

WORKSHOP Abstracts

Workshop 1

Interethnic relations and social cohesion in the neighbourhood

Workshop theme

Contact, identification, prejudice: revisiting the contact hypothesis

Organizers:

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Abstract:

Putnam (2007) suggests in his article *E pluribus Unum* that ethnic diversity in people's immediate living environment leads to decreasing solidarity and less trust. In ethnically diverse neighbourhoods the inhabitants incline to turn more strongly inwards upon themselves. Putnam calls this phenomenon 'hunkering down.' Trust is decreasing, mutual help and cooperation becomes more rare, friendships more loose, and all this even happens within the own group. In earlier publications Putnam brought up the fragmentation of community ties in the United States: *bowling alone* as metaphor of decreasing social cohesion. Now he has stressed a direct relationship with ethnic diversity. His interpretation is that in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods bridging social capital (contacts outside the own group) is lacking, causing a lack of mutual trust between groups.

In this workshop we want to discuss if there is evidence whether Putnam's findings for the USA also apply for European countries. The idea that a growing ethnic and cultural diversity might be a threat for the social ties in society is alarming. Many scientists have tried to replicate Putnam's findings (e.g. Leigh, 2006 for Australia; Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2008 for the UK). Policy makers used it as an argument for community building policies in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods.

This issue has many important policy implications. In many European countries the integration policies aim at mixing neighbourhoods. Basic assumption is that mixing is beneficial. Mixing is thought to prevent neighbourhoods for being stigmatized as problematic neighbourhoods. It would also be beneficial because deprived inhabitants would lean on more privileged inhabitants by recognising that there are opportunities for improvement. Furthermore, the assumption is that social networks will emerge in mixed neighbourhoods leading to privileged inhabitants supporting the more deprived inhabitants.

The issue in this workshop is whether mono-ethnicity in neighbourhoods is better for social cohesion? Do we need a plea for segregation and withdrawal? Is social cohesion better realised if each ethnic group withdraws to its own neighbourhood? If this is true, policies focusing on mixing aimed at promoting social cohesion might have contrary effects. Or is the issue more delicate and complicated? What is the role of socio-economic deprivation: is the key factor for successful social cohesion socio-economic inequality, or ethnic diversity, or a combination of both factors? There are indications that poverty in a neighbourhood is a strong predictor of weak social cohesion. Inhabitants of economically deprived areas have less trust because of the perception of disorder and unrest in the neighbourhood (much crime and vandalism).

Workshop 2

Boundary, Inter-ethnic Relations and Differentiation in Contexts of Impending Ethnicity

Workshop theme

Interethnic relations in the spheres of education, work and health

Organizers

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Summary

This workshop aims to bring under reconsideration the concept of frontier (as well as a cluster of related concepts such as differentiation, identification, accusation, competition, distinction, etc.) focusing on contexts of interaction that we shall designate as impending or enforced ethnicity arenas.

Abstract

We have known since the seminal work of Fredrik Barth that the «ethnic ascription» which «classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, (...) provides an organizational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems» as well as at different historical moments. The process of boundary construction that shapes the group so as to distinguish it from others becomes one of the crucial focuses of investigation from this point of view provided that the idioms that these identity frontiers engaged tend to be altered. This perspective is wholly compatible with the production of discursive strategies of strategic essentialism. Moreover, it is also congruent with alternative ways of conceptualising ethnic difference and distinction which emphasise explicitly the historically-contextualised transformation of the «ethnic imagined communities». All contact, transfers and exchanges across those borders would not, however, alter the maintenance of the boundary.

This workshop aims to bring under reconsideration the concept of frontier as well as a cluster of related concepts such as differentiation, identification, accusation, competition, distinction, identity superiority, etc. Grounding such reflection in research of inter-ethnic relations in migratory contexts, we mean to focus on contexts of interaction that we shall designate as impending or enforced ethnicity arenas. Among these are included the public school, the multi-ethnic neighbourhood, the street, the (mixed) family, the sports world, the pluri-ethnic mosque or church, the detention centre or even the care giving situations that entails health assistance.

To what extent do inter-ethnic sociabilities interfere with the usage of categories and ethnic idioms as bases for identity, narrative and relation when they are advanced in contexts of close spatial and social proximity, of status similarities and biographical experience, of common problems and projects; when they are motivated by the same religious affiliation or by the condition of being either imprisoned or ill; or even when they stem from conjugal and micro-familial ties? The literature does not offer us a straightforward answer. Which situations tend to render the ethnic boundary invisible, unused, or even refused? Which situations promote the mobilization of ethnicity as a key resource to intensify the density and positive dimensions of inter-ethnic relations, and which strategies are manipulated in these endeavours to cross and/or maintain the boundaries? To what extent do meta- or supra-ethnic idioms and strategies dispose of frontiers and its potential to organize interactions, representations and distinctions?

Workshop 3

Methodological considerations in cross-comparative studies in the field of inter-ethnic relations at the neighbourhood level in European urban spaces

Organizers

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Abstract

In the light of the growth in multi-disciplinary and international cooperation and networking in the social sciences, this workshop aims to explore different methodologies adopted for cross-comparative studies on cultural interactions between individuals and groups of different ethnic backgrounds, in contexts where they meet on a daily basis. The relevance of cross-comparative studies is increasingly pertinent in Europe today, especially in the light of the lack of cross-comparative statistical material, the push toward harmonising immigration policy, the increasing heterogeneity of Europe's cities and the need of the commission to monitor the state of affairs across member states. The benefits of cross-national studies are many, and have provided an analytical framework for exploring and explaining social and cultural differences in their respective contexts and determining if common causes can be found across societies for similar social phenomena. Furthermore, such studies are also valuable in their consideration of the transferability of social policies across nations. This workshop aims to address all of the above points, considering both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyse inter-ethnic relations in different European cities. In addition to the participation of the Geitonies research team, other contributions involving methodological questions on cross-comparative analysis on this topic are also welcomed.

Workshop 4

Inter-ethnic Communication and Multiculturalism in European Mediascape

Workshop theme

Interethnic relations, mutual representations, displays of identity and the media

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Abstract:

Inter-ethnic communication, being one of the most valuable flags of most migration policies, is in fact a complex and multidimensional thematic transversal to all contemporary contexts, scales and groups.

“Giving voice” to migrant and minority groups was one of instruments thought to establish and promote communication in the European and the North American countries and, as a result, we observed the birth of a significant number of “ethnic minority media” and also of “minority oriented productions” in the mainstream media on the contemporary “mediascape”. Apart from the everyday interacting interpersonal (effective) communication happening everyday at all European streets, now we can also observe that migrant and minority groups are communicating thru the media, setting their agendas and addressing their interlocutors in a direct manner.

How can we address this issue in a context marked by a claimed retreat from multiculturalism and increase of arguments for social cohesion in Europe?
How should the risks and advantages involved in the multicultural communication policies be evaluated?

In public debate and political talks multiculturalism has been addressed for the past few years with doubts. Recent Europeanized and heavily mediated problems, such as the Danish caricature crisis, disturbances in French suburbs, and conflicts related to the Muslim “veil” demonstrate that public concern is focused on “non-intergratedness”. Where as multiculturalism stressed group cohesion and focused on preserving “minority cultures”, the new discourse of social cohesion and cultural diversity focuses on individualization on the one hand, and on cultural cohesion at European level on the other hand.

There have been various strategies to manage difference in plural societies. Australian, European, and Canadian roots of multiculturalism are based on a top-down policy of a state inculcated into the citizens through programs for tolerance. There have been significant differences in the ways multiculturalism is understood in these contexts. However, we can see some similarity in these policies compared to the United States, which has taken a laissez-fair approach to integration of immigrants, and where interventionist multiculturalism would be considered incompatible with American national identity.

The workshop invites both theoretical and empirical analysis of this discursive and political shift from various national, social and disciplinary viewpoints.

Workshop 5

The role of emotions in interethnic relationships of Muslims: feminism and masculinities

Workshop theme

The role of emotions in interethnic relations with Muslims

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Summary (50)

This multidisciplinary workshop explores emotions in interethnic relationships between Muslims and others in creating cultures of fear and relationship building work. The workshop addresses the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity in the construction of Muslim identities for men, women and young people in Sweden, Iraq, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

Abstract (250)

Anecdotal evidence and research confirm that since September the 11th 2001 anti-Muslim feelings and unaware identification of people as 'Muslim' have increased in Western countries. In response many young people with Muslim identities are moving towards political Islam. Simultaneously, orientalism combined with gender discrimination makes specific groups invisible; for example the resistance of Iraqi women against the invasion; or Iranian men in Sweden who report that it takes them two years in every new group to overcome the images in the dominant majority's minds of the violent Middle-Eastern man.

This workshop focuses on the role of emotions in creating a culture of fear as well as in healing from the separations between Muslims and non-Muslims in a range of different contexts. Opposing the thesis that simply proximity will create closer relationships and better understanding, the position is explored whether opportunities to express emotions while being heard by one's own group and the 'other' can help build better interethnic relationships with (non-)Muslims.

The workshop draws on feminist approaches and masculinity studies in order to address the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity in the construction of Muslim identities. The discussion will be multidisciplinary with contributions from sociology, anthropology, criminology, International Relations and political theory.

We bring together papers on interethnic relationships of Muslims with non-Muslims, Islam and democracy, women and multiculturalism, displaced masculinities and Iranian men in Sweden, the invisibility of Iraqi women's resistance, intersectionality, space and emotion, emotions and counter-terrorism, young Turkish people in Bulgaria and Young Crimean women in Ukraine.

Workshop 6

Challenging Multilevel Discrimination: dealing with diversity in the workplace

Organizers

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Abstract

The aim of this workshop is to provide an understanding of interethnic relations in the realm of the labour market. The integration of immigrants and members of ethnic minorities in the labour markets of their countries of residence, in both low skilled and highly skilled occupations, frequently result in interethnic encounters or relations. These encounters involve the establishment of both employer–employee and employee–employee relationships and provide opportunities as well as challenges. Such opportunities are usually recognised within diversity management approaches, while challenges are more commonly posed by different discriminatory practices (direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and institutional discrimination, for example), strategies of social closure and professional cultures. Emphasis has been put on the recognition of the value of diversity in the workplace in parallel with measures to fight discrimination but evidence has shown that progress has been slow and discrimination has subsisted.

We expect to bring together experiences across sectors and occupations (from low skilled to highly skilled), that take into account different national experiences, as well as different perceptions of such encounters, involving both employers and employees' experiences, the nature of the challenges that arise, definitions and policy responses. The contributors might also try to identify indicators of socio-economic integration across other variables (for instance, gender, nationality) and recognise the role of non-state actors (employers, professional associations, trade unions, civic associations) in promoting migrants' labour rights.

Contributions involving the challenges posed also to research on this subject, involving methodological questions on migration and discrimination are also welcomed.

Workshop 7

Migrants & Ethnic Minorities and Citizen's Participation

Organizers

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Abstract

Citizen's participation is often considered as important for both the cities and the citizens and their communities involved. For the cities, active citizen's participation is important because by including 'local knowledge' and local experience urban authorities can improve the quality of local policies and services, and thus the quality of life in (distressed) urban neighbourhoods. The idea is that neighbourhood-oriented policies make use of existing capacities and resources of communities that enrich the quality of local policy-making. On the other hand, active citizen's participation is also crucial for local residents, neighbourhood-based community organizations or ethnic organizations because it is a means of serving private and collective interests and of empowerment.

This workshop intends to focus on the (lack of) participation of migrants and ethnic minority groups in local practices of active citizen's participation. Do migrants and ethnic minority groups fully participate in such practices or are they underrepresented? In the latter case, what causes the under-representation of migrants and ethnic minority groups in active citizen's participation (lack of interest or capabilities, bureaucratic complexities, exclusion from the part of dominant population categories, etc.)??

The objective of the workshop is to collect local experiences of how migrants and minority groups do or do not participate in community initiatives, what impediments may hinder active participation of migrants and minority groups and what possible solutions there are.