



Diversity in Europe

- *In varietate Concordia* (EC, Brussels, 2000)



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- **issue 4**

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*« These strangers in a foreign World
Protection asked of me-
Befriend them, lest yourself in Heaven
Be found a refugee »*

*« Ces Etrangères, en Monde inconnu
Asile m'ont demandé
Accueille-les, car Toi- même au Ciel
Pourrait être une Réfugiée »*

Emily Dickinson (Quatrains II-2, 1864-65, Amherst, Massachusetts, Etats-Unis)
traduction en français de Claire Malroux (NRF, Poésie/Gallimard, Paris, 2000)

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From Europe to America

The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (Iriv) has published since September 2016 a newsletter dedicated to migration- *Regards Croisés sur la Migration*.

The first issues (September 2016 - March 2018) were dedicated to a comparison between Paris and Berlin on the basis of testimonies gathered among migrants interviewed in the two European capital cities.

Since 2018, our newsletter has been entitled “Diversity in Europe”. Its main aim is now to tackle the issue of diversity- the motto chosen by the European Union (EU) since 2000 and definitely in 2004 after the last biggest enlargement of the European Union (from 15 to 25 EU members).

The first issue (November 2018) was focussed on diversity at school with Rotterdam (in the Netherlands) whose inhabitants coming from abroad represent more than 70 % of the total population which is both a challenge and an opportunity to experience new approaches. Paris also has in its schools very diverse students in its class rooms.

The second issue (March 2019) was dedicated to religious & cultural diversity, with a focus on the Jewish community. If the Judaeo-Christian roots of the European Union are obvious, the European Union is a secular project with a genuine cultural identity open to all religions- “*United in diversity*”. This issue suggested a comparison between Paris and Thessaloniki, two cities sharing an history of troubled times during World War II.

The third issue (November 2019) tackled the issue of interreligious dialogue with articles on diversity in Switzerland and France. This is especially important in secular countries where all religions have to be respected together with the right to be free from any religious belonging or belief. A “republican” approach has allowed a civil peace for the past century in most of our European societies (but during World War II).

The fourth issue (March 2020) is suggesting to think of diversity in Education and Interfaith dialogue among multicultural countries. A first article analyses diversity inclusion in the USA, insisting on the necessity to enhance a “glocal diversity mindset”. A second article reminds of the example of Sarajevo, a city of peaceful existence between Jews, Muslims, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats in a European country, Bosnia, with a historical “multifaceted, universal identity” that was brutally treated during the bloody Balkan war (1992-1995)

As underlined by Ahmed Kulanić (lecturer at the International University of Sarajevo) the “continual use and misuse of religious identities, mostly by politicians for political reasons” creates a “fragility within society and also undermines a genuine reconciliation process”. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, if the Dayton Peace Agreement provided “the basis for dialogue and reconciliation by ending the war”, it has also “enforced the ethnic division and segregation of Bosnian society that ultimately led towards the formation of the ethnically cleansed territories”.

Any national reconciliation process is very fragile, interfaith dialogue is therefore necessary to ensure its success and sustainability. The approach of “simply tolerating difference” is not enough. According to Kulanić, Interfaith dialogue should be further and deeper – “actually sharing and cherishing our differences, thus creating a truly multicultural and plural society”.

In this perspective, there shouldn’t be any hierarchy among the different cultures or religions, one being considered as “mainstream” as opposed to other cultures or religions presented as “minorities”. This is the main idea lying in secularism - equally treating all religions, and respecting all beliefs, including the right not to be a believer, nor belonging to any religion. Ultimately Interfaith dialogue and multiculturalism concern everybody- believers or unbelievers, whatever one’s cultural or religious background, in order to enhance a real and effective diversity inclusion.

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A window on diversity and inclusion in the U.S. education system

Although many small towns across the U.S. still have percentages of Whites above 90%, diversity is the norm and not the exception in the land of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Diversity involves both individual and social group differences related to, but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, education, abilities, ideologies, personality types, and various other domains. Diversity exists at various degrees in the education system of the U.S. However, the opposite is not true about inclusion. What is the reality of diversity and inclusion in the U.S. education system?

A window on diversity and inclusion in the U.S. education system

Diversity is the reality that conveys the uniqueness or distinctiveness of each individual, and embodies the full spectrum of human demographic, geographic, cultural, social, political, economic, and psychological differences. Diversity is part of most institutions in the U.S., including the school system. The education system is probably the best reflection of diversity in America. The American population is becoming more diverse than ever. In the fall of 2014, the country reached a demographic milestone: for the first time, Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American children made up the majority of the approximately 50 million students in the nation's public schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), by 2023, students of color will represent 55% of students in k-12 public schools.

Having diversity is one thing. Diversity inclusion is something completely different. It refers to the reality of diversity being embraced, valued, respected, and supported by individuals and institutions in a society. With diversity inclusion, individuals may feel support and commitment from other individuals, groups, and institutions, and consequently tend to develop a sense of belonging and respect. Diversity inclusion has been a challenge for the leaders in U.S. education system to ensure that Black and Hispanic students have access to education that is similar to their White and Asian peers. Although, schools in the U.S. are diverse, the majority of the teachers are Whites. Therefore, many minority students in the k-12 school system do not necessarily have teachers who look like them, or cultural backgrounds that are similar to theirs. Further, despite the rich diversity in U.S. school, racial and economic segregation remain a major issue for Latinx and blacks. The U.S. Government of Accountability Office (GAO) found that Latinx and Blacks attend schools that are more likely to provide them inexperienced teachers and offer them less access to advanced-level courses.

There are some other diversity inclusion challenges related to the stereotypes on sexual orientation and gender identity, antisemitism, and Islamophobia. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that students who are bisexuals, gays, or lesbians, Jews, or Muslims have been the victims of physical violence or bullying in many U.S. high schools. And, in many cases violence or bullying had led to unfortunate suicides.

Students should be prepared to work in a workforce that is becoming more diverse in the U.S., but that inclusive as well. Diversity inclusion contributes to better educational outcomes that benefit children, individuals and communities across all backgrounds, but more importantly communities that have been historically marginalized or disadvantaged. One of the ways to further diversity inclusion is for schools in the U.S. to continue to improve culturally responsible leadership, pedagogy, and community relations with a glocal diversity mindset. The term "glocal" refers to the interconnection between the global (i.e., the globe) and the local or national (i.e., individual countries or communities within countries). In the context of diversity inclusion, a glocal approach enables to envision diversity as a global reality that is manifested at various local levels in ways that are not uniform across the world. Therefore, global diversity inclusion intentions, policies, leadership or instructional practices can be confronted with local norms, traditions, practices, and policies that foster discrimination or exclusion. For example, in a given local or national context, diversity inclusion may come against a local context that engender discrimination against Jewish people, Muslims, migrants, Gay people, or another minority group.

A glocal approach would enable to recognize when global and local diversity diverge, reassess approaches to help fill the gap, and reconcile the global and local through a comprehensive coexistence that accommodate variations in historical, social, political, cultural and legal contexts. A glocal approach will foster culturally responsible leadership, pedagogy, and community relations.

Culturally relevant leadership concerns educational leaders who are glocally competent. Culturally responsive pedagogy involves curricular and instructional practices that are relevant for diversity inclusion. Culturally responsive community relationship refers to collaborations and partnership that accounts for the diversity of the demographics attending a school and its external stakeholders.

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Post war Interfaith Dialogue- the example of Sarajevo

“Amid the ever rising evil of antisemitism and Islamophobia... we are renewing our pledge that we will remain good neighbors who will watch over each other as we did in the past” said Bosnia’s Muslim top cleric Husein Kavazovic, on the occasion of a joint exhibition and conference held in Sarajevo, last November 2019. It celebrated nearly 500 years of peaceful existence between Bosnians- Jews, Muslims, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats. It also reminded of the bicentenary of the rescue of Jewish citizens from an Ottoman-era governor’s jail by Sarajevo Muslims. This is an inspiring example of co-existence at a time of rising global sectarian hatred. (1).

Historian Eli Tauber insisted on the efforts made by Zeki Effendi (born Mose Rafael Attias) whose tomb in the cemetery of Sarajevo is the only Jewish grave with epitaphs in Bosnian, Hebrew and Turkish (inscribed in Arabic script). Effendi studied Islam and medieval Persian literature and was a passionate interfaith advocate. His tombstone itself is a proof of Sarajevo’s multiculturalism. Effendi’s book “Sarajevo Megillah” is a reference to the Book of Esther (read aloud during the Jewish holiday of Purim) that celebrates the Jews’ salvation from genocide in ancient Persia. The way Purim is celebrated in Sarajevo by all communities is “unprecedented and could serve as a role model to the rest of the world” for Eli Tauber. In his book, Zeki Effendi tells the story of the Sarajevo Purim. In 1819, the Governor of Bosnia, under the rule of Ottoman Empire, Ruzdi Pasha, a corrupt Turkish governor, detained and threatened to kill Mose Danon and a dozen of other prominent Jewish citizens of the city, on the occasion of Purim, in case that the Jewish community refuses to pay a large amount of ransom money, an unfair blackmail. A representative of the Jewish community went all over the city the night before the planned execution and asked prominent Muslim citizens to stop the execution, scheduled at dawn. The inhabitants of Sarajevo, about 3 000 of them, broke into Pasha’s palace and liberated the prisoners. Moreover 249 prominent Muslim citizens from Sarajevo wrote a letter and sent it to Sultan Mahmoud II requesting from him to replace the corrupt Pasha - the Sultan agreed to do it. (2)

Cooperation between Jews and Muslims is not just a reminder of an ancient history of Bosnia. Jews have played a significant role in Sarajevo’s cultural and economic life for 450 years. Expelled after the Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, they found sanctuary in the city, then part of the Ottoman Empire. At the height of the city’s influence, Sarajevo had eight synagogues and a population of 12 000 Jews. Most of them were killed during World War II ; fewer than 1 250 survived and remained. As Eli Tauber pointed out, some Jewish Bosnians managed to escape from Sarajevo thanks to the help of local Muslims who disguised their Jewish neighbors in hijabs in order to get them out of the city (1). The situation was reversed during the aggression of Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH) by Serbs. When Bosnian Serbs surrounded the capital of Sarajevo, Jewish citizens organized convoys in which 1500 Muslims managed to leave the city , giving them “certificate of Judaism” to be able to go to Israel. After Yugoslavia’s bloody collapse and the never ending siege of Sarajevo, the longest in modern history, the Jewish community drastically decreased. Before the Bosnian war (1992-1995), Sarajevo was a multi-ethnic place with mosques, churches and synagogues standing side by side. Afterwards it became predominantly Muslim and only 800 Jews are still living in the town (2)

The brutality of the Bosnian war has been referred to as an outcome of tensions in multicultural and religiously diversified societies. Some authors argue that the differences between different religious and ethnic communities are too deep and wide to reconcile and so too difficult to cooperate and share a future. As underlined by Ahmed Kulanić, the “clash of civilizations” theory was not confirmed, on the contrary, with a myriad of interfaith and inter-cultural peace initiatives (3). Many lessons seem to have been (un)learned in the post-Dayton Bosnia experience according to Kulanić as the lessons should have had a wider implication beyond BiH itself and could have provided helpful insights for societies recovering or still facing ethno-religious violence.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace in BiH discussed in Dayton (USA) and signed in Paris (France) in 1995 brought peace to the Bosnians of all ethnic groups. It also established the basis for reconciliation. Religious leaders were asked to play a greater role, given religious identities and themes played a key part in group identities. An Inter-religious Council (IRCBiH) was established in 1997 gathering the four traditional religious communities- Islamic, Roman-Catholic, Serbian-Orthodox and Jewish. It aimed at fostering reconciliation among the different ethnic groups. It has been positioned as a major civil society organization promoting reconciliation through interfaith dialogue. This top-down approach (religious leaders and institutions) has to be combined with a bottom –up approach (integrating individual citizens living next door to each other) with a focus on the inclusion of women and youth and the necessary networking of grassroots organisations, religious institutions and international organisations. Local communities have also to play a key role, together with day to day lives of individuals, and local experiences of people of the region. Kulanić mentions the very personal concept of *komšiluk* (neighborhood) to provide a common ground to take interfaith dialogue further and deeper.

According to historian Zoran Brajovic Bosnia’s historical identity is a “multifaceted, universal identity” not involving a fused idea of a nation –state and therefore attached to “pre-modern concepts of identity that link religion and nation, mainly expressed through specific rituals, traditions and habits”(4). This identity was further complicated by atheism and agnosticism under communism (1945-1991) and the brutal war in Bosnia (1992-1995). The best picture of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina is “an intricate tapestry comprised of multicolored and multitextured criss-crossing threads: the often tempestuous history, the complexity of ethnic and culture-religious identification, the ongoing economic crisis and the unique political system designed in an attempt to mitigate the nationalist-religious polarization created in the aftermath of the war”. (4)

This might be a good description of many countries in Europe and in the World to explain the many tensions and troubled times faced by many religious, cultural or ethnic minorities. The XXIst Century has begun with a heavy past. It should be less forgetful of the dramatic events of the X th Century in order to avoid repeating them.

« The nearer you are to war, the less you know what’s happening » (5)

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Article written by Bénédicte Halba

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Club de l’iriv at the Cité des Métiers

The iriv offers a monthly club at the Cité des Métiers in Paris is an illustration of a pedagogical approach to enhance diversity on the ground among a public with a migrant background
“Valuing a migratory path—from experience to competence”

In a first step, participants are asked to introduce themselves (short biography) during a roundtable.

In a second step, diverse tools & pedagogical strategies are explained. On the basis of the Migrapass portfolio (circular approach from experience to competence), other strategies are suggested and discussed.

In a third step, the pedagogical supports are dispatched among participant after the session
The participation at 3 clubs together with the sending of one’s resume open the way to an official attendance certificate provided by iriv - it may also enrich the resume (as a training path)

Several European projects in the migration field have been tested at the Cité des Métiers since 2012- Migrapass (2012), Valbuk (2013), ALLinHE (2013-2014), Vintage (2015-2016), Key Tutors (2015-2017), Revalue (2017-2019), MiFamily (2019) , MiFamily (2019) and DiverPass (since 2020)



Further information : www.club-iriv.net

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