

Deliberation as a collective decision-making mechanism in multicultural communities

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Abstract

In this policy brief, I examine the potential that deliberative democracy as a decision-making process has for enhancing the inter-cultural dialogue and dealing with the issues present in multicultural communities. Besides analyzing the advantages of deliberation and its operationalization in reality, in the final part of the policy brief, I offer some possible paths for improving the deliberative process in fostering intercultural communication and problem-solving.

Keywords: deliberative democracy, deliberation, multiculturalism, decision-making, citizen participation, public policy

Introduction

In this paper, I will examine the contribution and possibilities that deliberative mechanisms can offer to intercultural dialogue, the positive effects they can bring to the establishment of a new basic consensus, but also decision-making and solving of everyday problems shared by all members of a political community. I will first deal with the current situation and the main currents in theories dealing with the issue of identity pluralism, and then examine the possibility of application and the effects that the application of deliberation at the local level can offer.

Multiculturalism today

The notion of multiculturalism as a phenomenon has gained importance in the second half of the 20th century and escaped from the marginality of social theory, but also political issues. Will Kymlicka is correct when he claims that ethnicity was on the margins of political theory until the 1970s, but that since then there has been a lively debate about the phenomenon of ethnicity, and thus the problem of multiculturalist coexistence in modern societies (Kymlicka, 2009:363). A real example is the liberal theory before the theory of multiculturalism came into the mainstream of political debate. Namely, the liberal theory has long been of the opinion that the only thing that matters is the association of

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free individuals without paying attention to their identity (religious, ethnic or any other), but that individuals are governed by universal liberal principles in a political community based on the already mentioned principles (Beljinac, 2011:3). The balance of power between supporters of multiculturalism and those who oppose the concept has changed. Thus, we have the rise and setting of the theory of multiculturalism as a positively valued axiom of the 90s of the XX century in the Western academic community, which is best reflected in the sentence of Nathan Glazer: "Multiculturalism has won! Now we are all multiculturalists!" (Glazer, 1997:14). There is something Fukuyamian in that statement that was premature and perhaps too uncritical. However, today, two decades later, the picture is quite different, we have a thorough critique of the very concept of multicultural coexistence, the political elites of Western countries themselves are having doubt about the possibility of implementing such type of coexistence (Vuksanović-Ćalasan, 2014; 25). This coincided with the waves of xenophobia, raised the ratings of right-wing extremists and led to the mainstream observation of immigrants through a new movement of security threats.

In the beginning, I need to define the very concept of multicultural coexistence and for that occasion, I will choose the one given by Gordy: "Multiculturalism and diversity are basic living conditions where different cultures meet, but do not drown in each other" (Denić, 2015: 21). Although the second part of the definition may be more normative than descriptive, it shows the right path toward a functional multicultural society that does not strive for assimilation or the creation of a new inclusive identity, but for the coexistence of multiple identities, of any kind, without endangering the minority. It is normal, however, to expect the influence of some kind of communication of identity in a certain territory, which can lead to the enrichment of the very lives of citizens, but also to conflicts. The problem in such a society is the harmonization of majority and domicile identity, which strives for uniformity, homogeneity and continuity and, in contrast, the demands of minority immigrant communities that seek some institutional and discourse adjustment to their identity, acceptance and respect for their identities and cultures (Denić, 2015:21).

What is very worrying today is the discourse that can be heard in the public sphere, which is full of prejudice, xenophobia and racism. Such a discourse is only one part of the manifestation of cultural violence that has had a distinct instrumental political use for a longer period than just the emergence of the discussion on the problem of multiculturalism. Johan Galtung defines cultural violence as: "a means of legitimizing structural and direct violence" (Galtung, 2009:15). Structural violence, in the case of identity relations, is always directed towards the Other, ie the second identity group, whose Otherness may vary in relation to the perceived closeness of the two groups and their common characteristics (Hansen, 2006). Often the reason for such an antagonistic relationship is precisely the

construction and maintenance of the identity of one group, which implies, directly or indirectly, the construction of the identity of the Other with different (often inferior) characteristics compared to the first group (Campbell, 1992).

As a potential tool to be seriously considered, I offer deliberation and the establishment of deliberative democracy, at least at the local level. This, I believe, will not only contribute to solving many problems, primarily local and everyday ones but will also get citizens better acquainted with each other and create a kind of cross-cultural empathy.

Deliberation and deliberative democracy

I will now deal with the theory of deliberation and try to show on a theoretical level the value of deliberative democracy for the phenomenon of multiculturalism. Here, “decision-makers exchange reasonable arguments in the spirit of equality, critical reflection and refinement of their esteemed position with the intention of monitoring and deepening the notion of the public good”, he continues: “they seek a decision based on the widest possible inclusion and overlapping consensus different opinions and which will therefore be reasonable and accepted by all reasonable participants in deliberation” (Walters, 2018:169). So, we have seen that deliberation includes at least a minimum of respect for the interlocutors, which must be achieved during deliberation. This is possible because the deliberative process by discussion puts people of different backgrounds in contact and creates a humanizing image of the Other among them. The deliberation process insists on the most rational argumentation, but also on leaving particular interests for the common good and consensus and accepting better arguments and proposals (Janković, 2012:34). Identity combined with a bad economic situation leaves little room for reasonable debate. However, the discussion itself and intergroup contact during deliberation lead to a better understanding of the interests and experiences of other identity groups, and to the potential for creating a certain level of empathy for others (Elster, 1986:112).

What is even more important to emphasize is the question of the final outcome of the deliberation process. Does it have to be a clear consensus that all parties are happy with, or can it be something less than that? The aforementioned Walters distinguishes between the two outcomes of deliberation:

1. A weak form of deliberation that requires only dialogue on all sides with respect, without consensus, but with the intention of deepening the common good.
2. A strong form of deliberation which, with all the demands of a weak form, adds a final solution that is in favor of the common good of all parties and which is accepted by them (Walters, 2018:169).

For now, I would like to deal with the first point, ie the weak form of deliberation that can be extremely useful for our problem. The implications of a weak form of deliberation can go in the direction of restructuring the problem itself and I think this is a great direction to move in solving the issues. One of the leading theorists of deliberative democracy, Jon Elster, insists on information and insight towards the Other brought by the deliberative process, we listen to the arguments of others, build relationships and trust from session to session, thus becoming more open critics and begin to appreciate more argument for the sake of the arguments themselves, and we become more informed (Elster, 1986:112). With this information and the solidarity built within the group, we are able to restructure the problem and set it in the right way, because it is the first, most important, but also one of the most difficult steps in making the right public policy in this area (Djordjevic, 2009:58). Bringing even the best-considered solution to a poorly structured problem does not lead to improvement, but can only heal superficially for a while, but the pain remains and it is only a matter of time before it causes new conflicts. That is why I think that deliberation has a great advantage over traditional ways of solving these types of problems.

The traditional way of making decisions involves political elite making decisions with no or little discussion with the constituency, therefore without any kind of input. But, if we look at what deliberation offers us in this regard, we see the insistence on fluidity in terms of preferences. Why is this important and how does it solve our problem? Before entering the deliberative process, each of us has a clearly defined preference regarding the issue to be resolved by deliberation, these are pre-deliberative preferences that are often supported by ill-informed prejudices, but during the deliberation, citizens can learn and there is a chance of them changing their perspectives on certain issues

Many theorists insist on the neutrality of deliberation regarding the goal needed to be achieved (Jackson, 2014), although this may not always be the case, because deliberation can give more space to marginalized groups if deemed necessary in order to empower them and make a fairer public policy.

Implementing deliberative mechanism

When I talk about the implementation of deliberative democracy, I mostly focus on the bodies through which deliberation takes place, they can be called by different names, but I will label them all here as mini-publics (Stephen Elstub & Gianfranco Pomatto, 2018). In their opinion, the mini-publics are: “bodies made up of randomly selected citizens (from the national register, author's note) who are of a representative sample of the entire population (ethnic, religious, status, author's note) and who are gather in them, get informed and then discuss specific topics” (Elstub & Pomatto, 2018:297). It is

difficult to imagine that everyone can participate in such discussion bodies, it is not possible for practical reasons, not everyone could be accommodated, and we could only dream of a quality and meaningful debate. Therefore, the ideal number of participants is 50-100, although, in Iceland, deliberative bodies numbered up to 1500 participants (Elster, 1998). It is of great importance for the mini-publics to have those who manage the deliberation processes, moderators, they must be trained people who will direct the discussion in the most efficient and objective way, in the most useful direction toward the set goals of reaching consensus. Our situation is complicated by the very topic that is being discussed here because deliberation here is also intercultural dialogue. This implies intercultural communication that “involves the interaction of people whose cultural perceptions and symbolic systems are different enough to change the act of communication.” (Samovar et al. 2013, 57). So, here the duty of moderators is even greater because they have to harmonize different culturally conditioned ways of communication, they have to merge horizons, and their training is extremely important for the success of the process. Experts are here to play an important role too by providing accurate and clear data from an objective point of view, but also as witnesses that deliberation participants can examine in order to better understand the problem they are discussing. The application of this theory proved to be satisfactory, but not perfect. There were still problems of insufficient information of the participants, insufficient interest (although the monetary compensation solved the problem quite well), as well as the subsequent obligations and the issue of mandatory characteristic of the decision made through this process. However, a process with similar characteristics managed to bring quite good results in building a new society of equals in a deeply divided society such as the Republic of South Africa in the 1990s (Sorial, 2018:332).

Finally, various authors point out that the main advantages of including deliberation in policymaking are that citizens better understand the values of the community; increased responsibility of decision-makers towards citizens; administration benefits from citizens' input during deliberation; legitimizes final decisions; but also facilitates information flow between participants in deliberation (Abdullah & Rahman, 2015).

Conclusion: New possibilities

After all that has been written before, I think we can conclude that deliberative democracy has the potential for application to solve the problems present in multicultural societies. Deliberation has the power to change the preferences of participants through relatively rational discussion and arguments, as well as personal contacts and connections that are created among the participants, during its process. However, contact itself and discussion might not lead always to desired results and division

across the ethnic lines can impose a heavy burden on deliberation sometimes. It is up to those who lead this process (moderators) to prevent it. It should be noted that this way of making collective decisions is not cheap, however, that is why see this decision-making process in places such as Italy, Iceland and British Columbia.

I see two ways to go forward with deliberation:

1. Adding corporate elements to the process itself through the participation of professional civil society organizations in public deliberation (Jelena Lončar, 2011:102). NGOs dealing with relevant topics could provide valuable input and proposals as they have expertise and pieces of information.
2. The use of local infrastructure owned by municipalities, municipalities, cities, local communities, etc.

I would like to elaborate on the second point concerning the use of local government infrastructure. The critique of this model is that the process is shaped by randomly (though representatively) selected citizens, and only one part, not the entire population. This problem could be reduced through, what I would call, the process of smallpox, which would mean simultaneous or short-term deliberation in a large number of local government institutions to solve the problems of multicultural communities on a regular basis. With more deliberations in different places, we would achieve greater involvement, although still far from the entire population. If we marked all those mini deliberation sites with a red dot on the map, we would get a map full of small red dots, hence the name. The role of bureaucracy here is crucial as they are the ones facilitating and organizing the deliberative forums (which, while active, are part of administration). That is why it is important to put focus on deliberative training of the administration in order to make deliberation as efficient as possible and also develop any further deliberative event.

I will add that this way of deliberation after the initial costs would be cheaper to implement because the institutions of local authorities would be used to it and the reduction of intergroup conflict costs could make up for the facilitation costs. In time, there would be a routine and more skillful implementation of these mini deliberations by those who lead it. What is wonderful about this theory of collective decision-making is that it is relatively new in political theory and leaves a lot of room for creativity and innovation in solving and improving problem-solving.

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What happens to public service delivery under a weak civil society?: Evidence from India

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This paper argues the performance of public service delivery under weak civil society. Drawing on information from the world largest workfare programme, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), I argue in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) benefits of NREGA hardly reaches the poor. This is due to presence of weak civil society organisations (CSOs), which is riddled with corruption and factionalism, and operates at the cost of social expense. The ruling elites who hold the key to these institutions have made it difficult for citizens to voice their concerns and negotiate their entitlements.

Keywords: civil society; NREGA; Uttar Pradesh; corruption; factionalism; development; transparency; accountability; villages; India

1.0 Introduction

What happens to public service delivery under a weak civil society? How can civil society organisations be improved to incorporate the voices of the poor? I address these questions in reference to UP by taking into account the world largest workfare programme, NREGA.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2, narrates the performance of NREGA in the context of UP. Section 3, is divided into two parts. The first part describes the status of CSOs in UP; the second part, provides policy recommendations to make CSOs vibrant. Section 4, concludes.

2.0 Performance of NREGA in Uttar Pradesh

NREGA is the largest employment provision act operating in India, and major plank in India's anti-poverty policy. NREGA is an act of the parliament, and not merely a government programme (Jenkins and Manor, 2017). This act was legislated in 2005, and promises constitutional commitment on the part of the Indian state to guarantee at least 100 days of wage employment to any rural household whose members demand work. By 2009, the act was expanded to 600+ districts across India, and by 2016-17, NREGA had generated about 2.35 billion workdays of employment, with more than 50 million households associated with it (Misra, 2019).

But implementation of this act varies across Indian states. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, the act has been implemented through the state bureaucracy, while in Rajasthan and UP it has been devolved through elected village councils (the *panchayats* or GPs). In UP, the key implementer of NREGA at the village level is the headman (*pradhan*) who is the head of the GP and is accountable to all beneficiaries. In this state, GPs have failed to deliver anything like an effective basis of democracy and accountability. These institutions have reinforced unequal access to power, where dominance has been buttressed rather than undermined by law. Corruption has spread to such a level that the entire administration thrive only on graft (Dutta, 2012). Rules and regulations are commonly disregarded, development funds are squandered by the *pradhan* for aggrandisement. Besides, most government schemes such as *Indira*

*Aawaas Yojana*¹ and the *Samajwadi Pension Scheme*² are used to mobilise political support at the local level. Village meetings (*gram sabhas*) a part of participatory democracy is rarely held and whenever they are held factional rivalries dominates at the cost of social concerns. This has resulted in loss of trust among villagers towards rural institutions as they think these bodies cannot resolve their problems. This is best captured by a rural proverb '*hakim ke aghadi aur ghodeke pichadi na jaiyyo*' (do not walk in front of an officer or behind a horse), meaning in both the cases you will be kicked or some adversity will befall you! It suggests the lack of trust villagers have over government institutions and officials.

In UP, NREGA was introduced in 2005-06, but was vigorously pursued and expanded across the state in 2009–10. Mayawati³ was concerned that the word 'National' in the title of the act (amended later to include Mahatma Gandhi) would benefit her opposition (the Congress). This was surprising, as majority the disadvantaged castes who formed the major support of her party were beneficiaries. This poor implementation of the act was reflected in employment-unemployment survey conducted by National Sample Survey Organisation (2009–10), which reflected only 16.24 per cent of rural households participated in the act (Srivastava, 2016). When compared with south Indian states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry), where participation was more than 50 per cent (Pankaj and Tanka, 2010). The condition of female labourers is even more precarious. Women labourers are only allowed to work in fields owned by farmers of their own caste or if other women from the same caste work there. In Sitapur district (central UP), hostile male relatives and their acquaintances have forced women labourers not to undertake NREGA work, as they considered it arduous, and only suitable for males.

This has allowed the pradhan to manipulate the act on three fronts – economic, political and administrative. At the economic front, the pradhan generates illicit

¹ Renamed as Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana, it is flagship-housing programme by the Ministry of Rural Development, which provides financial support to poor households to construct their dwellings.

² Samajwadi pension scheme (launched in 2014) by the government of UP provides a pension of Rs 500 (US\$ 7) per month to households belonging to BPL category.

³ Mayawati was the youngest chief minister of UP. Under her leadership her party held power until 2007, when her party won a landside victory. She was instrumental in initiating various welfare programmes benefiting disadvantaged castes.

income through various sources. The most common source is through the use of private contractors, although contractors are not allowed under the norms of the act. The biggest political incentive for the pradhan is dragging his feet over NREGA implementation. This includes the ability to ration jobs and distribute them according to his discretion. Rationing occurs due to scarcity, a key determinant behind distorted distribution (Weitz-Shapiro, 2014). From the perspective of the local implementer, a greater availability of NREGA works makes it less costly to distribute it to someone who will not provide (or less likely to provide) any political support in return (Maiorano, et. al, 2018). Finally, at the administrative level, pradhan allies with leaders up the hierarchy. Among them the most important is the block development officer (BDO). The BDO is responsible for approving projects, certifying projects on completion and disbursement of wages. While distributing wages of NREGA, the BDO wields power by digitally approving payments through the use of 'dongle' for electronic signature. This authority provides him the leverage to negotiate for rents ex ante (before the wages are effectively paid to the workers' bank accounts).

At the village level, the pradhan chooses only those beneficiaries who are scarcely educated. These beneficiaries depend on the pradhan or village assistant (rogar sevak) to supply them information regarding the provisions of the act. This has provided strength to the pradhan, as beneficiaries are called and provided jobs. Calling workers individually are against the norms, as NREGA promises jobs on demand. The pradhan has strong incentive of not acquitting these beneficiaries of their specific rights conferred upon them under the act. This also suits the interests of local bureaucrats who demonstrate there is no unfulfilled demand within their block, as beneficiaries hardly approach them with their complains. This has led to clientelism, a mutual exchange based on discriminatory patronage, where every worker is treated differently. The major feature of this 'give and take' relationship it cuts across caste and class lines. The aim is to derive personal gain out of each beneficiary. Under this exchange, two categories of workers are chosen. The first includes those beneficiaries who have the ability to garner votes for the pradhan through their network of friends and relatives. The second category includes those beneficiaries with whom the pradhan teams-up to manipulate the act. These beneficiaries are chosen based on services, favours and loyalty.

3.0 Status of CSOs in Uttar Pradesh

The above discussion indicates that NREGA has been poorly implemented. Two reasons exist. First, poor citizens in rural areas are unorganised and hardly protest against poor service delivery. This has led to low participation in public sphere, as citizens are rarely mobilised over political issues. Second, in complete absence of any podium the poor fail to negotiate their entitlements. This has led to some key questions: what is the role of CSOs in UP? Can CSOs be made vibrant to incorporate the voices of the poor?

In UP, there are two categories of CSOs. The first category includes CSOs that are co-opted by elites. In India, upper middle classes have consolidated their hold over the poor by allowing them minimal rights to bargain for state resources (Chatterjee, 1993). The upper classes encourage the poor to imagine themselves as people in the process of development. The poor receive benefits such as loans, places in schools, scholarships and positions in government institutions. This strategy allows these classes to effectively neutralise social tactics. This broader picture of domination of elites is reflected in UP where elites have seized land from the poor, dominated lucrative work and controlled access to social networks. In these areas, middle classes have reproduced their privilege in part by establishing educational NGOs (Jeffery, et al., 2006). These organisations offer poor children schooling without altering patterns of social reproduction. By controlling educational opportunities, these classes are able to inculcate norms of good behaviour and discipline the poor and, in the process, make considerable money out of education.

The second category includes those CSOs who have a good track record, but are unable to operate in villages, due to existing local power structure, which holds sway on the basis of caste, class and religion. Mahila Samakhya (launched in late 1980s) is a quasi-public agency for women's literacy and empowerment. It operates under four broad areas – education, health, governance and law – and organises rural lower caste women. As part of a government order in Sitapur district, the organisation in 2010-11

was responsible for running of mid-day meal scheme.⁴ The coordination of this scheme was always a source of conflict between the female staff responsible for preparing the meals and school heads. The school heads would come late for work, and would interfere in the cooking process. This irritated the female staff as they reported the matter to government officials responsible for monitoring this scheme. But officials dismissed the complain on matter pertaining to purity and pollution.⁵ Given the realities of social exclusion and inequality in rural UP, it is hard to reject the hypothesis that upper castes have captured rural institutions making CSOs difficult to operate.

3.1 Making CSOs more Vibrant

In order to make the CSOs vibrant a CSO-panchayat partnership needs to be established. This will regain the confidence of villagers over rural institutions, and improve public service delivery. But to form this partnership some challenges needs to be crossed. Women and lower-castes elected as panchayat members under the 73-74th Amendment Act, 1993-94⁶ are scarcely educated and have little understanding of politics. When these members confront issues of transparency and accountability power-holders become antagonistic, as they emerge from power structure that has dominated the agrarian landscape for decades. This poses problems for the poor, who become vulnerable to these elites. Since poor are unorganised, they need protection against these groups. Protecting the interests of the poor is difficult, as politics in the state is criminalised and atrocities against disadvantaged castes is everyday affair. The second important challenge is how to obtain reliable information from panchayat leaders. The Right to Information Act (RTI Act)⁷ is difficult to implement, as the asymmetric state-citizen relationship will prevent citizens from accessing information. As the pradhan and his associates who handle developmental programmes will ensure that the line between state and society remains blurred, making difficult for citizens to

⁴ The mid-day meal scheme was introduced by the central government to provide cooked food to children in government schools.

⁵The concept of purity and pollution is interlinked with the caste system. The hierarchy of the caste decides the degree of purity and pollution. This concept plays an important role in maintaining distance between castes.

⁶ This act ensures reservation of seats for disadvantaged castes and women in panchayats.

⁷The RTI Act was introduced in 2005. The Act empowers citizens to obtain information held by the government.

access information thereby protecting their interests. Therefore in order to establish a mature CSO-*panchayat* partnership followings steps are needed:

Building capacity to conduct gram sabhas: Villagers need to be realised regarding the importance of *gram sabhas* as effective instruments for administrative matters. The best way is to organise meetings and workshops. Issues pertaining to the interests of villagers need to be discussed at length. These meetings should be open to all castes and classes, but participation of lower castes should be made mandatory. In Andhra Pradesh, this experiment was carried by Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP, government imitative), which trained several scarcely educated women and men to join village groups. This increased the awareness of these villagers, adding pressure on rural institutions and their leaders to demand better public deliverables.

Mobilise community-based organisations (CBO) or caste leaders: CBO along with caste leaders⁸ should be made aware regarding poverty alleviation schemes, minimum wages act and issues of transparency and accountability. This will enable better dissemination of information. At present information is held by block officials or the pradhan who dispenses it according to their discretion. Another way of disseminating information is to develop a pictorial beginner guide enabling villagers to understand the information.

External capacity building: Staff members from CSOs should be encouraged to visit the worksites, write reports and present the findings to the gram sabhas. These presentations should be written as commissioned articles and circulated in local newspapers. Appropriation of developmental resources by the pradhan or a local bureaucrat, should be taken up by the local media acting as ‘public watchdogs’

4.0 Conclusion

In UP, developmental gains did not translate in mobilisation of citizens. In the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, mass mobilisation of marginalised castes created spaces within social policies which led to process of development. There is no evidence of

⁸ These leaders assist their caste members in various chores. They are useful in disseminating information regarding various welfare schemes.

such initiatives in UP, as successive governments are engaged in disputes with their rival parties and are busy imposing allegations against them. The planning commission reveals that poverty outcomes have not improved substantially in the state despite funds through centrally sponsored schemes like NREGA. The state still has the largest concentration of the poor as their voices remain muted, in the absence of strong civil society. Private investment, the main driver of growth in India, is absent in the state as it prefers to operate from progressive states. Against these odds the future of the state remains uncertain.

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Conflict Transformation and Cultural Heritage Use in Cyprus

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Abstract

Cultural heritage use is often a point of friction between antagonistic groups in intrastate conflict. In other instances, use of heritage may facilitate intergroup contact and provide space for conflict transformation. The Cyprus issue is not an exception to this phenomenon. Although Cyprus is one of the most researched frozen conflict cases, cultural heritage use vis-à-vis conflict transformation is relatively understudied focusing primarily on tangible heritage protection, restoration and museology. This brief examines the degree of influence (be it positive or negative) of cultural heritage activity on conflict transformation between the two Cypriot communities. In specific, it examines bicomunal heritage projects, use of in-group and out-group heritage and, visits to own heritage sites on the other side of the divide. Results show that bicomunal heritage projects foster contact and cooperation, use of tangible heritage becomes the ground for antagonism over neglect and care of in-group and out-group sites, and visits to heritage on the other side provoke questions over use and reuse of neglected heritage of the other. In total, this brief demonstrates that often heritage issues are exploited in order to back ethnocentric positions. Both sides use own, neglected, damaged or lost heritage to support arguments of in-group superiority. Contrarily, the Cypriot communities do not consider intergroup cultural differences a deterring factor to transformation. The dynamic potentials of heritage can be utilised towards conflict transformation through bicomunal heritage activities, ventures attributing local ownership and joint management, and critical notions of heritage that favour intangibility and hybridity.

Keywords: Up to 10 Keywords Cyprus, Cultural Heritage, Heritage Use, Unofficial Diplomacy, Stereotypes, Conflict Transformation, Conflict Analysis

Introduction

Contemporary approaches in international relations tend to take into account the role of non-governmental actors in intercommunal conflict, considering them as important elements of conflict preservation, escalation and transformation. According to the Multitrack Diplomacy approach, citizens' activity, research, training and education are important diplomatic tracks that may support social peace building (McDonald, 2003). Like in other frozen conflict cases, in Cyprus, cultural heritage is a dimension that influences the perpetuation and, at the same time, the transformation of the conflict depending on its use by key actors. Given that culture and (social) identity are interrelated

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(Côté, 1996), and that definition, interpretation and use of heritage is highly political in nature (Pasamitros, 2017), cultural heritage use has the potential to feed both strife and rapprochement.

Theoretical Framework

In Cyprus, physical and psychological division defines cultural heritage by creating dichotomies in the perception, framing and use of tangible and intangible heritage. Conflict resolution theories claim that stereotypical images of the “other” are preserved by the lack of contact. Therefore, contact between members of communities is considered important for both maintaining and transforming protracted conflict (Coleman, 2006) and for contradicting negative stereotypes in direct interactions (Burgess, 2003).

Sociological theories on the causes of conflict support that contact can improve intergroup relations (Hodson & Hewstone, 2012). In specific, direct contact under non-competitive circumstances, combined with cooperation towards common goals, leads to a decrease in intergroup tension (Sherif et al, 1954/1961, Wedge, 1990). In addition, Contact Theory supports that interpersonal contact is an effective way to reduce prejudice between majority and minority groups under certain preconditions (Allport, 1954/1979/2007, Pettigrew, 1998). At the same time, sociological research also stresses the negative effects of contact, focusing on the generalisation of positive in-group – out-group experiences (Barlow, et al., 2012, Graf, Paolini, & Rubin, 2014), ambiguity of the effect contact has on prejudice (Wilson, 1996), in-group – out-group interaction anxiety (Wright, et al, 1997), and issues of internal and external validity of research (Forbes, 1997).

It is often claimed that intercultural dialogue, support for cultural diversity, and protection of heritage is important for building sustainable solutions. Specifically, culture is seen as an integral element of peacebuilding (Peace Direct, n.d.) that promotes tolerance, understanding and sustainable coexistence (Fukushima, n.d.). Post-modern reality demonstrates that, not only the possession of multiple identities is possible, but also that these multiple identities come to the surface according to the environment and external stimuli. Furthermore, certain theoretical approaches consider hybridity and transculturation as the ongoing condition of all human cultures (Rosaldo, 2005) and perceive cultural structure the result of prior hybridisation (Mac Ginty, 2011). On the opposite side, culture is also considered a source of conflict when ethnic or cultural differences coincide with economic or political interests (Galtung, 1990). Moreover, cultural heritage has been used as a tool for establishing and preserving identity, and heritage sites and practices as points of reference of common group identity.

Material culture as heritage is often used to provide a physical representation to the ephemeral and slippery concept of ‘identity’ (Smith 2006).

According to the aforementioned theoretical approaches, on the one hand, culture is a potential peacebuilding factor, connected to cultural cooperation. On the other, cultural heritage use can exacerbate real or perceived cultural differences that may deepen conflict. Given that culture and heritage are controversial terms and all individual or group activity happens within a cultural context, the present brief concentrates on cultural heritage activity, joint cultural heritage management, and visiting heritage sites on the other side.

Identities and Culture in Cyprus

In Cyprus, two different cultural realities prevail for each community: 1. a Cypriot and a Greek for the Greek Cypriots (GCs) and 2. a Cypriot and a Turkish for the Turkish Cypriots (TCs). In relation to the Cyprus conflict, for many years the dominant narratives have been those of the motherlands (Greek and Turkish), with the Cypriot cultural identity pushed to the background. Until 1974, the Greek and Turkish cultural identities were linked to the notions of “enosis” and “taksim” respectively. In recent years, there are systematic and non-systematic efforts to prioritise Cypriot culture. From 2004 on, under the Europeanisation process and the domestic political developments, there have been changes in the school curricula towards reconciliation (Hajisoteriou, Neophytou, & Angelides, 2015) and a more Cypriot-centric approach of a common heritage (Charalambous, Charalambous, & Zembylas, 2013, Gillespie, Georgiou, & Insay, 2013, Philippou, 2007). In practice, while there are cultural differences, like language and religion, there are also cultural similarities, like family structure, societal significance of the neighbourhood, localism as self-determination, gossip habits, non-verbal expression, culinary habits and traditional dances (Broome, 2005).

An asset in cultural rapprochement is the rich cultural landscape of Cyprus, which includes hundreds of archaeological sites (Louise & Morgan, 2013), offering the fertile ground for the communities to interact, cooperate, and pursue conflict transformation. Overall, in Cyprus, interconnection of conflict and cultural heritage is fraught with tension over cultural violation, heritage destruction and communal obliteration but at the same time, the restoration of particular sites of cultural heritage has become a tool for rapprochement efforts at the local authority and civil society levels (Constantinou, Demetriou, & Hatay, 2012).

Bicommunal Heritage Management in Cyprus

The most prominent body that facilitates bicomunal cultural heritage cooperation in Cyprus is the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH). The TCCH consists of archaeologists, architects, art historians and town planners from both communities and is dedicated to the recognition, promotion and protection of the cultural heritage of the island (Tuncay, 2012, TCCH, 2015). It was formed in 2009 and is supported by the European Commission and the UNDP-ACT programme. The work of the Committee, not only preserves cultural sites of Byzantines, Greeks, Lusignans, Ottomans, Phoenicians and Venetians, but also stresses the pan-Cypriot nature of heritage. In addition, it promotes cooperation through the work of the bicomunal team of experts. Beyond the TCCH, the ACT programme has invested in planning, implementing and facilitating projects that aim to protect culturally important sites and bring the two communities closer, through collaboration (Louise & Morgan, 2013).

In 1979, an era very close to the division, the first bi-communal cooperation project was formed. The Nicosia Master Plan (NMP), along with the Nicosia Sewerage Project, were led by the two mayors of Nicosia at that time (Lellos Demetriades in the south and Mustafa Akinci in the north), and were planned and implemented by GC and TC professionals (Europa Nostra, 2019). In the context of the NMP, several urban and infrastructure upgrading was realised in both sides of the walled city of Nicosia through the collaboration between technical teams from both communities (UNDP, 2013). In total, the NMP was an important heritage project that attempted, to revitalise the historical centre of Nicosia by focusing on abandoned areas from the time of the division, to preserve and exhibit cultural heritage of all the residents of Nicosia and to get experts from both communities to work together for an extended time.

The Cultural Heritage Preservation Circle in Kontea project is an example of cooperation of both experts and local people. The 6-year project (2007-2013) was implemented by the Kontea Heritage Foundation and the Union of the Chambers of Cyprus Turkish Engineers and Architects and managed to bring together the former GC and the current TC residents of the Kontea village in order to revitalise and rehabilitate it, through grassroots activities and community engagement. Through the project, important cultural heritage sites were restored. Furthermore, the scope of Cultural Heritage Preservation Circle was broader than preserving cultural sites. It experimented with an inclusive approach to public consultation with town meetings, exhibitions, information and feedback networks, and was structured around joint decision-making by parallel, TC and GC management committees. A pioneering, participatory, locally-owned decision-making model was planned to foster conflict transformation. Overall, the Kontea project demonstrates how combining reconciliation and citizen

participation in decision-making around tangible assets of common significance can transform conflict dynamics (Louise and Morgan, 2013).

Along with successful cases of bicomunal cooperation in the field of culture, there are also efforts that failed. A representative example is the attempt to make the Kyrenia ship project, bicomunal. The Kyrenia ship is a wreck of a 4th-century BC merchant ship and is exhibited in the Ancient Shipwreck Museum in Kyrenia Castle in the city of Kyrenia, Northern Cyprus. Three full-size replicas of the ship have been constructed so far. The replicas occasionally travel around the world as a floating ambassador of Cypriot culture. The shipwreck is of ancient Greek origin and the replicas were constructed under GC initiatives. There have been efforts, to rebrand the Kyrenia project in civic rather than ethnic terms but there was little success in this since the only achievement up to now is the inclusion of a TC in the crew-team of a replica ship. (Constantinou, Demetriou, & Hatay, 2012).

Culture and Cultural Heritage as a Factor of Antagonism

Beyond the positive side of contact and cooperation on cultural projects, there are dimensions of heritage use and management that preserve negative perceptions between Cypriot communities. While the Cyprus case is not a cultural or religious conflict, these two elements occasionally fuel strife and enrich ethnocentric narratives. A common claim in both communities is that the in-group protects cultural heritage of the island, while the “other” destroys it by straightforwardly targeting or deliberately neglecting the heritage of the rival group in an effort to perform ethno-cultural cleansing. Preserved heritage of the “other” is used to manifest in-group tolerance and “own” lost heritage is used to reproduce ethnic identity in similar and often more intense ways than the actual possession, access and enjoyment of heritage (Constantinou & Hatay, 2010).

Both communities instrumentalise heritage in order to legitimise claims and support policies concerning the Cyprus problem. In each side, one’s own preservation of selected heritage is opposed to the other side’s destruction of heritage. The Greek-Cypriot side, that has been comparatively more diligent in protecting and reconstructing the ethno-religious heritage of the TCs, has often communicated preservation in order to emphasise the destruction of GC heritage in the north. Respectively, TCs emphasise the multicultural character of the island and downplay its Greek heritage. This means that while ancient Greek sites and a few historically significant Byzantine churches are preserved, late churches and monasteries have been either neglected or vandalised. The reconstruction of such sites occurs under negative international publicity and pressure. TCs fear that site restoration will facilitate the return of displaced GCs to the north (Constantinou & Hatay, 2010).

When information demonstrate that the “other” respects in-group heritage and opposes established perceptions, the other community is often accused of demonstrating symbolic tolerance for the culture of the other (Constantinou, Demetriou, & Hatay, 2012). Instances where the in-group participates in a reconstruction project in cooperation with the “other”, while one would expect them to oppose consolidated perceptions, sometimes work in a reverse manner, confirming the image of a civilised and tolerant “self” vis-à-vis a rarely enlightened “other” (Constantinou & Hatay, 2010). In these instances, cooperation cases function as the exception that proves the rule.

Visiting Heritage Sites on the Other Side

The 2003 opening of the Green Line crossings allowed displaced persons from both sides to visit their former villages and properties. Religious heritage sites were important destinations of private and spiritual visits. These visits were emotionally and politically loaded (Constantinou, Demetriou & Hatay, 2012). Mass media depictions of neglected religious heritage sites on the other side of the divide, stressed in-group self-victimisation while contradicting these images with the care taken by their own community for the preservation of the cultural heritage sites of the “others”. What is more, social context dignifies cultural heritage. In the absence of the people for whom religious heritage sites were important, a damaged church, mosque or cemetery could fade into the background, occupying a minimal space in the landscape of everyday life. With the opening of the Green Line crossings, these sites became noticed again, as visitors lit candles in churches or rummaged through broken tombstones looking for the names of relatives. For the TCs, loss of heritage was a bitter experience on the one hand showing that life in the south as it was in the past does not exist anymore and on the other leading to the realisation that in some cases recovery of heritage is practically impossible (Constantinou & Hatay, 2010).

Lastly, tangible heritage also privileges manifestations of cultural wealth of dominant groups in the expense of “ephemeral” and “mutable” cultures. In this way, the two dominant Cypriot communities benefit from this discourse as it favours the construction and enhancement of their ethno-cultural identities and sustains bicomunalism. Such understanding presents cultural hybridity in Cyprus as anomalous and marginalises heritage of smaller, subaltern communities, like the linguistic heritage of the Maronites or the Cyprus Roma travelling traditions (Constantinou & Hatay, 2010).

Conclusions

Research on cultural heritage use vis-à-vis conflict transformation, shows that culture is a field of contact and cooperation. At the same time, there are also indications that there is an antagonistic use

of heritage and a dividing perception of culture. The present brief argues that bicomunal contact and activity on a cultural heritage basis in Cyprus can be either supportive, or dissuasive to conflict transformation, according to the framework and present conditions. On the one hand, bicomunal activities aiming to preserve and restore cultural heritage create contact and cooperation that challenges established images. On the other, cases of neglected heritage sites by the “other”, serve conflictual narratives of a civilised “self” and an uncivilised “other”. Given that heritage is (connected to) identity, heritage use-based cooperation or antagonism reflects either the different identities (Greek and Turkish) narrative or the Cypriotness narrative. Furthermore, non-ethnic or cross-ethnic heritage is downplayed and hybridity is marginalised since they are not exploitable by ethnocentric narratives. As a result, strictly communal or bicomunal use does not reinforce cultural tolerance and long-term, conflict transformation-oriented solutions.

Cultural Heritage use in Cyprus suggests that:

- (a) Cultural heritage issues are used to back ethnocentric positions and confirm established images of the “other”.
- (b) Both sides exploit own, neglected, damaged or lost heritage of the conflict to support arguments of in-group superiority.
- (c) The two communities do not understand ethnic, religious, and cultural differences as inseparable and rigid elements for the perpetuation of conflict.

Proposed paths for utilising the dynamic potentials of heritage as a factor of conflict transformation are to:

- (i) Sustain, prolong, and create new bicomunal heritage activities. Cooperation of experts offers the Cypriot communities a chance to appreciate their diverse heritage and to gain direct experience of how bicomunal cooperation can build interpersonal trust.
- (ii) Support projects that actively involve local communities in the process. Through restoration and reconstruction projects, communities have the opportunity to re-imagine physical spaces around them, to pursue contact with the “other”, and to claim and exercise local ownership of the (re)use of heritage and the conflict transformation processes.
- (iii) Bring to the fore the notion that individuals and societies are not passive recipients of heritage but rather active producers and consumers of it. Stress the importance of intangible

heritage, practices, traditions and the ways people give meaning to them. Thus, acknowledge intangible heritage in parallel to tangible in order to soothe ethnic competition fuelled by heritage sites and heritage practices use.

(iv) Let heritage and identities of smaller communities and marginalised groups come to prominence. Support multiculturalism and cultural hybridity based on the rich history and diverse past of Cyprus.

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