse the idea of it as a potential threat (74% and 80.5% respectively). Among SEM respondents we register a similar level of positive change of view about Europeans when the interaction has taken place in the school, in the neighbourhood or in the public space (57%, 57% and 60% respectively) (Chart 6.1). However, views about diversity as a source of prosperity for society are mainly registered among those having been exposed to interactions via business and tourism (78%). Business contacts are also those that impact the most in diffusing the belief that diversity is a threat for the stability of society (42%) (Chart 6.2).

**Chart 6.1**

Agreement with statements on cultural and religious diversity, by method of cross-cultural encounters



### Diversity as an advantage in the city management

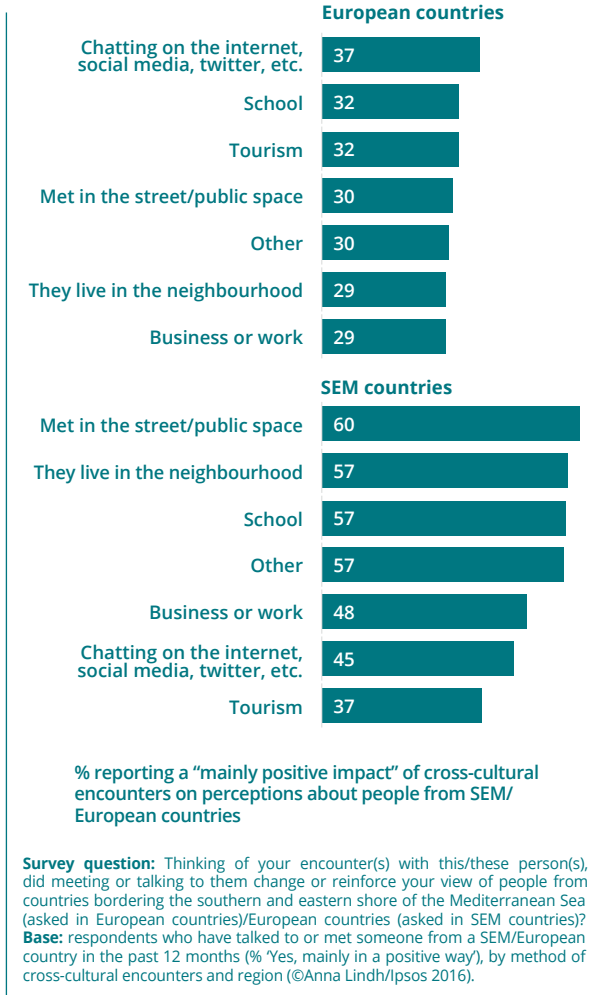
The first promoters of interculturalism as a policy and social practice bring with them a different concept of diversity that was not considered by multi-culturalists – the concept of ‘diversity advantage’. This notion highlights diversity as a potential resource and source of opportunities that needs to be managed to make the most of its advantages and is rather ground breaking in current debates. The intercultural policy paradigm in Europe takes this particular conception of diversity as potential benefit for the society and it is interpreted as a policy strategy to promote these advantages.

From urban studies, this approach emphasises the view that diversity is a community asset and a collective resource since it is assumed that optimising diversity increases social and political benefits (Ph. Wood and Ch. Landry, 2008). An immigrant has several added competences and skills in terms of social and cultural capital, such as language, cultural differentiated registers, cultural particular worldviews and knowledge.

At this individual level, we also know that interculturalism is seen as a most appropriate tool to promote in society creativity, trust, mutual-knowledge, and prejudice reduction (J. W. Berry 2013). Applied to society, this basically means that diversity can be seen as a driver to social and economic development.

As a result, re-designing institutions and policies in all fields to treat diversity as a potential resource for public benefit needs to be distributed, not as a nuisance that needs to be contained. In practice, this diversity advantage management is great in terms of providing equal opportunities for education, employment, entrepreneurship, holding civil office, etc. (Wood & Landry 2008). It is seen as the basic strategy to foster intercultural citizenship (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2016a), and the basic driver of integration (I. Guidikova, 2015). Namely, a successful integration can be done not only through group recognition of cultural differences and diversity management (as was the focus of multi-culturalism) but through the promotion of contacts and as a strategy that aims to socialize people into a public culture of diversity (Zapata-Barrero, 2015).

**Chart 6.2**  
Impact of cross-cultural encounters,  
by type of encounter



This is why the results provided by the Anna Lindh Foundation/Ipsos Survey are so illustrative. They give more ground to fuel the importance of intercultural values in raising children in the respect for other cultures, family solidarity and recognition for religious beliefs and practices. This socialization approach of interculturalism is then a key strategy to reducing prejudices and stereotypes around diversity, increasing knowledge and awareness of diversity as a new public culture to ensure social cohesion.

For instance, from data we can observe that among the European respondents those who believe respecting other cultures is a key value for raising their children are more likely to positively change their views about the 'other' when they are part of a direct encounter (32.3%) compared to those who raise their children on obedience (18%). Also, SEM respondents placing a higher level of importance to the values of respect of other cultures, family solidarity and religious beliefs in raising their children showed to be more positively affected in their views of people from Europe when talking to them, with an average of 50% of positive change registered (vs 36% of those valuing independence). A direct correlation

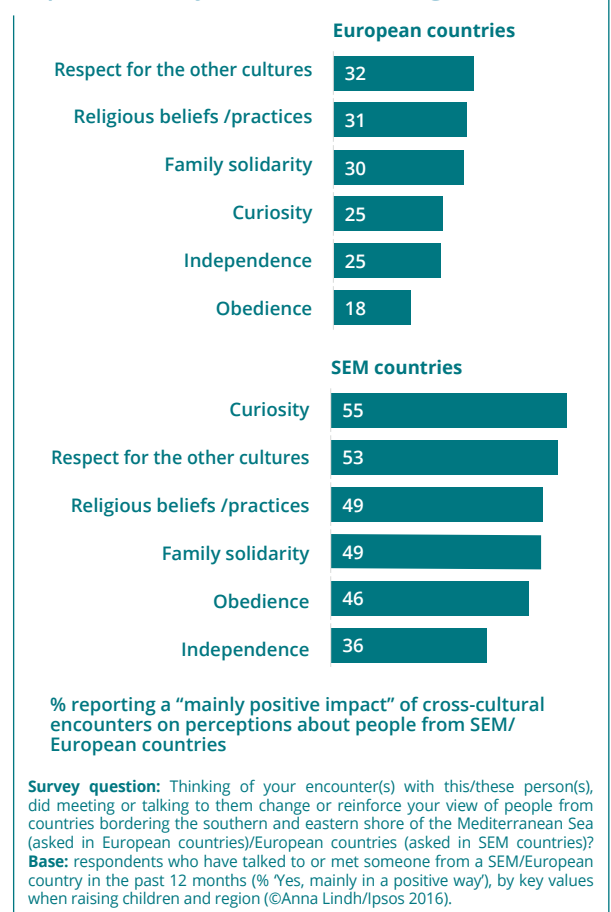
can also be drawn between the importance of nurturing curiosity and openness to the encounter (Chart 6.3).

**Interculturalism vis-à-vis multi-culturalism**

Another source of the intercultural policy paradigm is probably less constructivist and much more social and cosmopolitan. That is, diversity without policy intervention can be the source of conflict and can increase the socio-economic disadvantages of diverse people. The notion of diversity-related conflict has to be understood in a broad sense encompassing racism, poverty and social exclusion (Cantle 2012, p. 102). T. Cantle has been responsible for a report surrounding the British government's concern for local social disturbances in northern towns in 2001. These events directly linked social conflicts with the failure of British multi-cultural policy. His book *Community Cohesion* (2008) directly articulated these ideas against the multi-cultural policy paradigm, accused of promoting 'parallel lives' between communities that had little in common and had no contact with each other.

The central claim of the intercultural policy paradigm here is that there is a need to go beyond the 'ethnicisation' of politics, and the very concrete concept of culture related

**Chart 6.3**  
Impact of cross-cultural encounters, by  
respondents' key values when raising children



to national identity and race. This post-national and post-racial view of culture is certainly a direct critique to the multi-cultural policy paradigm's core assumptions and allows us to centre the policy to the common bonds that must prevail upon differences as a premise to formulate policies. The interculturalists are fully aware that common practices and relations can be constrained by inequality, asymmetrical power relations, and lack of a minimal common public culture. It is probably at this point that interculturalism shows its most demanding side, requiring appropriate conditions for inter-personal relations, reducing the possibilities that contact zones become conflict zones, particularly in vulnerable areas where the tension among communities prevail.

### Managing the advantages of diversity in the cities

What can these normative parameters of the intercultural policy paradigm tell us? First, by its origin, the European view of interculturalism is some sort of 'policy rebellion of cities' against the state policy domination (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2017). The multi-cultural policy approach has basically been thought at the state level and has rarely considered the multi-level perspective in implementing policies. This local approach provides interculturalism with two main strengths: proximity, which allows to promote face to face relations and to develop policies at the micro-level spaces (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2015; 187) in public spaces (Wood, 2015; Cattle, 2016) and *pragmatism*, both because action and practice prevail over whatever preconception of justice or ideal of equality, but also to the extent that less emphasis is placed on culture, and more on the citizen that acts and therefore interacts. Interculturalism's primary concerns are not such abstract and universal notions of justice related to rights in context of diversity, but about a society that takes advantage of diversity as a resource, at the same time ensuring community cohesion. Interculturalism is also non-ideological meaning that when it is incorporated at the city level for managing diversity, the intercultural policy 'resists' ideological variations in political governments and is colour-blind from an ideological point of view. This is the case for most intercultural cities participating in the Council of Europe Intercultural Cities programme (ICC) and has been the case in analysing the intercultural governance of the Spanish network of intercultural cities, RECI (Zapata-Barrero, 2016). Launched in 2011, RECI can certainly be considered a good practice of cities working together, exchanging methodologies, instruments, ideas and good/bad practices in trying to promote contacts, interactions and joint-projects.

### New directions in the intercultural policy research agenda

Today, migration and human mobility have become representative of globalisation with the inherent lack of

control over boundaries and the impact on the economy and welfare. With our current interpretative frameworks, it is therefore usually seen as opposed to both because of the diversity it brings and because it falls prey to the nationalist agenda. In this context, interculturalism can help generate some answers where a boundless multi-culturalism may have difficulties. This is probably one reason why the intercultural policy paradigm can be seen as being a challenge. Rootless cosmopolitan global citizens are as much despised by nationalists as by the rigid multi-culturalists. The post-multi-cultural period where the diversity policy debate lies, illustrates that European societies have fallen to some sort of vicious cycle. In the age of populism, multi-cultural master narratives nurture anti-immigrant arguments and feelings, or even radical views of national civic integration, ranking duties as a condition *sine qua non* of rights. The contacts-based approach of the intercultural policy paradigm can thus be seen as an opportunity to break this vicious cycle.

Multi-culturalism's concern about equality and power sharing is contributing in the last resort to the promotion of encounters, but this does not necessarily entail that it will happen. Consequently, there is a need for a policy whose main target is to encourage contact among people. It is here that we can find the main space for the legitimatisation of interculturalism. This is why we can also celebrate the fact that the Anna Lindh Foundation's 10-year strategy 'Working Together Towards 2025' (Anna Lindh Foundation, 2015) adhere to this intercultural wave as an alternative to the extremist narrative that hits the reality of many societies in the Mediterranean today.

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