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Diversity and inclusiveness:

Exploring options for a shared democracy

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1. A preliminary reflection: why is diversity so fashionable?

Why has diversity become such a popular theme? It has always existed, both in human society and in a way, in each of us, as individuals and products of the most obvious, "primordial" diversity – the diversity between a woman and a man.

We use the term diversity to name what once used to be called "difference" or the "multiplicity of differences", maybe because diversity does not imply division and, as such, sounds more "politically correct".

In politics, the term diversity is most often used to refer to cultural, linguistic, religious and other differences generically defined as "ethnic". This paper too is about ethnic diversity and its relationship to democracy and politics.

Different or diverse people have always mingled and this mingling produced the best and the worst in human history: it was the catalyst of scientific discoveries, of the expansion of trade, of artistic creativity. Mesopotamia, the Indian Ocean, the Americas – were crossroads of cultures and cradles of fertile diversity. But diversity, particularly when coupled with exclusion, oppression, or huge disparities in power and in the distribution of wealth, also produced immeasurable suffering: wars, conquests, colonialism and slavery.

Why is diversity today becoming such an intensely debated subject? I suggest this may be the result of the combination and interaction of three broad tendencies:

   a) The intensified necessity and experience of contacts with "others" – be they voluntary or involuntary;

   b) The advances of democracy as a new hegemonic order;

   c) The increasing understanding of democracy as social inclusiveness.

Has the diversity of the world increased or is it just about our perceptions?

Both are probably true. Diversity is not easy to measure and lessons learned from recent history would advise against such measurements. What started with measurement often ended up with disaster. Yet, with a rather high degree of certainty we can say that almost everyone's contacts with "others" and "otherness" multiplied in the past couple of decades as a result of geopolitics, globalization, the communications revolution and mass migrations flows.

While levels of diversity have certainly increased everywhere, the historical experience of diversity varies greatly from one region to the other. In European countries increased diversity is experienced as a relatively new phenomenon. For more than two centuries, the nation-state paradigm kept producing the idea that cultural homogeneity was good and desirable and that diversity was a curse. The real surge in diversity occurred with the economic boom of the seventies and following decolonisation (with the phenomenon French sociologist Martine Spensky calls "Le retour des gallions" – the return of the gallions)[1] .

In other parts of the world, diversity has always been, in a way, "endemic". I once asked an Indian friend which was his mother tongue and he answered that the very concept of mother tongue was, in his view, Eurocentric. Since his childhood he used to speak one language with his family, another one at school; has learned a third one watching movies and reading books.

Some former colonies, in the Western hemisphere in particular, have had the specific experience of settlers' nations. The debate on the historical injury inflicted upon native populations surfaced only in the second half of the last century and has taken since different forms and produced different results, from the high levels of diversity-awareness and diversity-protection in Canada to the painful political awakening and resistance of the Guatemalan Mayas against policies of exclusion and silent apartheid ("defined by themselves as the 500 years of suffering" – "los quinientos años de sufrimiento").

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[1] Expression borrowed from "El retorno de los galeones" (bocetos hispánicos) by <u>Max Henríquez Ureña</u>

2. Democracy as the new hegemonic order:

More than a hundred countries have undergone democratic transitions since the 1970s and some 40 countries since the 1990s. Statistics, of course, can be misleading as they say little about the quality of these transitions. Most probably many of these new democracies are still "democracies with adjectives": "controlled democracies", "oligarchic democracies", "ethnic democracies", "male democracies" (the last group is no doubt, the largest one and not only among so called "young democracies"). We have also learned that transitions are long-term processes. Democracy is not what one usually finds under the rubble of dictatorship. It is always a complex construction, it takes years to build if not decades, and beyond institutions it encompasses the practice and the culture of democracy. What is more, the process is not linear nor is it irreversible. Hence, beyond statistical figures and the number of governments formally legitimised by multi-party elections, more important is perhaps the global "hegemonic status" that the democratic model has achieved in political thought after the end of the Cold War. Simply, at global level, democracy has become "the only game in town". There are no credible alternative models of governance. While the understanding of democracy varies both in theory and in practice, we can hardly find anyone today advocating the idea that there are better systems of governance than democracy.

Whose democracy?

Regardless of the plurality of models and patterns, democracy is increasingly understood as having to do with inclusiveness. A democratic society is basically understood as an inclusive society. Inclusiveness, as we know, has not always been a defining feature of democracy but its importance has been growing steadily. Since the French Revolution, suffrage gradually expanded though it took more than two centuries to achieve its current feature of "relative universality". We may also note that in doing so it happily survived a couple of major contradictions in terms, particularly the one of being called "universal" while excluding half of the population, i.e. women (in France until the end of World War II), not to mention the colonised.

This "partial" character of "universal suffrage" seems to re-emerge today with the strengthening of a certain "human rights" approach to democracy. The subjects of democracy are citizens while the subjects of human rights are, by definition, all human beings. In no country, at any point in time have all human beings enjoyed the status of citizens. Thus we cannot do away with a more fundamental problem and contradiction between the universality of human rights and the exclusive character of citizenship – a problem identified already by Hannah Arendt and encapsulated in her question about "the right to have rights". The "right to have rights" proves to be an issue with an extreme level of historical resilience.

The democratic state, while needed to guarantee and protect the rights of its citizens, also excludes non-citizens. In addition, levels of inclusion and exclusion vary not only between, but also within the two categories. Non-citizens can be tourists, investors, migrant workers, refugees or asylum seekers. Citizens can be rich or poor, of "unquestionable national origin" or of foreign descent, of "recognizable" – "identifiable" or non-identifiable foreign descent (the new French term is "issus de la diversité visible" – belonging to visible diversity – an amazing neologism as it lends itself to interesting linguistic speculations: for example, citizens of unquestionable domestic origin, to mark the difference, could be called "issus de l'uniformité invisible" or "belonging to invisible uniformity").

The differentiated treatment of the different categories of citizens, while existing in practice, remains illegal in self-respecting "established" democracies. On the contrary, the differentiated treatment of non-citizens is enshrined in the law. Non-citizens can be "legal" or "illegal" and the application of laws that differentiate one status from the other is not always transparent and predictable. A Hungarian asylum-seeker in Western Europe in the sixties would be warmly welcomed and the media titles would read "He chose liberty", or something similar. This poetic emphasis will definitely not apply to an Afghan asylum seeker in most of Europe today.

International trade increases diversity but again, those involved do not enjoy the same treatment. Investors are welcome. Those who have no other goods to sell than their own labour are more likely to be criminalised as "illegal". The free market remains limited to commodities, financial capital and to some extent services, but is still far

from including labour. Luckily enough, the "providers of labour" are sometimes disguised as "providers of services". Labour is "outsourced" and frontiers crossed in the opposite direction. In one way or another, globalisation appears to be unstoppable and diversity invades not only the physical space but the virtual one as well.

3. The challenges of globalisation

Leaving aside the paradox identified by Hannah Arendt, globalisation keeps producing two effects, often perceived as contradicting each other: **enhanced diversity** and **enhanced standardisation**. In no other field is this clearer than in the field of language. Yes, English is in the process of becoming the standardised global language, but at the same time, it allows Indian, Chinese and many other cultures and worldviews to be better known throughout the world and to leave their imprints in other peoples' minds. There is no diversity in diverse communities living incommunicado next to each other. Diversity happens only when they interact.

How does globalisation affect democracy? It bears opportunities and threats. On the one hand, in many parts of the world (India is a case in point) it has certainly contributed to overcoming the legacy of colonial exclusion and to fully "humanising" the "other" who became a respected trade partner and a fully fledged "subject of democracy". On the other hand, globalisation has exposed millions to external influences beyond their control and beyond the control of their elected governments. Employment opportunities respond to the vicissitudes of volatile financial markets and the idea of job security has become obsolete. Elected, democratic governments, even when driven by a sense of responsibility and accountability, are often left with no other choice than to invoke external circumstances for the failure to meet citizens' expectations. They can hardly be blamed. Globalisation has indeed deprived them of most short-term intervention tools while their performance and approval rates continue to be measured by their capacity to respond to short-term demands and to implement "popular policies and measures" with immediate impact.

Will democracy beyond national borders emerge as a real issue in the coming decades? Globalisation has both reduced some forms of exclusion and created new ones. The Berlin wall has been pulled down but a much longer one is being erected

between the USA and Mexico. In the long term and in an optimistic perspective, one should hope for the emergence of a collective "we" that transcends national borders, a kind of democratic constituency of the United Nations. Today, this is still political fiction in spite of emerging global issues such as climate change.

Inclusiveness as a feature of democracy at national and local levels may be more within today's reach. Yet even as such, it is far from having been achieved in most parts of the world. What is worst, in many parts of the world some important "drivers" of these processes, such as patterns of income distribution, seem to be producing exclusion rather than inclusion.

4. Can democracy help "managing" diversity?

Very few states today are ethnically homogeneous and most probably, even fewer will be homogeneous tomorrow. As much as ethnic homogeneity may be attractive to political leaderships - obviously, the exercise of power and the political tools required are much simpler when such homogeneity exists - forcibly inducing or re-instating homogeneity where it does not exist is clearly no longer an option. Some of the major human disasters of the last century from Bosnia to Rwanda may be attributed to attempts to impose ethnic homogeneity by force within the existing or the imagined nation-state. Hence, the issue of "managing diversity" or, I would rather say – of making democracy and diversity supportive of each other, is acquiring an ever greater importance.

Democracy is seen as the ultimate tool to address social tensions and conflicts in a peaceful and transparent way. Is democracy by the same token the best framework to address the challenges arising from ethnic and cultural diversity? As tempted as we may be to say "yes", we can hardly avoid addressing two questions that seem to emerge from empirical evidence:

First, if democracy is the best framework to address the challenges posed by diversity, how can we explain the proliferation and exacerbation of "ethnic conflicts" precisely after the end of the Cold War that signalled a new wave of democratic transitions?

Second, if democracy is the proper framework to "manage" democracy peacefully, how do we explain that different governments, all inspired by democratic values and principles, adopt different and sometimes diametrically opposed approaches to the "management" of diversity?

As far as the first question is concerned, a very frequent perception is that ethnic fault lines and tensions have always been present in former single-party socialist states but were "suffocated" and prevented from expressing themselves under "communist dictatorship"; hence they erupted violently as soon as this heavy "lid of dictatorship" was removed. "In the condition of plural democracy" says Neal Ascherson "people are invited to choose sides, to identify what divides them rather than what unites them"[2].

My view is that this explanation, though it may be valid in some situations, leaves important questions unanswered. Most importantly, it doesn't say why was there such an urge to choose precisely from the "ethnic menu" in a situation where so many other choices needed to be made: choices related to the economic system, education, social protection etc.

5. A case in point: the violent disintegration of the former Yugoslavia:

This unanswered question is perhaps most evident in the case of the country where the transition process coincided with the fiercest and most violent explosion of nationalism: the former Yugoslavia. Yet the case of the former Yugoslavia is also the one that offers the strongest resistance to the "ethnic oppression" thesis.

To substantiate this view we may need to recall some key features of that country's political regime. The single party of the Yugoslav federation – the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, was a rather strange "eight-headed single party". The

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[2] Neal Ascherson: From multiculturalism to where?; 2004; article posted on the Open Democracy website
http://www.googlesyndicatedsearch.com/u/opendemocracy?q=Neal+Ascherson&as_filetype=pdf&as_ft=e&sitesearch=www.opendemocracy.net

leaderships of the six (de facto eight[3]) federal units had not only a high level of autonomy, but often sought to legitimize themselves politically by giving precedence to the specific local economic or other interests over ideological cohesion and unanimity. As the ideological cohesion faded away over years, this tendency became even more obvious. As long as Josip Broz Tito was alive as the supreme arbiter – he would pull the break to such tendencies as he did when he disciplined the leaders of the "Croatian spring" in the early 1970s or the "Serbian liberals[4]" soon thereafter. Yet one should remember that both of these movements were led by the local leaderships of the League of Communists. When Tito died in 1980, nationalist tendencies emerged even more vigorously. Both the Communist League of Croatia and the Communist League of Slovenia fiercely opposed Milosevic's attempts to reassert centralism and the role of Serbia in the Federation and to that effect, both proposed re-organising the state as a confederation. At the same time, in none of the federal entities was there enough public space to allow for a broad discussion and articulation of different views – other than those of local communist leaderships, and to carry on an open political debate on the pros and cons of different approaches. Allegiances were required to the political priorities set by these local leaderships, never mind the overarching ideology. In my view, it is not the alleged suffocation of specific "ethnic claims" under authoritarian rule that led to the ethnic "overheating" in the 90-s. The key reason for the surfacing of ethnic claims was that no "other than ethnic" claims were allowed to grow, to take roots and constitute the base for trans-ethnic political kinships and alliances. When the constraints of authoritarian rule were lifted, there were no organised political actors able to aggregate and articulate political claims different than the ethnic ones, and to express them through coherent and credible political programmes. The only claims and grievances "ready for use" were precisely the ethnic ones. Which also explains why the leading promoters and defenders of those ethnic claims in the 90-s were not the representatives of some formerly oppressed social groups or classes, but precisely local communist leaderships turned nationalist overnight as nationalism became "the flavour of the day" and a much more effective political tool than the imploding ideology. Multiple grievances – economic,

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[3] The 1974 Constitution accorded to the two autonomous provinces within Serbia – Kosovo and Vojvodina - practically the same status and prerogatives as those held by the six constituent republics of the Yugoslav federation.

social or cultural – tended to crystallize as ethnic because the language of ethnicity is the easiest one, the one everybody speaks. Nationalism does not require arguments and persuasion. Its conceptual apparatus is extremely simple and basically does not differ from the conceptual apparatus of a single-party state: citizens are divided between "us" and "them" or, rather, between "us" and our "enemies".

Yugoslavia in the 70s and 80s was in many respects different from other socialist regimes. It was a relatively open society and political issues were not "taboo" provided they did not directly challenge the system. Critiques "from within" were seen as quite normal and sometimes even encouraged. Yet the underlying logic that differentiated between "us" and "them" was present and it did not disappear with the implosion of ideology. On the contrary, it became much stronger in the new – ethnic reference framework. The following quote from an article by the Polish journalist and intellectual Konstanty Gebert (better known by his pseudonym David Warszawski) explains the problem through a very good metaphor:

If one wanted to translate from the language of communism to that of democracy, one had to change both the vocabulary and the grammar, and that had proved to be a difficult task. But if one wanted to translate from the language of communism to that of nationalism, the task was much simpler: all it took was changing the vocabulary. The grammar, as it were, remained the same. The class enemy became the national enemy, the party leader the leader of the nation. His job remained that of crushing the adversary".[5]

To the earlier question "why have ethnic conflicts erupted" with the emergence of democracy, my answer is: precisely, because at the time when countries opened up to democracy there was no democracy. Again, the building of democracy takes years if not decades. It involves agreeing on constitutional arrangements and on the electoral system, building a responsible, transparent and effective civil service, a sense of trust among citizens that their opinion counts and that their arguments will be heard. These

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[4] Though the "Serbian liberals" led by Marko Nikezic focused on issues of general political freedom rather than on ethnic ones, Tito's determination to react against both clearly signals a concern for "political balance" within the federation.

[5] Konstanty Gebert: From '89 to 9/11: of Turmoil and Hope in "Ten Years of Supporting Democracy Worldwide – 10th Anniversary publication by International IDEA, 2005

multiple ingredients of democracy will not remove ethnic issues from the agenda, but will allow the search for solutions within a democratic framework.

If we see democracy not just as the absence of authoritarian rule, but as a very sophisticated system of governance, we will find ample evidence that the combination of diversity and democracy is definitely a less inflammable mix than the combination of diversity and authoritarian rule. Conflict is not what you get when you mix democracy and diversity; on the contrary it is the symptom of weak, dysfunctional and troubled democracy. The "friendly divorce" of the Check and Slovak republics testify to this view as well as some other more recent debates on different levels of autonomy and devolution of power (in Spain, Canada and the UK for example).

The case of the former Yugoslavia is paradigmatic but not unique. One who has witnessed the devastating power of intolerant nationalisms in the Balkans is tempted to apply the same analytical lenses to other situations (even when the symptoms are much less intense), situations in which "identity" and "diversity" issues tend to grow out of proportion in the political debate, to monopolise the political space and divert attention from other burning economic and social problems. The historical lessons learned from the genesis of the Balkan wars may still be valid in our times of advanced globalisation. The feelings of insecurity and the demands for group protection generated by globalisation lend themselves very easily to being read and interpreted through ethnic lenses. Theories (such as the "clash of civilisations" one) are already in place to elevate such readings to scientific dignity and to further stir the mixture until it acquires the strength of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Let us now turn to the second of the two questions raised: Why is it that democratic governments adopt diametrically different ways to deal with the issue of diversity?

6. Integration versus multi-culturalism:

Two schools are best known today: The French model of "integration" that emphasizes equality through the adherence of all citizens to the same "republican values"; and the "multi-cultural" model (sometimes called Anglo-Saxon) that acknowledges the existence of different communities within the nation and their

collective claims. The first model prioritizes the principle of equality among citizens before the law; the second presumes that people, before being recognized as citizens wish to be acknowledged and respected as members of their religious, cultural or linguistic community.

Both systems are presented, pursued and defended as means to achieve the laudable democratic objective of inclusiveness. Yet, none of the two has proven to be a fully reliable and "conflict-proof" tool for the "management" of social diversity. Countries applying any of the two systems have had to face major social turbulences. Both systems seem to have their strengths and their weaknesses as well as the ability to generate tensions and crisis situations particularly when applied with some consistency.

Recent events such as the reactions to the London July 2005 bombings, the French 2005 suburbia riots and the more recent Danish cartoons controversy, provoked a new wave of debates in Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, in some non-European societies. The debate has not been overly conclusive in taking advantage of the lessons learned. The holders and followers of different approaches have not really undertaken to reconsider the pros and cons of their respective stances. This resilience of "diversity-management" policies to pragmatic adjustments and corrections seem to testify both to the political sensitivity of the issue and to the role that ideological convictions still play in shaping these policies.

Let us briefly examine the ways in which, ideally, each of the two systems is tuned with the intention to "produce" a more inclusive society. Then, we shall look at the discrepancies between the proclaimed intentions and the complex reality on the ground. This may offer some clues about what is wrong with the underlying assumptions.

The "intergrationist" model understands citizenship as a set of values assumed to have a universal value: equality of citizens before the law, equality of citizens in accessing services to be provided by the state such as security, education and public health etc. There is a strict separation of the public and private domain. The State, in order to foster equality, pretends to ignore all differences among groups of citizens. In the case

of France, the state also applies a strict policy of "laicité" of which "secularism" is only an approximate translation. "Laicité" is seen and taught (not to say "preached") as the necessary full separation between the State and the Church applied precisely with the purpose of ensuring full equality among citizens regardless of the religion to which they adhere or to their choice not to have a religion at all. Religion is therefore banned from public institutions. The national education system poses the same requirements to all concerned in terms of language and in terms of certificates and diplomas required. No social or ethnic group is entitled to any affirmative action policy (which in French, not accidentally, is called "positive discrimination").

Sixteen years ago, coming, to France as an immigrant from the former Yugoslavia where I could experience the devastating consequences of "ethnic overheating" I was very much attracted by this integrationist model and by the very idea that a citizen may enjoy all his or her civic rights without having to declare or to display in any way his or her ethnic origin or other cultural preferences. "A French citizen" - once said Mr. Chevènement - former French Interior Minister, "is a person holding a French passport, **period**". No questions are to be asked about his or her origin, his or her religion, his or her ethnicity.

Today, my views are more nuanced, not because I am now the holder of a French passport and not at all because I feel the need to retrieve any ethnic roots. Rather, because I am better able to measure the limits of this integrationist model and to see its flip-side.

The flip side stems essentially from the fact that all citizens in real life, are not equal nor treated as such. The same standards applied to the privileged and to the under-privileged do not produce equality. Inequality, unfortunately, has made its way into the social tissue and is being produced, reproduced and deepened by the economic system. In addition, social inequality and exclusion often come together with origin and culture. When it becomes deeply entrenched, the official - legal "equality" tends to become meaningless and the official language that promotes it is increasingly "de-semanticized" – unable to produce meaning and political mobilisation. What happened in France in the fall of 2005? The "de facto" excluded - the under-employed youth of the metropolitan suburbia, living in huge dormitory satellite-cities, mainly of

non French origin, and mainly belonging to the already mentioned "visible diversity" – fell in a kind of political limbo and rebelled. Their sense of belonging to "the nation" was weak as the nation itself had excluded them. One should also note that Muslim French citizens – who are the largest "visible minority", had not been part to the secularist "social contract" negotiated much earlier between the State on one side, and the Christian churches and Jewish community on the other. Having arrived to France much later – in the fifties and sixties, they do not see themselves as party to the arrangements that established the system of "laicité". This circumstance is reflected in many details – among others in the fact that Easter and Christmas are kept as holidays in a "secularist" state, but Eid is not. An excluded minority will always express itself, but the expression is likely to be less articulated and ipso facto more violent if it had not had a chance to constitute itself as a political agency and if the state has refused to see it as a political actor. The French integrationist model of "diversity-management" has shown its limits most blatantly in these 2005 riots.

Attempts by the new government to find meaningful interlocutors in the Muslim community and to mark in a symbolic way the multi-cultural character of French society by appointing several cabinet members coming from the "visible minorities", may be signalling a departure from the consistent application of the "intergationist" model. It may also be signalling the abandonment of the idea that the system should be tuned to "produce equality" – in other terms under-privileged minorities are likely to remain under-privileged and, as such, they are in need of specific political representation through some affirmative action measures. Of course, it is much too early to speculate about how real the departure is and how far it might lead.

Let us now look briefly at the assumptions and the effects of the other model – the so called multi-cultural one. Its point of departure is that society is composed not only of individual citizens but also of identifiable cultural, religious and/or ethnic groups.

7. Ethnic power-sharing as the extreme form of multi-culturalism

Multi-culturality is practiced in many ways and through different and varied legal frameworks. The recognition and inclusion of different ethnic and religious groups as constituent elements of society can range from the most rigid forms of ethnic power-

sharing such as those prevailing today in Lebanon or in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to much more flexible forms of recognition and protection of diversity that do not amount to power sharing and do not diminish the idea and the role of "the citizen" (in fact they may even, as we shall see, in some cases, protect it).

The problems with the rigid power-sharing forms of multi-culturalism are quite evident in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon. Both countries are good cases in point to highlight the heavy constraints that such forms of governance pose on civic liberties and citizenship itself. I will expand a bit the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina as I know more about it.

The 1995 Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina which is based on the Dayton Peace Agreements signed the same year, defines the country as belonging to "its three constituent peoples – Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs".

Though the constitution also mentions "Others" (note the capital "O") as well as "the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (no capital "C" here), the latter two categories are nowhere to be found in the multiple ethnically balanced arrangements that define the country's institutional make-up at national, intermediary and local level. Ethnicity remains the key feature through which citizens can participate in political life and assume political responsibilities and offices. To date, the Dayton Constitution has proven to be a rather effective conflict-prevention tool but a very ineffective tool of state-building and democracy-building. Its main deficiencies have been identified in the following points:

- It keeps promoting ethnic allegiances and clientelism rather than accountability;

- It acts as an obstacle to reconciliation processes since ethnical elites tend to see any cross-ethnic or non-ethnic initiative as undermining the basis of their power;

- It hinders the establishment of a professional and responsible public administration and has thus "frozen" a dysfunctional system of governance;

- It reproduces a hardly viable state.[6]

This is not to deny the utility of ethnic power-sharing in specific post-conflict situations but to point to its limits in democracy building, particularly in the medium and long term.

8. "Sub-continental secularism" as "soft multi-culturalism":

Multi-culturalism, as mentioned, can take much more flexible forms and can even be effectively combined with specific models of secularism. The multi-cultural model that affects the largest number of people and that has, at the same time, proven to be quite compatible with the requirements of an effective and vibrant democracy, seems to be the Indian one. Its "application tool" is defined by the Indian scholar Rajeev Bhargava as "sub-continental secularism" (since it really preceded the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947).

Bhargava[7] describes sub-continental secularism as one that does not pre-suppose (like the dominant – Western model) a total separation between religion and the state, one that is not constrained by the limited choice of being either "hostile to religion" or "passively respectful of religion". Based on the specific historical experience of India – a country characterised by diversity since time immemorial – sub-continental secularism would allow multiple modes of interference between the state and religious/ethnic communities with the intention, precisely to prevent social exclusion and correct inequalities in the status and treatment of citizens that may be the consequence of their belonging to a religious/ethnic group or to a sub-group within a larger group. The idea is that the state remains impartial, but this impartiality is an active one. Depending on the concrete circumstances the state is allowed to interfere in order to correct situations that are particularly demeaning or discriminating against some members of the society.

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[6] Adapted from "Democracy, Conflict and Human Security – Pursuing Peace in the 21st Century", International IDEA 2006, pages 173-175.
[7] See the Web page of International IDEA's Democracy Round Table on Democracy and Diversity held in Oslo, Norway on 12th July 2007: http://www.idea.int/roundtable.cfm

The political logic underpinning a civil law system that acknowledges and respects communal nuptial traditions and ceremonies, a system that establishes an elaborate quota mechanism to ensure political representation of "dalits" and other so called "scheduled and backward classes" probably responds to the same necessities. One also thinks of the practical political need to marry a century-old tradition of inter-communal tolerance and coexistence (by no means the only feature of Indian society) with modern concepts of plural democracy. The system seems to have worked relatively well in India, though it has not prevented periodic outbursts of inter-communal violence as evidenced by the 2003 Mumbai riots and many other similar events. As with other "diversity-management" policies, its applicability to other social and historical contexts is not to be taken for granted.

One of the most frequent critiques addressed to "multi-culturalism" – one that I tend to agree with – is that it takes cultural and ethnic differences and fault-lines as given and immutable. In doing so, it offers strong arguments to the most conservative elites within each ethnic or religious community, those who build their power and their authority on keeping their communities watertight and who reserve to themselves the voice of their collective "we". This also explains why multi-culturlism coexists quite well with very patriarchal societies.

9. Are there lessons to be learned?

In social sciences there is a broad understanding today that identities (ethnic, national and others) are essentially cultural constructs, imaginary and fictional[8]. They do, of course, produce very real effects, but remain themselves subject to change. It is striking to note how little this perception has permeated political debate and key political agencies in all parts of the world. The idea of social mobility is broadly accepted while the idea of ethnic mobility still needs to make its way into politics. Political programmes are still being built on the assumption of an immutable character of ethnic identities. Obviously, nothing is less certain in today's globalised world.

The above contradiction could probably be explained by several circumstances:

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[8] B.Anderson, E.Balibar, I.Wallerstein

- Ethnic identities are slower to change and have a stronger inertia than social status;

 - They are often "frozen" by the administrative and legal system (according to several researchers on the 1994 Rwandan genocide the introduction of ethnic classification on ID cards by the Belgian colonial government in 1933, has contributed to a rigid racial concept of group identity where it had not previously existed[9]);

- Finally, "ethnic allegiance" remains a key pillar of the nation state (the recent establishment in France of a new "State secretariat for immigration and *national identity"* is eloquent in that regard).

One hopes that these constraints will fade away in some foreseeable future and that people will also have more freedom to construct the identity of their choice by combining different cultural contents from whatever is available in their living environment and beyond.

In globalised mega-cities such as London, New York, Delhi or Mexico, this is already taking place without being attributable to specific "diversity-management" policies. Hybrid societies are emerging, ones in which ethnicity and religion occupy different places in each individual; in which multiple identities are a normal way of life. These multiple identities don't even have to be ranked by any pre-established order of importance and, as metaphorically expressed by Neil Aschersson, could better be presented in the form of a kaleidoscope than in the form of concentric circles[10].

If there are any lessons to be drawn from the successes and failures of different "diversity-management" practices (indeed, they seem to deserve the name of practices rather than coherent and well thought policies), they should be inspired by caution, humility and a permanent attention to the historical circumstances in which they have emerged and are being applied.

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[9] See in M.Mamdani: When victims become killers, Princeton University Press 2002

[10] Neil Ascherson: From multi-culturalism to where, Open Democracy website http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/2052

If inclusion is the objective, patterns and causes of exclusion should be explored, identified and addressed; this, rather than rigid and pre-established ideological frames should be a point of departure in the design of any "diversity management" policy.

Inclusion should be pursued at both individual and collective levels (as group inclusion) since patterns of exclusion may be both individual and collective.

Exclusion at national level may be sustained by adverse external factors. Therefore, inclusiveness is a feature of democracy that international democracy support should particularly seek to address.

The importance and role of different collective identities vary in time and in space; group identities should never be neglected and special protection should be offered to groups and minorities - victims of historical exclusion and/or discrimination.

On the other hand, collective identities, cultural or religious allegiances should not be taken as immutable features of society.

No ideal "diversity management" policy exists for all countries and all times. The balance between multiculturalism and integration, the free space for cultural "hybridity", mobility and fusions of cultural identities, should be allowed to evolve and to assume the contents and shapes that best suit a particular society and its citizens in any particular moment of its history.

The cause of inclusion has progressed slowly but steadily, through decolonisation, democratic reforms and broad mobilizations of citizens against racism, sexism and other forms of domination. We should be allowed to hope that future societies, in spite of the walls that continue being erected everywhere, will be more successful in freeing themselves from the domination by any single frame of self-centred cultural or ethnic references. Including by those that pretend to have reached "supra-ethnic" universality.