

# 21ST CENTURY MIGRATIONS: FLUXES, POLICIES AND POLITICS

EDITED BY  
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LUISS ACADEMY

# 21st Century Migrations: Fluxes, Policies and Politics

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# IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

RAFFAELE DE MUCCI

## A FEW QUESTIONS TO FRAME THE ISSUE

1. How was multiculturalism born? At the beginning it was a “melting pot”. It was deemed the historical foundation of American integration and it represented the society as a big mortar where all the cultural differences and origins were “crushed” and assimilated, just like in the famous “pesto” condiment. Many believed it represented a model for all multi-ethnic societies. But, over time, the “pesto” went bad. And so multiculturalism imposed itself as the new recipe to feed Western societies searching for effective and painless solutions to exit the cultural impasse of their isolated identity. Not a “pesto” sauce anymore, but a mixed and colored salad, where different ingredients coexist in the same bowl while still maintaining their individual taste (Joppke, 2004).

2. How can it be defined? Multiculturalism is a type of political management strategy for inter-ethnic relations that focuses in giving value and respecting every difference in customs, culture, religion or ethnicity. Born in the mid-eighties, multiculturalism progressively affirmed itself in the United States and then Europe, but its origins date back to at least twenty years earlier, when in the western society the matter of “difference” started to make its way into society in the context of the traditional culture advocated in the '68 and with the ethnic and nationalistic claims of the Decolonization. The intensifying of the migratory phenomena and of the globalization led to the definitive passage between a culture of uniqueness to the cult of difference (Kymlicka, 2010).

3. What are the main aspects of the concept of multiculturalism? The historian Francis Fukuyama proposed a version of “good multiculturalism”: a corporate multiculturalism or “globalization multiculturalism” of sorts that by applying the economic approach used by multinational corporation focuses on the spreading of the same consumptions between the various life-styles of different social, ethnic and cultural groups (Fukuyama, 2007). Of the opposite opinion is the Italian political expert Mr. Giovanni Sartori, who believes that multiculturalism is “bad” by definition because it considers society as built on separate and segregated identities. Sartori counters the American “recipe” proposed by Fukuyama by proposing the “European model of pluralism and tolerance” understood as the “correct management of diversities” (Sartori, 2000).

4. What does the European Union do to improve the integration of immigrants? *Integration of third country nationals* is a European Union financing program for the promotion of integration of non-EU citizens in the European Union member states. Its goal is to promote the dialog in civil society, develop integration models, and spread and give value to best practices in the field of integration. The contribution made available to the 25 member states in the year 2005 was 5 million Euros. In parallel, the EU has finalized an “Handbook on integration” to spread the best practices fine-tuned in Europe to governments and public authorities dealing with integration: training, political participation and inter-religious dialog. The manual was presented at the end of 2004 and it highlights the need to involve unions, foreigners' associations and employers.

5. Which are the integration models in Europe? Europe oscillates between two types of integration models: the French “assimilation” one and the English “multicultural” one. Both are struggling. The first focused on integration founded on an exchange: granting of “republican citizenship” in exchange for a privatization of the religious creed (for example, the prohibition to wear a veil in French schools). The British multicultural policy allowed public spaces to ethnic or religious minorities under the form of “collective rights” to support the harmonious coexistence between different groups within a liberal and tolerant society. How did they fail? In France, many French citizens of second and third generation (children and grand-children of those North-African immigrants that a few decades ago chose to become French citizens) refused the old style “assimilation” under the republican concept, and the riots in the suburbs in November 2003 or the protests against the 2004 that forbid the use of the Islamic veil in schools were clear examples of this. In Great Britain, vast sectors of the Islamic world refused to recognize themselves in the laws of the country, forming a hostile and isolated minority. The British public opinion could be summarized in a sentence of the African-Arabic Labor Party’s member Trevor Phillips, Chairman of the Committee for the equality of the races published in an article of the Times magazine: «Multiculturalism does not mean that everyone can do whatever he wants in the name of his own culture» (Vertovec, Wessendorf, 2010).

#### WHAT KIND AND HOW MUCH MULTICULTURALISM

Let’s look at the following figure to understand the effective size of the problem through comparisons.

The countries were evaluated based on an official affirmation of multiculturalism: multiculturalism in school curriculum; inclusion of representation/ethnic sensitivity in public and media licenses; exemptions from dress codes in public law; acceptance of double citizenship; financing of ethnic organizations to support cultural activities; funding for bilingual and mother tongue education; and affirmative action for immigrant groups.

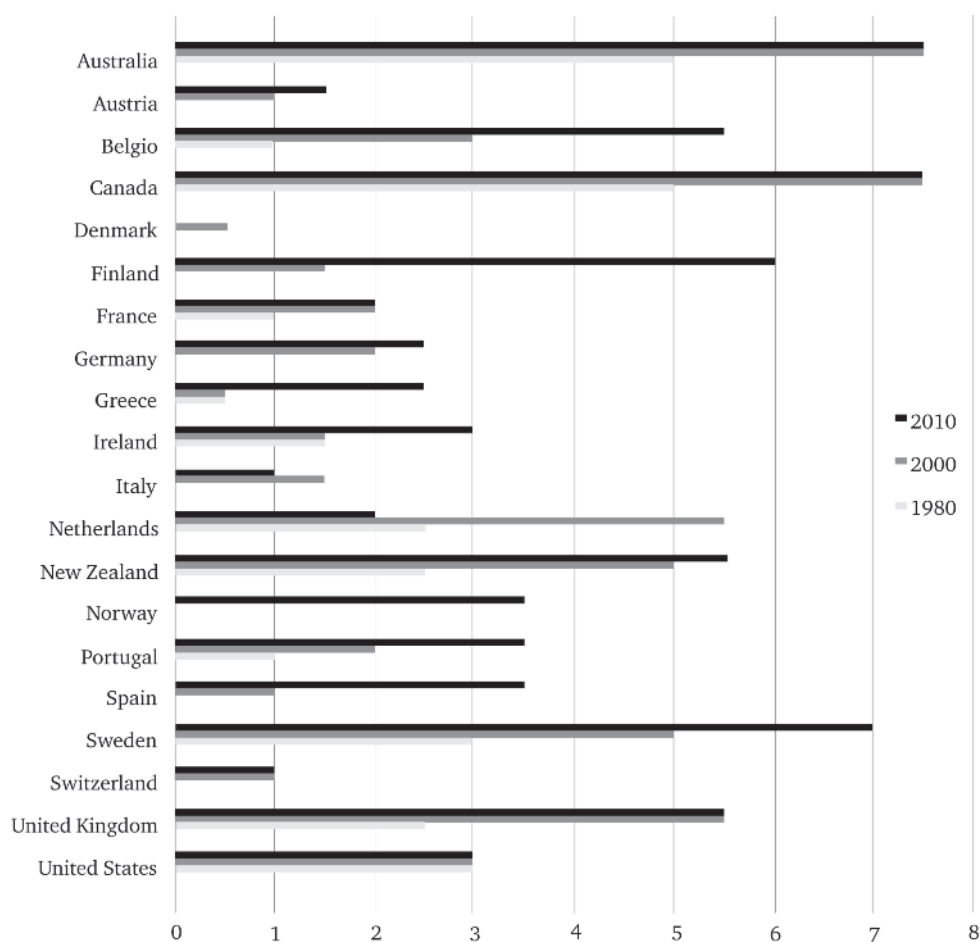


Figure 1. Multiculturalism Policy Index Scores for Selected Countries, 1980-2010.

Notes: The absence of a bar for a particular year indicates a score of zero on the multiculturalism policy index for the country that year. Source: *Multiculturalism Policy Index*. Accessed September 2011 (Available Online).

This type is similar to those of researchers using alternative measures, such as the one created by Ruud Koopmans and colleagues in 2005 or built by the *Migrant Integration Policy index* (MIPEX). The evaluations drawn indicate that, despite Chancellor Merkel's promotion of the principles of multiculturalism, Germany is not a country that practices strong multicultural policies. Indeed, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway and Switzerland are among the least multicultural among all the countries among those assessed, although Germany over time has adopted a greater number of policies inspired by multiculturalism. Belgium, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the United States rank as moderate multicultural countries, while Canada and Australia sit at the top rank, having adopted the widest array of multicultural policies. In many of the analyzed countries, we find an increase in the number of mul-



multicultural policies over time. Sweden's multicultural policies in 1980 and 2000 can be classified as modest, for example, but by 2010 they were more widespread and significant (Koopmans, 2010). Spain and Portugal, countries with international migration flows of very little relevance in 1980 and correspondingly very weak in multicultural policies, have moved to a moderate level of multicultural policy in the developments of the migration dynamics starting from 2010. This suggests that the real policy in many countries has been affected by moving towards greater respect for the values of pluralism, despite widespread political rhetoric around the perception of diversity issues. Naturally, political developments are a moving target. While the general trend is towards a greater range of multicultural policies in most Western countries, some nations, like the United States, have not experienced any considerable change in national multiculturalism. Holland and Italy both had the lowest scores on the MCP index in 2010 and in 2000. It is unclear at this time, however, if this is the beginning of a downward trend for multicultural policies, or whether it is to be considered an abnormal datum (Bloemraad, 2006).

#### MULTICULTURALISM, PLURALISM, AND IMMIGRATION

How much do multiculturalism, social cohesion and the integration of immigrants have to do with the policies on multiculturalism? The promotion of pluralism and respect towards diversity stand in conflict with social cohesion and with the integration of immigrants, or is multiculturalism a path towards incorporation? The topics brought forth by the theorists of multiculturalism suggest that, recognizing and respecting the culture of minorities, the members of these communities will feel closer and more involved in the political system that hosts them. The critics say instead that an excessive emphasis on diversity exacerbates the differences, undermines a collective identity and hinders shared political projects – from supporting the armed forces, social benefits, and redistribution policies. They also fear that by promoting multiculturalism, the minorities are left to segregate in communities where they conduct “parallel lives”, delaying the learning of the language of the country's official language, hindering the economy and weakening social ties and, therefore, the social capital with individuals belonging to different ethnic enclaves.

The empirical research on these issues was limited, and the conclusions on the socio-economic consequences of multiculturalism are rather varied. Certain studies state that facilitating ethnic closure – an assumed consequence of multicultural policies – prevents or discourages immigrants from competing in the broader labor market, which leads to a higher rate of unemployment and social assistance (Barry, 2002). Others state that it is precisely the maintenance of social capital, ethnic and cultural, which facilitates educational attainment by the second-generation immigrants' children and the second-generation natives (Koopmans et al., 2005). The truth could be somewhere in the middle of these two positions, as it is not clear what mechanisms link multiculturalism to outcomes such as employment or education. The policies of the job market, educational institutions, and economic integration

in the social state structures likely have a higher influence in respect to the multiculturalism policies.

As for the civic and political integration of immigrants, the consequences of multiculturalism are more pronounced. Immigrants who live in countries that adopt multicultural policies are more likely to engage in non-violent political activities toward their country of residence rather than their homeland, making more likely a relationship of trust with the government. Ultimately, the less widespread are the chances of discrimination based on their belonging of a “different” group, the higher the likelihood of becoming citizens of the host country. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 89% of immigrants of working age (15-64-year-old), that lived in multicultural Canada at least ten years, had adopted the Canadian citizenship in 2007 – a high amount in respect to the acquisition of citizenship of the same population of immigrants in countries with few *multicultural* policies. From 2007, only 57% of immigrants in Denmark obtained Danish citizenship, 47% in France became French citizens, and 37% in Germany obtained German citizenship. To the extent that we consider citizenship an indicator of civic “incorporation” and an additional factor facilitating integration, political or economic access to the job market, we find greater integration in countries with more developed multicultural policies.

However, although multiculturalism reinforces civic ties and the immigrants’ sense of inclusion, the negative perception of multiculturalism by some politicians and right-wing parties in various European countries is based on the fact that some people are very alarmed on the issues regarding diversity. Seven out of nine studies carried out on the anti-immigrant behaviors monitored in the course of time, the researchers found stable or increasingly negative attitudes towards immigrants, especially in Western Europe, while only two studies document more positive trends. The distinction between the various meanings of multiculturalism becomes important in order to understand the potentially different answers that the social majority of a country provides to ethnic minorities in that society and how the government deals with this diversity. However, much of this opposition reflects concerns about “demographic multiculturalism”, namely the growing pluralism in Western societies caused by immigration. Thus, even the politicians in *multicultural* countries manifest some ideas contrary to the idea of multiculturalism (Parekh, 2006).

## CONCLUSIONS

Can multicultural policies improve the potential negative reactions from members of the majority group to demographic multiculturalism, or could such policies exacerbate them? Very few research studies examine this issue with concrete data. A study on 19 western nations found that, in societies are grappling with the problems arising from migration, multicultural policies seem to mitigate or reverse the erosion of confidence or political participation that may occur in relation to situations of demographic change (Kesler, Bloemraad, 2010). In contrast, another study found

that residents of countries with the most multicultural policies might move towards more exclusionary schemes of national identity in the past decade (Bloemraad, 2011). These findings raise difficult questions for academics and policymakers on how to evaluate the preferences of the majority against the interests of minorities. The majority of the population could express limited support for policies for the recognition of political minorities – an attitude that some politicians support and encourage. Evidence shows that multiculturalism probably facilitates the socio-political integration of immigrants and contributes to their sense of civic inclusion. It is possible that, in the medium and long term, the effects of multicultural policies could also benefit the majority of residents. If the integration of minorities is facilitated, greater civic and political cohesion could follow and prevent the negative consequences that can result from feelings of exclusion and marginalization among minority residents. Given the tone of the current debates and the political climate in some countries, however, the maintenance and expansion of multicultural policies could be in danger.

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