

**Some reflections and comments on the IP Course
"Integration of minorities and intercultural communication"**

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I

An anthropological approach

Culture and identity are dynamic realities. So, an essentialist view of culture and identity, will not explain the process of integration of minorities in context of acculturation, and leads to politics of ghettoization.

Among the different forms of cultural metamorphoses occurring in teachers, social workers, immigrants, diplomats, public relations, etc. this lecture focusses on what we describe as cultural transfusion. By means of this process, we analyze two tendencies in personal identity: The first tendency among these professionals integrates the culture of origin into the emerging cultural identity; the second denies the culture of origin and idealizes the target culture as its aim in life.

The most representative minorities in Portugal are original from the former colonies, Angola, Cabo Verde, Mozambique, East Timor, Macau, Brasil, S. Tomé, and the immigrants from Eastern Europe, that started to come to Portugal after the end of Soviet Union.

II

Some basic concepts to understand the question of minorities integration and intercultural communication.

1. The myth of a Global Culture

People tend to think that in the future there will be only one culture for everybody over the world. But it is not true. Different cultures have always existed, exist today and will exist tomorrow. We must distinguish between equality of opportunities and culture uniformity. The individual needs to be different to be himself.

2. Each person has his own measure.

The individual is different by himself.
Before nineteenth century, nobody thought like that. People use to think that in time culture would be homogenous. Until we all became equals.

Nowadays, there is the idea that to be human one should be unique and my way of being a man, a woman, a social or cultural being is not in contradiction with being a part of mankind.

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3. The I is a We.

The I – me, the self, is not one. The self is plural. The person – me, you, him – is a mixture of individual, social structure and the cultures in which one lives.

However, at the same time, each one shapes his own identity in a particular way.

In the past, the ideas of good, evil, god, heaven, etc., were something that existed outside the individual.

Nowadays, these ideas begin to be in the center of the conscious self.

It's a new form of introspection. In this time, we are individuals with a deep inner self.

So, the person is not the micro-representation of the group, of family, of society. The person is not an epiphenomenon of society. He is not the micro-social. He is not a copy of social structure or of a cultural pattern.

4. Our past give us a cultural mind set

However, our past, the way of thinking of our group of origin, the paradigms with which we grow up, give us a cultural frame that crystalizes some forms of acting and thinking. Most of the times, this leads to a structural mind that has difficulty to understand the other, the different, the woman, the man, the minorities in a dynamic or processual way.

5. The individual and the cultural mosaic

So, we think the social and cultural world like a mosaic of social structures or like a cultural mosaic.

We believe that individuals in modern societies live in the middle of a cultural mosaic from which they take, for themselves, some pieces of this cultural variety.

Each one constructs for himself :

1. a multicultural self or a bicultural self;
2. a monocultural self;
3. an intercultural self.

6. Individuals in situation of acculturation may choose between ontological and pragmatic strategies of adaptation or both.

A concept of culture that conceived acculturation as a cultural degradation led to believe that cultural disorientation was responsible for the social and mental pathologies of individuals caught between cultures. Human beings have the ability to live in different cultures, if his own cultural identity is not stigmatised by the dominant group.

7. Ethnicity is a dynamic category.

The ethnic frontiers are not fixed. They are the result of permanent reorganization between groups. Ethnicity is a category groups use to create frontiers among each other, and the items selected to create the difference are in some way arbitrary.

8. Cultural contacts and social contacts

Only an essentialist idea of culture conceives cultural contact as a contact between cultures without considering that this contact happens in an interaction between people. The discontinuity between cultures must not be looked for in space but in time. "The past is a foreign country". Cultural contact and acculturation is the rule not the exception.

9. The epistemological problems.

And what to do with the differences in the school?
And what to do with the differences in society at large?
What can be done to prevent discrimination?

III MULTICULTURAL PORTUGAL

1. Lusotropicalismo

Lusotropicalismo is a theory, inspired by the Brazilian sociologist, Gilberto Freire, in his analysis of Brazilian society, in which he defends that Portuguese were not racists, and mixed with other races. Another expression to characterize the relations between Portuguese people and other races is "*soft racism*". By this expression it is meant that Portuguese, although considering themselves as superior, like any other European colonial power, are not as cruel as other Europeans, and treated well the other peoples of the world, with whom they came in contact.

Immigration grew up since 1981 (nineteen eighty one) to 2002 (two thousand two). In 1999 (nineteen ninety nine), 79% (seventy nine) percent of the immigrants who asked for residential permit in Portugal were less than 35 (thirty five) years old.

In the same year, (1999 nineteen ninety nine), the large majority of African immigrants from former Portuguese colonies (PALOP) was less than 45 (forty five) years old.

In fact, immigrants are usually a young and active population and they have a high birth-rate.

Few years ago, Portugal was a more homogenous country. We had only one language and a great cultural contrast between rural and urban society.

Portugal had just one school program for the whole population.

Nowadays, the extraordinary growth of immigration, since the end of the eighties, created a socio-cultural landscape new to Portugal.

Still the ethnic-cultural diversity is more evident near the coast in the great cities like Lisbon, Porto, Coimbra, Setúbal, etc.

Now, how we have become a country of immigration.

In the eighties- The number of immigrants was, by the first time, larger than legal emigrants.

If we add all African immigrants, we have the African immigrants in the first place.

2002 (two thousands two) was the year which registered the highest increase of the immigration.

But also the illegal immigration has been large: maybe half of the legal immigration.

In the last years, Portugal has been a country of arrival to the people from black Africa, to the people that ran away from the wars in Africa, to brasilians too, looking for a better life; and to the eastern Europeans, after the implosion of Soviet Union.

The immigration from Eastern Europe represents 22,3% (twenty two percent) of immigrants in Portugal.

This number is near the African rate.

Immigrants concentrate mainly in 3 (tree) or 4 (four) regions of Portugal:
The Africans of the former Portuguese colonies, around Lisbon;
The Brasilians near Porto, in the North;
Immigrants from UE (European Union) at Algarve, in the South of country.
There are also the Americans in Azores and Venezuelanos at Madeira.

Most of these immigrants have worked during important international events like:
Lisbon Cultural Capital;
Making roads;
The Expo 98 (ninety eight);
The new bridge over the river Tagus;
And now, building ten new football stadiums for the Euro 2004 (two thousand four).

However minorities are not regularly widespread all over the country.

Maybe we should rather speak of multicultural regions or of multicultural cities than of a multicultural Portugal.

As we mentioned in the last lecture, we must think also about the differences within each minority.

There is general agreement that the idea of one state, one nation, one culture, one language is finished. However, there is much more complexity than we are used to see when we hear about the ethnic and cultural diversity. When a french man refers to someone as a maghrebian he is not considering the differences between algerians, marrocans, tunisians, and inside each of these nationalities, the different peoples, the thouaregs, the saharauhis, etc.; ort the differences between shiites and sunits, and to mention only the muslims,...

We speak of immigrants from each country (Ukraine, Cabo Verde, Mozambique, and so on), but we must not consider these nationalities as homogeneous groups. They are heterogeneous populations. Within each so called minorities there is great variety of ethnic, religious, linguistic differences. As an example we have in Mozambique, Macondes, Macuas, Rongas, Tongas, etc.

In Angola, Ovimbundos, Quiacas, Quimbundos, etc.
In Guiné Bissau, Balantas, Nalu, Bijagós, etc.

Usually, people don't know about these distinctions, which are very important for those concerned.

Only in Lisbon, there are eleven associations of immigrants from Guiné. Why is that so? May be they think of themselves different among each other.

The problem is that we are blind to the rationality of the Other. We will say: «They are different from us. They are immigrants. Minorities. Ethnic groups». So, there is no need for us to think more about it.

But we don't know them. We recognize the other as a whole – a unique identity – but we don't see the different belongings that there are among them.

In Portugal we used to say that: «Portuguese people are not racists». That simply is not true. There is racism – a soft kind, and the others too.

Three in four Portuguese don't wish to receive more immigrants.

It is also true that Portuguese prefer to have eastern Europeans as immigrants than from any other origin.

The study about Portuguese opinions on these matters show however that for many Portuguese the youth and the handwork of the immigrants is good for the development of Portugal.

Among us, and for nearly five hundred years, we have been sharing our territory with gypsies.

It is very difficult to know exactly how many are they living in Portugal. The best guesses refer to something like half a million.

But even the gypsies are changing. Nowadays they are becoming more and more sedentary. Particularly those who live near Lisbon.

2. All this diversity is now in the school.

Most of the eastern Europeans are starting to call their families. And this process is changing the landscape in our classrooms. Now our schools are becoming more and more multicultural.

Thus, we will talk on the third lecture about intercultural education and intercultural communication as means to create a nondiscriminatory education.

However we have a problem with the old curriculum for all and with the teacher's know how to deal with this heterogeneous school.

It is important to make an education that doesn't destroy the different identities.

The school must teach, and to teach it must change the culture of origin, it must help the student to grow up, in order to transform the self, but it must not kill the cultural mind.

This shall be the subject of the third lecture.

Now, we can debate on the issues presented on the first and second lectures, and talk about possible projects of work.

IV METAMORPHOSES IN PROFESSIONAL'S IDENTITY.

By analyzing the life-histories of teachers, this paper attempts to describe the ways they lived their experiences from childhood to adulthood and how this process has affected their attitudes towards diversity. It also seeks to examine how these life-histories are conveyed and enacted in the classroom, and hence the possible ways teachers can integrate their cultural knowledge into the teaching-learning process.

Socialization and learning experiences throughout life cause metamorphoses in their personal identities.

Among the different forms of cultural metamorphoses occurring in teachers, this paper focuses on what I describe as cultural transfusion. By means of this process, I analyze two tendencies in personal identity: the 'intercultural trãnsfuga' and the 'oblato', two concepts to be explained in my text.

The former tendency among teachers integrates the culture of origin into the emerging cultural identity, both implicitly and explicitly. The latter denies the culture of origin and idealizes the target culture as its aim in life. Thus, this tendency leads to a 'monocultural' teacher.

V Impressions on the organization and results of the course

The first observation that must be pointed out is the excessive time spent in lectures. There was not much time for students and teachers to debate, to meet outside the classes. There was not time to speak and to think.

The intercultural communication has to be different. It must really give time and space for people to meet, to think and debate.

Concerning lectures, it is important to consider that the course is being presented to students who are not - the majority of them at least - familiarized with the concepts, the problematics, and the theories of sociology and anthropology. Thus, in order to have more learning than teaching, it would be convenient to advise the reading of a basic textbook previously to the selected students.

Lectures must not be about data alone. It is important that facts are linked with modern social theory.

VI Comments of the students

"The IP in Alicante, about the evergrowing problem of minorities integration, focused mainly in the broad European Union territory, was undoubtly a unique oportunity to gather information and to share experiences with a large number of people who have in comun the so-called european citizenship. Therefore, those who attended the course were aiming to find out better ways to put different people (or different peoples) in contact, thus improving the intercultural communication within a framework of great disparities.

Throughout the course we were given the opportunity to attend classes with several experts on different areas, who showed us various perspectives of the Migration problem as a social phenomenon worldwide and its implications in the past, present and future. Quite a few discussions were raised during the classes and among the various work groups that dealt with specific subjects, and that was certainly the most fruitful part of the course, since everybdy was given the floor to present their point of view, to tell the others some relevant story or experience related to the topic in discussion or to suggest some measures to be taken on a specific context.

The place where we attended the classes was also quite pleasant and all the technical conditions were assembled to provide us the best comfort. However, the amount of time spent there was excessive, and sometimes, after so many hours, it became difficult to assimilate all the contents. Another drawback was the fact that many lecturers were not given the possibility to express themselves in their mother tongues, what quite often gave raise to misunderstandings between them and the audience and, ultimately, was fairly a barrier to an effective communication.

As far as I am concerned, this kind of initiatives are of great importance not only because they promote the discussion of problems on the agenda, but mainly because they reflect the widespread will, among the countries that make part of the European project, to make the law more effective in order to broaden the rights of the individual in a global perspective." (Inês Grosa)

"For the next year our suggestions would be:

- Having less lectures, and more debate. Also, have a smaller schedule.*
- With less lectures we would have more time to meet the other participants and their culture;*
- We also think that the groups should be formed while we still are in our countries, and the topics should also be given to them then. We say this because if they already know what they are going to talk about, they have the > opportunity to bring bibliography to Alicante;*
- We also think that the students, WHEN APPLYING should know about all the conditions of Colegio Mayor and about the meals.*

(Raquel Castro e Marcial Guilherme)

"The course in Alicante was an extraordinary experience in many aspects. The contact with the students of other countries brought me many different ideas of intercultural communication! I could discuss my points of view and my personal knowledge about the theme with them and we developed a very friendly and nice relationship. About the lectures I found them very interesting and i could learn a lot about subjects that were, till then, a bit unexplored. Even so, I consider the schedule a "little bit" too intensive!! That was the general idea and i'm sure the next course will be adapted to this general feeling, giving place to more debate time. We were very well received and my thanks are going to the all organization and also to all the teachers" (Fátima Teodósio)

