Dark side of multiculturalism

Social exclusion and other unintended consequences of multiculturalism

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Content

Introduction

Contemporary Europe should in consequence of globalisation processes become home of many different people, which bring with them not only own languages and customs, but also unique values and beliefs. These values and beliefs are often perceived as incompatible with basis of Western culture and their representatives are therefore stigmatized and feared. However, when the immigrants are once present in Western society, they need to be taken into account, if we want to maintain or create some social cohesion within. Multiculturalism becomes one possible way of dealing with immigrants and with their integration into "host" country.

The purpose of this paper is to name the unintended consequences of multiculturalism and above all explain the way it leads to social exclusion. This issue is rather important, because of the multiculturalism being considered a way of coexistence of many cultures leading to their inclusion. My position in this critique of multiculturalism is not the nationalistic one, I think that it is necessary to support the together life of people from different cultural backgrounds, but it is also crucial to provide them with adequate conditions for peaceful coexistence.

In the beginning, we will look at the way multiculturalism is understood from different viewpoints. Subsequently, we will look at the unintended consequences of multiculturalistic approach to the "national" society, such as social exclusion, xenophobia, nationalistic tendencies and fragmentation of society. Finally, we will look at the particular ways of failure of multiculturalism in two European countries - the Netherlands and Slovakia, based on some empirical data and in very end we will look at the ways multiculturalism needs to be reconsidered and changed in order to virtually lead to social inclusion instead of social exclusion.

The basic questions of this paper therefore are: what way is multiculturalism understood and performed in certain countries, what weak points does it have in connection to their particular context and what can be done in order to improve the situation in multicultural societies.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism emerged as a response to the massive migration, which characterises late modern society. Term multicultural can be understood as purely descriptive – describing society consisting of several cultural and religious groups. We will be, however, interested in a different explanation, which is considered to be rather problematic, because it represents some kind of ideology. Despite its many defects this ideology is nowadays considered to be the most proper way to inclusion of members of cultural and religious minorities into certain state and its aim is to create the sense of belonging to the multiethnic and multicultural community without suppressing the cultural diversity. However, this sense of belonging is something that is continually disappearing or hasn't even emerged yet. Multiculturalism is often connected with issues of social justice, interdependence, incorporation and integration of minorities and equal opportunities.

Now we will focus on different ways multiculturalism is defined within the scope of social sciences. According to Fay, multiculturalism is the *celebration of difference*: 'differences between various groups of people should be emphasized and honoured.' (2002: 14) In the multiculturalist

approach celebrating the differences, each society or culture represents independent unit, which is differentiated from other units through borders. These borders at the same time define the very nature of each society or culture.

Multiculturalism may also be defined as a plural co-existence of diverse cultures influencing each other while their representatives are absolutely equal in terms of rights and duties in certain society. In the multicultural society everyone´s cultural identity, habits and traditions are respected on a mutual level. According to Hajer and Uitermark, term 'multicultural' refers to 'policies that value cultural difference, view integration as a two-way process, and consider intolerance and discrimination as serious obstacles to the emancipation of minorities' (2008: 8). This understanding of multiculturalism has a long tradition in the Netherlands and in Canada[1].

At this point, it is necessary to examine closely the relation between multiculturalism and pluralism, because this may be a rather confusing issue. The main reason for this is occasional use of these terms, as if they were interchangeable. However, Hutcheon (1994) uses a very apposite metaphor to explain the difference between these two terms. In Hutcheon's explanation in pluralism[2] the main culture can be seen as a mountain river which is filled by many littler brooks and these brooks make it larger. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, represents 'landscape of stagnant pools on a volcanic plain: pools that periodically erupt into jets of stream and molten debris' (1994: 27). Pluralistic and integrated country values individuality, multiculturalist country is unavoidably stigmatized with tribalism and effort to preserve all cultural difference intact through generations.

Another very useful definition of multiculturalism was written by Ravitch (1990), who diversify multiculturalism into pluralistic and particularistic. Pluralistic multiculturalism again views each culture within society as contributing, unique and valuable, but is to some extent interested into integration and ability of cultures to communicate. In sociological literature you may find a term melting pot for it. On contrary, particularistic multiculturalism is more concerned with preservation of distinctive features. However, when we emphasize the differences, we can't really reach integration and then the integration is just declared target we never wanted to reach.

Before we move on to the dark side of multiculturalism[3], we should have a brief look at the view of multiculturalism as a project. According to Sartori (2005: 75), who is one of major critics of multiculturalism, multiculturalism is a very dangerous ideology because it constructs differences that are not (or not necessarily) even present. The main problem occurs when multiculturalism is presented as an important value within society and works as a diversity machine. In contrast to Alexander (2006), who claims that project of multiculturalism was "just" misunderstood, Sartori is convinced that it can't be misunderstood and is bad from its very basics, as it proponents try to realize a new vision of society. Alexander on contrary claims that

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[1] Primarily in Canada proponents of multiculturalism on the state level put stress on encouraging 'racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discouraging ghettoisation, hatred, discrimination and violence'. The main aim in Canada is to support the integration of members of minorities into society and also full taking part in social, cultural, economic and political affairs.

[2] Hutcheon uses also term intercultural, which I see as a good alternative to multiculturalism, because it means communication between various cultures.

[3] Now it should be clear that we are focused on particularistic multiculturalism

proponents of multiculturalism view alternative normative ideal to contemporary society wrongly in 'social system of isolated, however equally powerful groups, which simply mutually guarantee to everybody right to individually cultivate their specific and "different" ways of living instead of sharing the common experience of humanity and solidarity' (Alexander 2006: 51). Multiculturalism according to Alexander, views the society as an aggregate of several equal, but necessarily different racial and ethnic groups. Its perception has moved from compromise and reciprocal dependencies to difference and separated communities.

Unintended consequences of multiculturalism

Concept of unintended consequences comes from American structuralist R. K. Merton (1957), who developed it as a concept of 'The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action'. His main intention was to focus attention to the fact that any social action no matter how well well-prepared cannot be anticipated into last detail and something can always go wrong, because social reality is too complex. This 'happened' also to multiculturalism. As I had mentioned before, it has emerged as a very promising way of tackling growing migration. However, multiculturalism hasn't really succeed in such a fastidious task and brought with itself many unintended consequences. These consequences we will examine within the next part of this paper.

Multiculturalism is often criticised for its connection to tribalism and thoughtless preservation of all differences. This logically comes to the situation in which changes within protected and preserved culture are not tolerable. Individual freedom within freedom of culture to be itself is also closely connected to this issue (see Kymlicka 1995). Sartori (2005) even blames multiculturalism for disintegration of society and its cultural segmentation. We will especially focus on issues of xenophobia and nationalistic tendencies, social exclusion and fragmentation of society.

Xenophobia and nationalistic tendencies

Xenophobia represents fear of the others and everything that is different. It is not clear whether people have fear of everything unknown and different developed in the evolution or if it is mainly contingent on cultural heritage. However, multiculturalism bears a very important contribution to xenophobia in general. Nationalistic tendencies are also partly based on xenophobia; however, their main cause lies in an effort to protect such a fragile grouping as nation[4].

Another very fragile and precious commodity in late modernity represents the identity. Before late modernity everything concerning identity was 'easier'. On the one hand, identity was to large extent firmly ascribed – in the time of late modernity, identity is a project and a task people need to complete in their lifetime (Bauman 2004). On the other hand, identity was confirmed and strengthened mainly through own contra-definition to the definition of the others. In the society of late modernity, the others do not confirm the identity anymore. The contrary is the case, they endanger it, because the cultures live together at one place and it is hard to define 'the only ones right' values and norms (Young, 1999). In this context multiculturalism really

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[4] Nations were socially constructed in time of Enlightenment and shortly after it in order to legitimate political power over particular geographic territory.

contributes to the confirmation of identities and supports solidarity and cooperation within particular culture or group. The main reason for it is the separation of cultures[5], which enables practical hostility (May, Bauman 2004) based on characteristics ascribed to anything unknown. This practical hostility may be expressed in many different ways: from prejudices through unwillingness to ascribe to the members of different group any positive characteristics even to the open hatred, which in this context is completely morally right because of its object being the members of other groups.

Another important issue in connection to identity is the effort to protect 'our' borders. Foreigners endanger and question everything we hold for given and unchangeable even through their presence and their everyday life in our society. Therefore, we tend to protect the borders from their invasion in order not to have repeatedly to legitimate our social structure, values and norms. Multiculturalism solves this problem in really unique way: by the declaration of all cultures to be equally valuable and erasure of necessity to deeply interact with representatives of various cultures on regular basis. Xenophobia is then something that was to some extent present in given society, but has become significantly stronger, because of multiculturalistic "unimportance of communication". Stress on differences can produce just hatred and aversion and need to be balanced with stress on similarities.

Xenophobia also legitimates the nationalistic tendencies within society irrespectively from its progressivity. Nationalistic tendencies can be described as effort to preserve one's nation untouched from representatives of other nations, mainly because we don't want them to spoil our country and society. Assimilation is the most frequent method of accepting immigrants in nationalistic countries, but is often accompanied by a paradox, in which minorities are on one hand wanted to integrate, but on the other hand they are not allowed to be the real part of a new country.

Social exclusion

Social exclusion became part of social policy agendas just lately. In contrast to poverty it draws attention to groups and individuals which are continually pushed towards and behind the edge of mainstream society. Poverty on the other hand is connected with vertical social stratification based mainly on income. Concept of social exclusion is interested in horizontal dimension of social stratification and unequal access to all sources which are easily accessible to all full members of particular society (Walker 1995). Social exclusion may have many dimensions in which people may be excluded, e.g. spatial, exclusion from labour market, cultural, political and social exclusion.

The way multiculturalism leads to social exclusion inheres again in an inability to communicate on sides of all cultures within multicultural societies. Multicommunalism[6] is what's left from multiculturalism and leads to social exclusion completely naturally. At the beginning, there is the fear of the others, which is the result of building enclaves of people with similar characteristics. On the one hand, they separate voluntarily; on the other hand, they are forced to make these groupings and denied the full access to the sources of society they live in and try to become part of it. Within these communities mutual fear and hostility is reinforced. As a result,

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[5] In this cultural separation, cultures cannot be mixed at any cost, because it would lead to loss of many distinctive features in original cultures.
[6] I will explain this term later in part about fragmentation of society.

members of minorities are subject to stigmatization, that means they are ascribed any characteristics which are incompatible with the culture of majority, which later become real in their consequences. This leads to segregation, which is an attempt to put the stigmatized aside in order not to have to deal with them. Segregation is somehow a forestage for the social exclusion. For each society, social exclusion is a problem, because it endangers social cohesion. In fact it is like saying: 'Sorry, but we don't need you anymore, you are completely useless for us. Therefore, we don't count with you in any of our policies. Moreover, we had excluded you, so we are not forced to meet you and interact with you anymore.' This attitude may be really dangerous.

Issue of social exclusion has also a lot to do with integration. If the society is not integrated enough, it's because of social exclusion. According to Carson (1998), integrated community is one whose all members feel that their presence is desired and desirable. Alexander (1988) claims that success of integration depends on extent to which the out-group is able to mobilize solidarity of core-group. Solidarity in this case means subjective feeling of unity with members of own group. Integration then means willingness of majority to broaden its core and share the advantages of membership in it with members of out-group. However, this willingness is always dependent on out-group's ability to erase all differences between them and core-group. In ideal multiculturalism erasure of differences shouldn't be necessary to become the full member of society. Despite this, reality often differs and in late modern society it is very hard to gain a right of not being disadvantaged and to excite in a core-group a feeling of unity with out-group.

Fragmentation of society

Fragmentation of society may be another important consequence of multiculturalism. Fragmentation here means decomposition of society into several cultural, religious or other groups, which are completely independent and are not easily forced to communication. The main problem with fragmentation again lays in threat to social cohesion. Moreover, societies in late modernity are like quicksand and it is understandable that to integrate into something so changeable and uncertain is almost impossible, which is not positive for social cohesion either.

Social cohesion is to large extent dependent on redistribution, recognition and solidarity. Multiculturalism tries to build social cohesion upon the idea of general equality. Unluckily, this idea of equality of all nations, races, ethnicity and religions stands on very shaky basis. According to Young (1999), multiculturalism is based on policy of recognition but without policy of justice. That means that all cultures are recognized, but are not given same rights and possibilities like dominant culture. This is then reflected in creation of many communities – ghettos and enclaves – which are then the basis of very unstable society.

Bauman uses the term *multicommunalism* for such a fragmented society: 'uncertainty tends to change multiculturality to multicommunalism. Deep or barely noticeable cultural differences are used as building material in pyretic build-up of bastions and pads for rockets.'(2006: 107) Bauman sees multiculturalism as a cause of contra-definitions, but not because of nature of multiculturalism, but because of communities it creates, in which the xenophobia is just strengthened. In addition to this, fragmentation of society would lead to the loss of public debate and democratic unity and also brings danger of cultural breakdown for any separated group, whenever borders are crossed or damaged.

Failure of multiculturalism in particular European countries

I have chosen two European countries to show unintended consequences of multiculturalism in social reality. The Netherlands was chosen because of its long history of multiculturalism and really unique coexistence of various cultures. Slovakia was chosen because of its official multiculturalism, which is unluckily accompanied by nationalism and can't emerge in its full form. Despite this, it is still a country in which multiculturalism, even just declared shows its negative consequences.

The case of the Netherlands

We may start with the case of the Netherlands that has been for a long time seen as the model of successful multicultural policy. However, nowadays more and more Dutch people feel that their multicultural policy has significantly failed. This attitude to multiculturalism was rare and almost violating even at the end of the Eighties. The critics emerged and got into public awareness mainly during the Nineties. These anti-multicultural tendencies have been lately strengthened by two politically motivated assassinations. First one was the murder of opponent of multiculturalism because of its threat of Islamization and supposed Prime Minister Pim Fortuyn in 2002. The second was the murder of controversial newspaper columnist and movie maker Theo Van Gogh in 2004. His assassination was seen as a violation of the freedom of speech.

These events and in fact whole debate on multiculturalism became vehemently politicised, even despite the fact that just few years ago multiculturalism was widely supported through whole political spectrum. In this politicised point of view the failure of multiculturalism is perceived as a failure of Left and as a consequence of their lax policies. Until this time the liberal political model prevailed in connection to the integration: its aim was to support and empower ethnic minorities. State supported radio and television stations in minorities' languages and also allowed their members to speak with authorities in their mother tongue. There was also a significant support for founding religious schools and for separate housing and schooling. Immigrants were explicitly told that there is no necessity to learn Dutch.

However, such a treatment of immigrants couldn't remain without any consequences. Inability to speak Dutch was a huge disadvantage in any attempt to start professional carrier and also means often impassable barrier for children of immigrants at schools. Ethnic segregation has occurred, partly voluntarily, especially in Islamic communities, but also involuntarily - in poor areas. Significant parts of Islamic culture were constantly seen as incompatible with democratic values and became the main problem of Dutch tolerance. This leads to the nationalistic tendencies and efforts to have a clear nation without unwanted people.

Some scholars are convinced that problems of the immigrants are not just problem of their culture, but have their roots deeper in social structure. Rath (1997) for example claims that as soon as state starts to see minority groups as unable to fit with prevalent socio-cultural norms, they will be perceived as needy and never treated as equal partners. Koopmans (2003) was interested in the most proper way of integration and came to the conclusion, that economic integration of guest workers as it is done in Germany, is more effective than the complete integration in the Netherlands.

What concerns ordinary people, according to Sniderman and Hagerdoorn (2007), there

are mistrust and suspicion mixed with belief that people should live their lives the way they choose. Dutch are really tolerant, but this tolerance only means that people can retain their differences as long as they maintain corresponding distance. This is really ideal type of multicommunalism. In addition to this, according to the survey on discrimination in European Union has shown, that significantly more people than is the EU average think that discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities is widespread in the Netherlands and is even more frequent than it was five years ago. However, more people think that they have done enough to fight discrimination. This may be caused by tiredness of people with such issues and also that everyone should be responsible for himself.

Nowadays post-multicultural tendencies entered the immigration policies and their approach tends more to assimilation than to multiculturalism. Since 1998 there has been a programme for new immigrants. They also need to learn Dutch and pass couple of language tests. Multiculturalism is just seen as something that wasn't as amazing as everybody had thought before and needs reconsideration even in the Netherlands.

The case of Slovakia[7]

In Slovakia the situation of minorities is significantly different from the situation in the Netherlands. However, even in Slovakia there is some sort of declaratory multiculturalism present. Within the context of Slovakia I will emphasize situation of ethnic and national minorities, because other types of minorities such as religious don't represent so significantly problematic part of Slovak society. In census of 2001 Slovakia had 5 379 455 inhabitants. 14,22% of this count were members of national minorities. The mostly represented minorities according to this census are citizens of Hungarian or Roma[8] nationalities. In addition to them, there live also members of Czech, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, German, Polish and Croatian nationality. Both mostly numerous minorities live in concentrated in particular areas and living like this makes multicommunalism out of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is there present in sense of guarantying the possibility to use mother tongue even in communication with authorities (in particular areas). There are some radio and television programmes in languages of national minorities, mainly Hungarian and Romany. In Hungarian there is also possibility to enter any level of education; that means from kindergarten to university. Hungarians are also the only one minority which has its representatives in Parliament. These representatives defend the interest of Hungarians in Slovakia. Other national minorities may have one of two representatives, but in common Parties and not national ones.

In Slovakia nationalism is a serious problem. Slovak National Party has wide support, despite the fact that its chairman has discredited himself because of his verbal attacks on members of Hungarian and Romany minorities. Slovakia is a state based on the idea of one nation as a state-creating principle. Citizenship is defined primordially that means that Slovaks are not very eager to share with members of other nations sources which are accessible to all Slovaks. According to Dohanyos (2003), nowadays the relations among minorities are worsening because

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[7] Information in this section come predominantly from Dohanyos et al. (2003), if it is not stated differently.
[8] Numbers of this census unluckily don't represent reality sufficiently, especially in case of Roma nationality to which I will focus my attention later. Data of censuses in connection to Roma minority under-represent the real Roma population; this is caused mainly by fact that Roma don't feel like members of distinct nationality and perceive themselves as Slovaks. The totalitarian past and fears of persecution contributes to this identity kept in secret as well.

of unsolved problems from the past, negative prejudices based on historical half-truths and insufficient information, and because of populism of majority parties members, which significantly influences public opinion.

Now we get to the vicious cycle of nationalistic tendencies and failing multiculturalism. Multiculturalism naturally can't exist side by side with nationalism. The main reason for this is that nationalism virtually gives priority to members of one nation. In multiculturalism all cultures, nations, groups should be equal in terms of their rights and duties. In Slovakia nationalism systematically undermines efforts of multiculturalism and multiculturalism, because of being multicommunalism, strengthens nationalistic tendencies.

To some extent Roma minority suffers a lot under this vicious cycle. A lot of Roma people wish to integrate and become the part of majority, but majority don't allow them to do that. Firstly, Roma people can't wipe off their skin colour and they will always be different from the majority. Secondly, they don't perceive themselves and are not perceived as a sovereign nation – predominantly they are stigmatized as welfare-state dependants and somehow less valuable for state as a whole than members of other cultures. The main problem is that minorities are not expected to integrate and nowadays anybody expects especially Roma people to integrate. Majority feels that they are better off, when Roma people are out of their sight and don't interfere in their everyday lives (Kvasnová 2008).

Possibilities within Europe

In Slovakia multicommunalism needs to be changed to multiculturalism, the one which would allow everyone to be full member of society and not demand the differences, but welcomes them. Similar should be done in all countries, which try to include members of different backgrounds into their societies through multiculturalism. Moreover, differences shouldn't be overvalued. It is important to be aware of both – similarities and differences-in order to feel some kind of solidarity with members of own society. Right to be same is at least as important as the right to differ. That means that all members of different culture from the major one should be allowed to assimilate or integrate if they wish to.

The answer to real inclusion lies in my opinion in pluralistic multiculturalism. It is the multiculturalism, which is in favor of breaking in-group barriers and reinforces the approximation of cultures. According to Alexander (2006), new multiculturalism would be more democratic way of civic integration. Negative perception of previously inferior identities would continuously disappear and even some of their aspects would be shared throughout the society. Then just the most workable and useful cultural attributes of immigrants would alive in the new land and enrich the culture there. Enrichment of common culture, which would be the result of pluralistic multiculturalism, however, requires interaction, mutual respect and eagerness to learn.

Lack of communication is what makes multicommunalism out of multiculturalism. Immigrants should be motivated to learn the language of new country. If they are allowed to maintain their differences they are not really motivated to integrate and become full members of a new society. Minorities should definitely be somehow attracted to looking for anything they have in common with majority in order not to support hostility and mistrust at both sides.

Conclusion

In this paper I tried to explain some negative consequences of multiculturalism, which are present in each society, where particularistic multiculturalism dominates integration policies. Particularistic multiculturalism is the one that emphasises differences at any cost. Multiculturalism has been for long time seen as the ideal way of inclusion; however, this particularistic multiculturalism leads instead to social exclusion. In fact, there are several conceptions of multiculturalism and one when understood right can really lead to inclusion of minorities.

These conceptions are multiculturalism as celebration of differences, as diversity machine and as pluralistic multiculturalism. Pluralistic multiculturalism can be freed of almost any unintended consequences. Those most important are xenophobia and nationalistic tendencies, social exclusion and fragmentation of society. All of them rise of multiculturalism in Western societies being in fact multicommunalism – that means aggregate of isolated communities within fear and hostility develop. Nationalistic tendencies are product of effort to preserve independency of one culture and ensure transmit of important values unchanged to next generation. By reason of all minorities or cultures living at one segregated and limited place, interaction or communication among various cultures is virtually impossible. Spatial segregation is the last stage before social exclusion takes its place and minorities are completely pushed out of all important structures within society.

All these negative consequences significantly endanger social cohesion and their prime causes lie in lack of communication among minorities and in stress on differences instead of stress on similarities. Multiculturalists sometimes insist on differences even there, where they aren't present, but become present as a result of self-fulfilling prophecy. To show some examples of failed multiculturalism, I have chosen two countries: the Netherlands which has long-term tradition in multiculturalism and Slovakia, in which multiculturalism is predominantly just official. In the Netherlands there are serious problems in interaction of Muslims with the rest of society. Their relations have significantly worsened after two politically motivated assassinations. Even before that many people had thought that the ways of life and values and norms of Islamic and Western culture are incompatible and immigrants had always lived in worse conditions than the rest of society. In Slovakia main problem is represented by nationalism, which is deeply rooted into minds of people. Nationalism and multiculturalism can't exist side by side. In Slovakia majority of minority's population live in particular areas and make some communities there. Multicommunalism is the case and minorities are not expected to integrate, they are allowed to keep their difference and even supported by state in their preservation.

To conclude, what needs to be changed primarily on multiculturalism/multicommunalism is the ability of minorities to communicate in official language in order to eliminate prejudices at their very beginning. Moreover, less stress should be put on difference and looking for things all people have in common should prevail. Only under these conditions multiculturalism can fulfil its promise and lead to social integration and inclusion.

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