Interculturality, fluctuant identities and "dwelling mobility"
Intercultural educator's view

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THIRD SESSION. TRIPLE I : IMMIGRATION, IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION

Concepts

- **Interculturality –** guidelines for practice to follow in intercultural relations: framework of rights and responsibilities, where discrimination is outlawed, All sides should change, where difference is recognized, but similarities emphasized. (Wood, 2011)
- **Fluctuant identities,** defined through multiple interactions in diverse contexts.
- Ethnic groups often share cultural characteristics, but the same applies to families, socioeconomic groups, student corporations, etc., and cultures can even arise spontaneously through interaction (Corsaro & Johannessen,2007).

Concepts

- **Dwelling mobility** : term indicates both the "adventure" of being called into expansive existential possibilities, as well as "being-at-home-with" what has been given.

  This deepest possibility of well-being carries with it a feeling of rootedness and flow, peace and possibility. (Todres, Galvin, 2010).

Content/premise #1

- Emigration from Latvia and immigration to Latvia in the micro perspective, from the personal migrant's view could be analyzed through the **common acculturation challenges**.

- The purpose: to reach mutual understanding and avoid non - productive construction of differences and mainstreaming such into national policies**.**

Content/premise #2

- Diaspora and repatriation is basically associated with mono ethnic narratives: Latvians' or descendants' of Latvians.

- There are practically no narratives of Russian Latvians, Lithuanian Latvians, Jewish Latvians, for instance.

- For a healthy balance and truthful reflection of Latvia's ethnic composition it would be appropriate to bring some diversity into the mainstream Latvian diaspora.

Content/premise #3

- The very essence of the historic DIASPORA concept is grounded into the definition of PLACE/HOME

- I invite to look at the diaspora as mobility itself, as the *moving community,* community of "snails" in a very Latvian understanding? Snail is a creature, travelling with his home. This mode of living/moving with imaginary home I would like to call today „dwelling mobility".

- Displacement/homelessness vs. "Dwelling-mobility"(Todres, Galvin 2010).

Acculturation: common understanding

- Acculturation "comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups''

  (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936:149, quoted in Bourhis et al, 1997:368).

Acculturation: common understanding

- More recent theories of acculturation (Berry, 1997; Berry, 2005; Berry, 2009; Bourhis, 1997; Arends- Tóth & Van de Vijver, in press) share with earlier frameworks the idea that **a culture is to some extent homogenous and measurable entity that is shared by all members of an (ethnic) group** (the perspective of cross-cultural psychology (Valsiner, 2007)).

- Acculturation can be assessed on two dimensions: **degree of maintaining the original culture and identity** and **degree of participation in and contact with the new culture** (Berry, 1997)

Group identities,

- ...whether they are rooted in claims of belonging to national, relational, sexual, political, cultural, occupational or any other categories.

- *I do not claim to be free of (self)categorical thinking altogether, of course. However, I do believe that awareness of the constructed and imaginary nature of these categories can be a source of emancipation* (Lapina, 2009)

Alternative view

- The two groups (the minority and the "society at large") are viewed largely isolated from broader contexts, while it would only be logical to presume that globalization and increasing diversity affect the processes of acculturation and cultural exchange.

- *Process of change that takes place when groups or individuals come into contact with one another* (Lapina, 2009)

- By including the individual perspective, this perspective attempts to **balance the micro- and macro levels**, as well as direct the focus towards individual agency (Weinreich, 2009; Chirkov, 2009b), meaning-making (Baumann, 1999) and intentionality (Cresswell, 2009).

- By expanding the number of involved actors, acculturation is seen in a broader context.

Meet Asli (Turkey, in Latvia since 2011)

Asli's story: AIESEC matters

- My name is **Aslı Seven**. I am from Turkey. I came to Latvia on January 2011. My purpose of immigrating here was to study my Entrepreneurship and Management master degree at Riga Technical University.

- Being a student in Riga is great. You have many chances to be involved in different projects and organizations.

- Besides good things, there were also some difficulties to cope with such as immigration paper work which cost me a lot of money and time before coming here.

- After I came here, the harsh winter was so challenging.

- In the beginning I tried to make Latvian friends to understand the culture and environment but was not so easy to do so. They were reserved and not so socially oriented.

- Later I decided to join among them through an organization and now I am working in **AIESEC** and I have many Latvian friends. **They became almost my family here.**

Meet Linda (Latvia, in Denmark since 2004)

Linda's story:
"Foreigners, don´t leave us alone with the Danes!" :)

- Living in Denmark for more than 7 years, and moving across contexts characterized by different "ethnic" tags (e.g. predominantly Danish professional contexts; somewhat predominantly "foreigner" friendship contexts), my own nationality (both in the sense of citizenship and personal identification) has had many meanings. My "international" name and surname that Danes tend to find extravagant, **fluent Danish and whiteness have of course given a lot of flexibility** and influence as to how much I myself want to emphasize my "ethnic otherness"; and at the same time, particularly in my first years here, **I have felt myself hit by the nationalist discourse on "Eastern workers" as a negative phenomenon in the Danish labor market**.

- The most pertaining element of my experience, is the **contextuality and situatedness of ethnicity from context to context** and the sense of **belonging** as tied to different levels - in my case, more and more often the local (political) level: belonging to and through studying and **professional contexts, civic initiatives and practices embedded in local communities** (e.g. human rights NGO, volunteering at a community psychological counseling center, winter bathing club, gardening-collective).

Linda's story:
"Foreigners, don´t leave us alone with the Danes!" :)

- Most of the time, I do not experience myself as either Latvian or Danish, but have **the privilege of being an active participant in local community contexts** - a fact that also signals the luck I have had in being accepted as a legitimate participant - a privilege that, unfortunately, not all migrants share, but that has given me unique opportunities with regard to choosing my own positions.

- **The situated approach to ethnic categories** that as arisen from my experience is illustrated by a quote that used to be visible on posters and stickers in Copenhagen a couple of years ago:

- **"Foreigners, don´t leave us alone with the Danes!" :)**

Who qualifies as native?

- *"Ethnic boundaries are the outcome of the classificatory struggles and negotiations between actors situated in a social field"* (Wimmer, 2008b:937).

- Wimmer (2008a) proposes a taxonomy of strategies of boundary-shifting. Actors can shift a boundary by

- (1) redefining the criteria for inclusion into their own ethnic group and thus expanding or constricting the group;

- (2) modify boundaries by challenging the ethnic hierarchy (transvaluation)

- (3) altering one's own position regarding the boundary system (positional move)

- (4) or by emphasizing other, non-ethnic forms of belonging (blurring) (Ibid.).

What bothers "us" to accept "them"?

- For example, in some ex-Soviet countries reinforcing the image of the Russian as the outsider combined with discursive focus on (distorted) power dynamics (e.g. labeling present day Russian inhabitants as "colonists") goes hand in hand with mobilizing the national identity of the indigenous groups (Romanov, 2000).

- In Britain, the re-naming of a residential area in a minority language is similarly brought to the center of attention by the media and politicians in order to achieve the double objective of excluding "them" and consolidating the category of the insider, as marked by national identity (Blackledge, 2002).

Emancipated by Individualism

- The paradigm of individualism that is propagated by most theoreticians of late modernity (e.g. Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2000, but also Harman, 1988), as well as the media and the educational system, places the responsibility on the individual:

- emancipation from socially imposed norms and values in late modernity has made everyone the master of their own destiny.

Meet Natalia Tsarkova:

Natalia's story: humane egoism

- Riga born Natalia Tsarkova is an internationally known expert on digital media architecture and broadband content programming.

- She is one of the founders of entertainment channel I - Concerts HD, now available also for Latvian viewers on Lattelecom digital TV.

- Natalia graduated Magna Cum Laude from Harvard College, and holds a Master of Science degree from the MIT Media Lab.

Natalia's story: humane egoism

- Interview for Latvian weekly IR (28.03.2012):
- „I was studying and I am still working abroad, but I am involved in Latvia as well. In my opinion it is only logical for people to work and live abroad, but it is necessary to create the environment here, which could boost the home - coming intentions. I am planning to open my firm here. I have a daughter, two years old, and I wish she could come to Latvia, meet her grandparents. I would not use the patriotism slogan. It is either egoistic. Still it is humane above all. I think everybody who has acquired certain degree of education just wants to give something back to own country."

Home as an act of experience

- To paraphrase *Salman Rushdie*, all homes based on categories of belonging are imaginary homes, since the categories themselves are imaginary. Still it makes the source one construct own presence in diverse context of being.

- *A new definition of home.*

- *De - construction of* experience of up-rootedness and *"no direction home"*, caused by migration.

- The simultaneous uniqueness and connectedness of human experience.

- Spatial mobility is but one aspect of the motion that characterizes the dynamics of human lives today.

A new definition of home":
"you are my home"

- One can be strongly influenced by and feel extremely related to people one has never met directly, just as one can feel extremely alienated from relatives of blood or carriers of the same national, racial, sexual, political, (...) label.

- These are not new dynamics, but the number of people involved in and number of channels of cultural exchange has grown so rapidly that this multiplication of known patterns of exchange might be bringing about something that is in fact novel. (Lapina, 2009)

Displacement:

- Along with increased interconnectedness, globalization also implies increased awareness and partial reinforcement of fragmentation and inequalities.

- The colonial patterns of power are far from extinguished, and are arguably being reinforced by the channels of information and other forms of capital flow in the globalized world.

- It can be hypothesized that these power relations have important consequences for the individual experiences of homelessness/displacement. (Lapina, 2009)

The archeology of home(lesness)

- *To use a personal example, I have come to believe that my own homelessness has fundamentally arisen from the personal experiences of my childhood, embedded in the collective experiences of several centuries of subjugation and occupation of the Latvian people among whom I was born. Another factor is without doubt Latvia's political position as I was growing up, trying to establish itself in, but feeling inferior to other states of the European community. At the same time, "Latvian identity" was still constructed through upholding an "us/them" dichotomy, in contrast to "them, the Russians".*

The archeology of home(lesness)

- These personal experiences, embedded in historical and political factors is what left me without a valid construction of home, the subsequent moving across borders perhaps triggering and reinforcing, but not causing, the experience of homelessness. Partially between the lines, I have encountered the same combination of displacing factors in works of migrant literature, notably those of V. G. Naipaul and W. G. Sebald. **Oneself can be "at home" in a certain situation or mood, in company of someone, in an activity. Home becoming an act of experience.** (Lapina, 2009)

Macro: MIPEX 2010/LATVIA
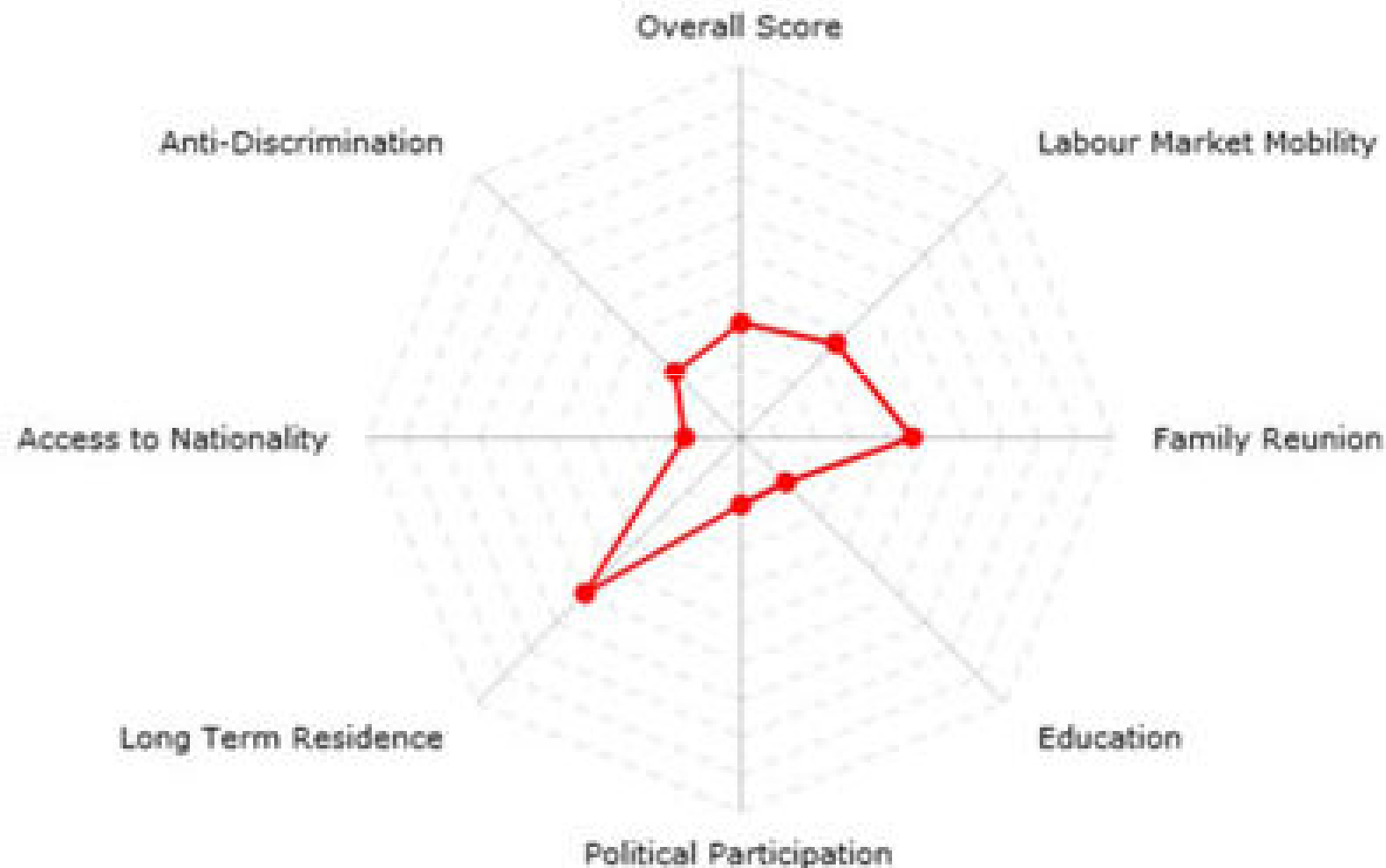
Alternative: polilogical politics:

- The Rights of Others (Benhabib ,2004)
- Double-track model of deliberative democracy (Benhabib, 2002):
- Maximum cultural contestation within the official public sphere, through social movements and the institutions of civil society;
- flexible acquisition and exercise of citizenship;
- models of institutional powersharing.

Individual and collective agencies in practice (Wood, 2011)

- Resourcing the places where cultures meet – and hybridise;

- Resourcing bridge-builders not gate-keepers

- A single, diverse public sphere

- Don't avoid conflict – expect it, manage it.

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Thank you!
Appreciate attention!

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