

HAWKE EU CENTRE FOR MOBILITIES, MIGRATIONS & CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Global Tipping Points: Migration Summit (1-2 November 2016)

ROUNDTABLE 2

Multi-dimensional approaches to asylum seeker and refugee integration

What is the relationship between migration and globalisation? If migration has always resulted in global diasporas, what prospects multiculturalism? If it is so that the term multiculturalism was coined before globalisation reached the levels it has attained today, might the discourse of interculturalism better serve to express the fact that we live in an era of super-diversity?

Panellists – Dr Jeff Crisp, Associate Professor Farida Fozdar, Baroness Royall of Blaisdon, Jason Russo, Professor Gillian Triggs

Chair – Professor Susan Luckman

Dr Jeff Crisp from the Refugee Study Centre at the University of Oxford explored the question - asylum seeker and refugee integration: is the concept of multiculturalism still relevant? He suggested that there are three approaches: the assimilation approach, the segregationist approach and the multicultural approach. He highlighted that it is becoming an increasingly contested issue, particularly because of Brexit and its rejection of multiculturalism. David Cameron was deeply implicated in the attack on multiculturalism. From these events, we might think it is no longer a relevant concept.

Is it correct to say multiculturalism increases radicalisation? The charge that it does is a misunderstanding of the concept. In actual fact it requires the majority population to leave space for minority ones. Does multiculturalism have negative consequences for national security and radicalisation? Where are we heading in terms of integration policy? There is a sense that the balance has shifted too far toward separatism and too far from assimilation. This is a dangerous trend, assimilation is on the rise in the UK and one has to ask whether such an approach is an advisable one.

Associate Professor Farida Fozdar from The University of Western Australia suggested that the celebration of diversity could be turned into a tool for exclusion. She argued that Australia's settlement services are among the best in the world. Health, education, housing and employment are not bad in terms of people settled through the UNHCR. There are still negative outcomes for people coming through there in terms of education and employment. If you ask refugees who come through the UNHCR program if they feel like they belong, they'll give you two answers - yes and no. Civic rights provide them with a sense of belonging, but they still feel excluded. While people have access to the material aspects of settlement, the layer of social connections and engagement is missing. She highlighted that other research has shown there are opportunities and people out there who are trying to engage.

She also looked at the way mainstream Australians engage in debates around asylum seekers and analysed blog discussions on this topic and noted there are strong aspects of nationalism.

She also explored multiculturalism versus interculturalism and suggested that interculturalism is presented as an alternative to the negative aspects of multiculturalism. Scholars argue against this, saying multiculturalism does a lot of the things that interculturalism is being celebrated as doing. Concerns are around the focus on the individual and leaving out government responsibility to engage people in the community.

Baroness Janet Royall of Blaisdon PC suggested that multiculturalism works at city and town level. She said that the right wing says it doesn't work, but that's because they don't want it to work. When inviting people to celebrate culture and celebrate diversity, care is needed so that the new cultures don't dominate the original culture. Baroness Royall argued it is these places where populists are the strongest. They build on fear and it's where people feel they are being treated unfairly. She discussed the arts in multiculturalism, as an exclusive means for building and sharing. There's also a role for religion and in the UK it's often the churches, mosques and synagogues that sustain the incoming refugees and asylum seekers and make them part of the community.

No matter what culture, you must uphold human rights. She said that some people argue things like forced marriage are cultural and therefore should be okay and that education is an important element. In terms of multiculturalism, people are afraid of difference, but there's nothing to fear in difference. She also suggests that we've got a long way to go. Even in the melting pots of London, there is still institutionalised racism and unconscious bias.

Mr Jason Russo from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection suggested it is more important than people may realise, looking back on it may be only when we realise how important it is. We've seen creeping protectionism and political volatility. We've also seen a sharpening in politics around migration more generally. These things are playing amongst themselves. If you want to shift the dialogue you've got to come up with fundamentally different ways to speak about things.

Integration is at the heart of public support for migration so you've got to get that right. He questioned, what does integration mean? Do host countries sit around and talk about how it's going? Do refugees talk about how integrated they feel? Thinking about the dimensions of integration, time is the dimension we don't discuss. Do we really think people understand the long-term consequences of what's happening? Have we learnt from history in terms of what good integration looks like?

We need communication around integration with politicians, policy makers and politicians talking to public. As well as, playing with the idea of time and thinking about this and consequences for the future.

Professor Gillian Triggs from the Australian Human Rights Commission began by saying the Prime Minister describes Australia as "the most successful multicultural country in the world". Professor Triggs argued that multiculturalism has been successful in Australia and that we have to have an understanding of it at a local level. She discussed refugee communities in rural areas and that there are support groups who talk to the minister and say that they would like to host some of the refugees in our community. She commented how deeply committed they are to the concept of multiculturalism. They need the labour and the diversity. She suggested that we underestimate the generosity and capacity for community support. In some suburbs there is no support, like in western Sydney. Looking at it more broadly, at the nation state level, with sovereignty we have the right to determine who comes here and the way in which they come. Citizenship is used as a tool in Australia in relation to terrorism. This is changing and will change. This wasn't as important in the 80s and 90s and it's coming back with the rise in nationalism and populism. She suggested that the planet has to come to terms with the mass movement of people and that there's a sense of nostalgia throughout the world that we can go back to what we were, but of course we can't.

Discussion

- Carla Wilshire – do we have the international architecture on migration right? If not is that something we should be pushing?
- Jason Russo – if you step back and think about the patchwork of international government and look at what you thought was good and where there were gaps, there's still a conversation about international architecture needed. Politics around migration is very sensitive. The G20 is powerful if you get the issues right. Climate change is a sensitive issue and the paragraph on climate change took 24 hours to write. You've got to find ways to use G20 in practical ways.
- Gillian Triggs – agreed there is a gap and that the international framework is not effective. Nation states determine migration, but other agreements play into it. Ultimately it's a question of what's in the national interest. When we talk about migration and asylum seekers and refugees

it's driven by globalisation and the media. We can see there's no hope where they're living and they can see what exists in other countries. That's the bit that's not being addressed at all. We're in a transition stage at the moment. Climate change is a big issue in migration. She argues there is more sympathy for climate change refugees than economic or war.

- Jeff Crisp – the international architecture has gone a long way. Global commission on migration was not within the UN and now there is a UN summit where this was up for discussion.
- Claire Higgins – how we could promote values and integrate new comers if we can't point to a set of values?
- Gillian Triggs – this kind of thing would be useful and cements her view we need a bill of rights.
- Baroness Royall – Britain doesn't have a Bill of Rights but have good legislation and it is absolutely clear that we are a free society. We should be talking about universal values that we share.
- Farida Fozdar – there is an Australian value statement that migrants must sign on their arrival, but it is a tool of nationalism rather than inclusion.
- Loretta Baldassar – migration studies needs to consider the transnational idea and consider the impacts on the sending areas and the obligations to other countries that were are using their resources and adult labour.
- Michael de Waal – asked Professor Fozdar – why people didn't feel belonging and did you research look at different groups and whether sense of belonging was different in different groups?
- Farida Fozdar – said she looked at African and Asian backgrounds. African background showed clearest distinction in sense of ethno and civic belonging. Ethno belonging is still an aspiration. Civic belonging is not enough. It's not full belonging. They would end their complaint about lack of belonging by saying they hope to become more like or have greater understanding the community.
- Keith Jacobs – economics makes people scared of the other and asked how the political class may be able to address social inequality? Can we address problems of multiculturalism without addressing social inequality and the economy?
- Gillian Triggs – it is her own view that the underlying cause is the need to return to more prosperous days. Almost all of them can be taken back to social circumstances. Two thirds of AHRC complaints are concerned with employment and goods and services in a non-discriminatory way. They come to them because they've not had fair or equal access to employment

and goods and services. Fairer opportunities economically and socially would see less fear in rising numbers of racial abuse.

- Baroness Royall – those that feel like they were left behind were the ones to vote for Brexit. Populism plays on fears and to reduce economic and social inequality but we've got to more than that now.
- Jason Russo – there is global narrative around inequality and it is not the same in Australia as other countries. Australia got through GFC etc., in the public domain people don't appreciate the scale of forces behind immigration. When we take migrants in, how much social engineering can we do to position them in the right part of Australia etc to ensure they get best opportunities.