JORNADA: **Ciudades interculturales.**
Las políticas locales interculturales hoy,
perspectivas y retos en España e Italia.

València, 16 de diciembre de 2022

Sala PB-05. Facultad de Magisterio UV. Campus de Tarongers.

Is Interculturalism a good way to threaten populism ?
(A cognitive survival kit)

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Interculturalism is a specific way of dealing with cultural diversity. it entails:

agency

1) a wider awareness of the kind of **knowledge** **(cognitive side)**
2) a willingness to overcome / reduce the **fear of others** **(emotional side)**
3) and the **responsibility** consistent with this assumption **(practical/moral side).**

structure

Interculturalism values cultural diversity and pluralism, and *implies that structural sources of political, economic, and social disadvantage, inequalities, discrimination, poverty, and marginalization should be eliminated* as a result of shared universal values

moving people from their home, either voluntarily (tourism, business, internationalization, need for achievement) or by forced motives (hunger, poverty, persecution), is not enough to "make them intercultural"

It Takes Much More

➢ intolerance and hostility toward the Otherness

➢ cultural clash (islamophobia, sinophobia, antiziganism, russophobia, homotransphobia…)
➢ need of "group-based" social representations

➢ forms of postmodern assimilationism (taking for granted a parity that does not exist in the "us/them" dynamic)

➢ Incapacity to govern the Superdiversity

➢ contradictory Eu migration governance: intercultural dialogue is not included in any treaty or action about migrant people

Populism ever existed since immemorial time.
In Europe it extablished itself since a couple of decades
→ *all recent crisis added «fuel to the fire» of populism*

Economic & financial crisis (2008)

Borders & refugees crisis (2015)

Pandemic & health crisis (2020)

Russia-Ukraine military conflict (2022)

Eu Parliament corruption & Energy crisis (2023) ????

A cultural attitude made of:

- Irrationality (refuse of analysis of reality)
- Hostility towards minorities (absolute right of the majority)
- Distrust about expert knowledge
- Bias towards one's own nation (nationalism, authoritarism)
- Trust in simplistic and rapid solutions

A «magic, blinding dust» (Ian McEwan)

A gift for multiple and bitter divisions: whites against blacks, young against old, cities against the country, graduates against early school leavers, citizens against «denizens»

Only empty pretty words?
intercultural rethoric has advanced much
→ but many people engaged with migration,
multicultural issues and social services have perceived
a growing detachment from it.

In a time of populistic thinking and nationalistic
resurgence
even Interculturtalism **is going to become corrupted**
(or so weak …. to be **irrelevant**)

Under current conditions, in the face of a military conflict …talking about interculturalism could be awkward

War

totally denies Interculturalism principles
→ And denies Europeism

So far – in opposition with populism, nationalism and authoritarism – European Union created a **self-narrative** as a unique economic, political and cultural body , based on fundamental values: peace, freedom, representative democracy and the rule of law in public space
→ *DO WE WANT TO DEFEND IT? ARE WE ABLE TO DO IT?*

- *Symplicity Vs. Complexity* (everything in politics is either good or evil, and that the choice between the two is immediately clear)

- *Rapidity Vs. Long-lasting choices* (clear-cut, black-and-white messages, outstanding performances that can surprise people)

- *Conflict Vs. Conciliation* (calling for battle as a way to reduce anxiety, reinforcing fear in order to create enemies)

- *Powerful / Authoritarian Self Vs. Decentered / Potential Self* (the populist pretends to represent people behaving in attack-and-defense way; the interculturalist takes time to reflect and decentering itself)

Reflexivity (Schön 1984; Archer 2007) is :

- Accepting the fact that we do not have «ready solutions» for complicated troubles

- Willingness to move away from institutionalised routines

- Put under discussion any praxis and procedure

- Considering the «players» not only objects for transations but rather decision-makers (even the subectivity of «users»)

- Co-existing with uncertainyty and ambivalence

- Acting now with an outlook for the medium-long lasting future

Implementation & Actualisation

Six social fields for Intercultural projects

(Bourdieu) "*arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation and exchange of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate, exchange, and monopolize different kinds of power resources (capitals*)"

Urban and Community Planning

Current problems	Who claims populistic solutions	What reflexive interculturalism offers	Major pitfalls for intercultu-ralists
• Presence of undocumented migrants • The widespread anti-migrant ideology • Urban segregation • Competition in accessing public housing • Presence of racist behaviour in service providers • Xenophobia and islamophobia at the local level	• Local social services want separate provisions for residents and immigrants • Populist groups who deny basic social rights to undocumented immigrants and Roma people • Families without proper housing ask for privileged benefits • Working, middle, business class residents claim for wealthy, and safe areas to be protected from urban decay	• Listening to native and foreign inhabitants, discovering common purposes • Urban desegregation • Indexes and benchmarking for cities' intercultural improvement. • Management strategies that publicly advocate respect for diversity and pluralistic city identities	• Underestimation of existing local conflicts to gain political consensus • Lack of leadership and capacity to contrast the "fight for resources" • Embracing small-scale approaches • Minimizing impacts on controversial issues • Implicit dominant view among intercultural agents

Social Policy & Welfare

Current problems	Who claims populistic solutions	What reflexive interculturalism offers	Major pitfalls for interculturalists
• **Unequal access in social services (employment, health, education and housing)** • **Unequal use of social services** • **Migrants' lack of trust in services** • **Exclusion from services for undocumented migrants** • **Institutional racism** • **Labour market segregation producing brain drains and glass ceilings**	• Workers • Residents in urban deprived areas and mixed neighbours • Sick people • People in need ask for stronger welfare provisions by excluding migrants • Populistic movements and parties	• Assessment of welfare system to detect how and how much it produces inequalities • Policy-makers are taught how to deal with foreigners and their needs and folkways • Inclusion of people with a migrant background in policy-making • Information campaign to natives about the risk of migrants' exclusion • Information campaign to immigrant beneficiaries about the risk of their self-exclusion from health system	• Advocacy organizations have poor financial resources • Insufficient intercultural training of policy implementers • Persisting cultural prejudices • Neglecting ethnic background of beneficiaries in the name of social equality • Negative externalities of information campaigns on migrants culture

Current problems	Who claims populistic solutions	What reflexive interculturalism offers	Major pitfalls for interculturalists
• **Intolerance towards foreign students** • **Racism among peers** • **Teachers with no intercultural or international experience**	• Native parents ask for more selection or separate education • Diverse students fight for supremacy • Young or old teachers wish to be exonerated from talking with immigrants	• Listening to native and foreign families, finding out common purposes • Unveiling and making clear which words and acts offend others • Talking about native and foreign families' fears and negative visions	• Taking for granted both the native's unavailability to dialogue, and the immigrant's inability to express him/herself • Silencing both bad and good emotions in racist talk and behaviour • Intolerant professional behaviour is condemned

Current problems	Who claims populistic solutions	What reflexive interculturalism offers
• **Racialised Learning Groups ➔ too many immigrants, tensions and cosflicts in classrooms** • **Trainers are not enough internationalised** • **The LLL offer is not known by the immigrant workers and it is designed for a «weak» and marginalised target**	• Traditional teachers and trainers • Denial of the multicultural problem in LLL • Assimilation view of the social integration of immigrants • Use of traditional and «frontal» teaching methods	• Monitoring the teachers attitude towards foreign target, questioning if their close-mindedness could hamper the interculturtal dialogue • Monitoring the natives attitudes towards immigrants ➔ not taking for granted that thay want to stay in separated circles • Listening to any fear, anxiety or intolerance is expressed by anyone

Interreligious Dialogue

Current problems	*Who claims populistic solutions*	*What reflexive interculturalism offers*	*Major pitfalls for interculturalists*
• **Religious extremism among young immigrants** • **Anti-religious sentiment** • **Competing views of what is a secular society** • **Competing views or open contrast between packaged religions (i.e. Christianity, Muslim)**	• Members of majority groups (Whites, Christians) • Claim for no place for minority expression • Education and Law become places of contestation and fight for group identity • Clergy and religious leaders pretend to control all communications	• Promoting mutual understanding and respect • Examination of the role played by family, school, peers and media in shaping religious affiliations • Considering the non-religious point of view • Identifying common themes • Rejecting any classification and judgment on one's religious belief and practice	• Excess of normativity • Dialogue only with clergy and religious leaders • Failure to recognise that people are religious in different manners • Ascribing to individuals those traits generally observed to apply to a religious group • Western religions play hegemonic role in dialogue

Current problems	Who claims populistic solutions	What reflexive interculturalism offers
• **Institutional Racism: no people with an immigrant background is «called to perform»** • **they are called on stage only to reinforce «poor, fragile, weak» narrative (immigrant as deprived person)** • **Mis-consideration of the artistic value and expression of black / immigrant / minority people**	• Those who think that immigrant people have no expression and artistic needs • Those who think that arts and cultures contamination can lead to a loss of value for the original culture • Use of sulle symplistic stereotypes to refer to «others» culture • Use of art/culture exclusion, by justifying that the other's culture is not understandable	• Co-creation of culture and art products • Cultivating debates on performing arts – wellbeing and social participation of migrant people • Debating what and how the performing arts can improve the intercultural skills of residents/migrants • Fostering the richness of: languages, forms and contents of the performances

4 STEPS TO IMPLEMENT REFLEXIVE INTERCULTURALISM

1

- **REVIEWING THE MAIN ASSUMPTIONS THAT DESCRIBE ONE'S OWN CULTURAL IDENTITY, THAT IS, ASKING ONESELF:**
- What do I really know about my culture? What are my inner convictions about its essential or immaterial nature? Up to what point am I willing to defend it in a cultural confrontation?

2

- **REVIEWING ONE'S OWN LANGUAGE USAGE, FROM THE VOCABULARY USED TO DEFINE ME/YOU, US/THEM, ETC., TO THE COMMUNICATIVE STYLE ADOPTED WITH DIFFERENT AUDIENCES.**
- Which of the words of my vocabulary are really embedded in my subjectivity and which ones are only "politically correct terms"? Which lost their original meanings and are used non-reflexively?

3

- **ACKNOWLEDGING THAT FEAR, ANXIETY, AND INSECURITY EXIST IN PUBLIC OFFICERS, ENGAGED CITIZENS, OR EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS AND LAY PEOPLE.**
- Which are the constraints and doubts in the face of the diversity challenge that I share with other people? How can I respond to questions from my friends, neighbors, or colleagues when they report they fear Others?

4

- **IMPROVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF INTERCULTURAL FUNDAMENTALS:** learning more about causal correlations among factors; understanding the negative externalities of single policies or intercultural programs; being aware of possible disruption to the former social equilibrium

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA del Sacro Cuore

Does interculturalism *presuppose or promote* the dismantling of hierarchical and unequal power relationships in a liberal democratic milieu?

NON-ASSIMILATING STRATEGIES → **ENCOURAGING COMMUNICATION, RECOGNIZING DYNAMIC IDENTITIES, AND CHALLENGING ILLIBERALITiES** → **A REFLEXIVE AND EVER- CRITICAL VISION OF INTERCULTURALISM, ABLE TO QUESTION WHAT IS TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED IN HEGEMONIC SOCIETIES**

EUROPE OF CULTURES
DIALOGUES

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Intercultural Issues and Concepts
A Multi-Disciplinary Glossary

Maddalena Colombo and Guia Gilardoni (eds.)

PETER LANG

The book is meant to **support further knowledge and practices production** in the *academia, policymaking,* and *social services field,* opening the «black-box» of the fundamentals of interculturalism

→ addressing those who are directly invested with the *responsability* of transmitting and putting it into practice.

Why a "glossary" of key terms?

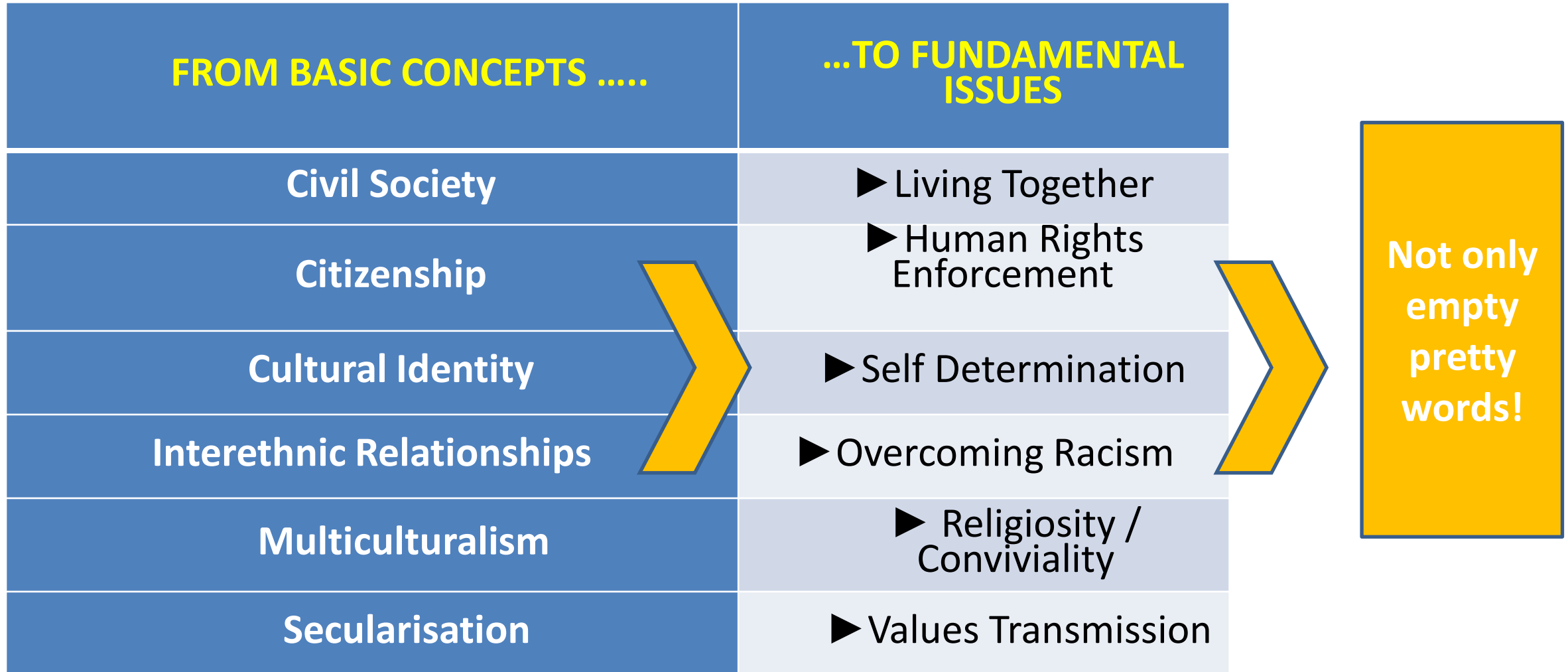18 "**middle- range concepts**" help finding the way.
= General statements that can be verified by data, linking theory - empirical research - everyday practice.

Each key word is necessary and sufficient *in* and *of* itself, representing a condition of possibility for the realization of an intercultural learning;
All key words are indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of what interculturalism produces in individuals, groups, and social structures → the list does not pretend to be exhaustive

Educational commitment - educational organization has a specific mandate to foster intercultural sensitivity in its learners, until they develop the habit of thinking, debating, and positioning themselves, overcoming the cultural conformity of their age.

Empowering policymakers - government and public administrators should implement "specific policies, programs and activities … that aim to influence the social interaction, communication and mutual understanding between native and migrant populations" (CoE, 2010).

Capacity building of practitioners - intercultural intermediaries, and dialogue facilitators, must be provided with a common lexicon and a shared perspective to become more active as "social promoters" of intercultural and interreligious dialogue even in conflictual situations.