ENABLING AND DISABLING SPACES WITHIN MULTICULTURAL PROJECTS[1]

Abstract
This article focuses on the engagement of third sector actors in service provision within the multicultural projects. There is a specific interest in how the expertise and knowledge of migrant NGOs and experts of migrant background are engaged in and part of service provision. According to the author, "good multiculturalism" could be characterised as listening. On the one hand, listening refers to openness to different kinds of knowledge and expertise, and on the other, to sensitivity and awareness of structural questions in relation to raciality and ethnicity. Neoliberal practices of projectification are an essential part of service provision that is discussed in the article. Therefore, service provision needs to be discussed in this context. The article concludes by considering the implications of individualism prevalent in much work on "integration" and "multiculturalism".

Salla Tuori*

Swedish School of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland

A man looks directly at you in a television screen. He poses a series of questions:

> Where are you from? How did you end up here? Do you know who will win the war in Iraq? Where were you during the first war? What's going on there right now? […] Are you a Muslim? Sunni or Shiia? Are you happy with the new situation? Do you think it is impolite to give something with the left hand? How do they treat women in Iraq? Can women go to bar? Can women drink? Can women go out? What do women wear? Do all women wear those funny veils? What does it feel to ride a camel? Freedom, how does it taste? Are you happy about the new situation? Did Saddam really live in all these palaces? Did Saddam have weapons of mass destruction? Where is he hiding them? Do you drink any alcohol in Iraq? Do you use any drugs? You don't look like one from Iraq. By the way, I heard they all speak the same language, there's no difference, it's all the same, all Arabs. Is it true that they cut the hands of the thieves? What do you think about the treatment of prisoners in Iraq? Do you think it's fair? Do you think it's ok? What do you think?

The questions are posed right after each other, in a quick pace and neutral tone. This is part of an installation "Cold interrogation" (2004) by a Finnish-Iraqi artist, Adel Abidin[2]. Some of his work, such as this, directly deals with aspects of living as Muslim and Arab in "western world" as he describes the work. I would describe Adel Abidin's work as political. With political, I mean that he poses questions of ethics and morals to the viewer, and shows complexities and ambiguities related to negotiations of differences. The racialised and culturalised relations that are exposed, hinted or sometimes twisted in his work are filled with power, while not reducible to hierarchical power relations. The questions of the interrogation are familiar, and the artist's display and performance show the absurdness, harshness and stereotype-ness of these questions.

Multicultural encounters are informed, and often disinformed by different kinds of presuppositions. These relate to knowledge. The questions, such as "how do they treat women in Iraq", includes an understanding of how things supposedly are. These could be named as misunderstandings, but more often it is about misknowledge. This means knowledge that can be easily shown as false or at least heavily biased, while it is knowledge that one has been committed to.

I suggest that "good multicultural politics" could be understood as listening (Tuori 2012). Abidin's work "Cold interrogation" is a form of anti-listening. Different forms of non-listening, which are not as overtly violent, are part of mundane multicultural encounters. Listening can also refer to sensitivity to conditions and structures (Back 2007; Ahmed 2000). In this talk I will look at project politics through questions of knowledge and listening.

I am interested in engagement of third sector in production of welfare services in relation to integration of migrant people. Kathleen Valtonen (2001: 251) has defined integration to signify "the ability to take part fully in society, implying unimpeded participation in society and the access or openness of institutions to all members of society."

* E-mail: salla.tuori@helsinki.fi

I am interested in how the expertise and knowledge of migrant NGOs and experts of migrant background are engaged in, and part of service provision. My starting point is that migrant NGOs and experts of migrant background hold the kind competences and experiences that are needed in service provision (also Valtonen 2001). Recruitment of people of migrant background is also a question of equality and social justice.

Third sector participation in service provision is organised primarily through different kinds of projects. Thus, the focus here is on projects that are run by third sector organisations or aim to engage third sector in production of welfare services. Projects conducted at public sector institutions with no proper engagement of third sector participants therefore fall out of scope for this paper, even if these have also been part of the empirical data and provide with contextual and to some extent, contrastive analysis. I define "projects" as the objects of my study. It could also have been NGOs or associations. However, "project" is a more precise context as the focus here is on such NGO work (most often funded as projects), which contributes to production of welfare services.

The paper is based on material and findings from two studies. I have studied multicultural project work for 10 years. I conducted an ethnographical study in 2002–2004 in an employment project for migrant women (Tuori 2009). Between 2010 and 2012, I have conducted expert interviews in the field of multicultural projects in the local context of Turku.

1   Expertise and knowledge

I will first examine the engagement of third sector actors in service provision. The unused possibilities and unused knowledge of the NGOs was brought up in all interviews with project professionals of migrant background. On the one hand, the professionals were calling for outsourcing of service provision. NGOs could offer counselling and labour market related courses among other activities. One NGO is striving for the establishment of a nursing home for elderly migrants. On the other hand, they talked about embedding the NGOs in decision-making in integration policies. When third sector actors are not integrally part of the decision-making process in the municipality, it means that the expertise of the NGOs and their projects are lost and left unused. It also means that the migrant communities do not have a clear voice in the planning of welfare politics (see also Valtonen 2001: 253). Even if there are many complexities, even impossibilities, to how the "voices" of the migrant communities become represented through NGOs, some kind of politics of representation are however necessary.

This was framed in the following way by an interviewee with long experience in migrant NGOs (interview no. 5, March 2012):

> ST: How do you see the cooperation between authorities and NGOs at the moment?
> Interviewee: I think the municipality is a little limited, still thinking about their own work. I don't think they really believe that it is possible to work through NGOs and that it also helps them. […] The authorities still have prejudices. They do their own work.

Forms of cooperation between third sector actors and public sector actors in Finland have been analysed and discussed by Miikka Pyykkönen (2007) and Sanna Saksela-Bergholm (2009) in their respective research projects on immigrant associations. To discuss third sector participation in the production of welfare

services mobilizes profound questions on the role of public sector and the division of labour between third sector, private and public sectors.

One argument, and a strong one, is that the welfare state *should* take care of service provision. The slot machine association, RAY, took the stance that they do not fund such activities, which fall under the responsibility of municipalities. This has affected NGOs possibilities to gain funding or at least the kind of funding applications they make. Also Sanna Saksela-Bergholm (2009: 284–285) discusses the dangers of third sector as service provider from the point of view of equal access to health care and social services as well as potential instability of third sector organisations. She calls for closer cooperation between authorities and NGOs and outlines that immigrant associations could fill an expressive function and provide with culture specific information for the authorities. Projectification is part of neoliberal policies and weakened public sector (Koskiaho 2008). However, from the perspective of migrant communities and broadened decision-making, a mere critique of the neoliberal condition is not enough.

The effect of lack of cooperation, joint projects and decision-making is that most of the experts of migrant background are seldom consulted in work for integration. As Kathleen Valtonen (2001: 259) notes, there are few employees of migrant background in the public sector provision of social services. She also points out that the role of community organizations is unclear and little initiative has been made to include them into the service provision arena. In the law on the domiciling of migrants these are however mentioned. Thus, the result is that experts of migrant background are marginalised from service provision and design of integration services. The findings of my study therefore support Valtonen's claim about the importance of re-examining the state-third sector and professional – paraprofessional divide.

One of the results of my earlier ethnography was that migrant women's knowledge was not always heard as knowledge, but for instance named as feelings or experiences (Tuori 2009). When knowledge is named as feelings and experiences, it loses its claim to universality and fact-ness. This happened for instance in relation to knowledge of racism or raciality in the Finnish context. A knowledge claim has a different role and weight than an expression of experience or feeling. It seems that the same kind of naming, or understanding is at stake also in larger project politics. NGOs expertise and work is acknowledged as important and valuable, but still not properly engaged with; not taken seriously, not seen as knowledge.

This non-listening happens on different levels. On one level, it is about the kind of "lip-service" that Pasi Saukkonen (2012) has analysed in Finnish multicultural policies on a general level. It might look good to talk about third sector participation and the engagement of migrant communities, while it never has meant to be a serious agenda. On another level, it is about more subtle or unconscious forms of non-listening. It is these forms of non-listening that I will reflect upon here.

Listening as multicultural politics requires the will and ability to listen also to such things that are unfamiliar, or come in an unfamiliar form. It is not only about listening to individual people, but also about listening to structures and conditions. It is crucial to be able to analyse differently racialised positions and also ways to position in the – sometimes ambiguous – divide between professionals and activists.

To enter into dialogue, and to listen, might require time, but first and foremost it requires will and commitment. I turn again to Kathleen

Valtonen's (2001, 260) analysis of social service provision. She has pointed out that it would be "vital to engage in strategies for fighting barriers to participation" in social work. Further on, she calls for readiness to intervene at policy level and adopt anti-discrimination and anti-oppressive approaches. In order to redefine the terms of inclusion of migrants, it is crucial with policy interventions and macro-level analysis. However, this kind of tradition in social work is weak in Finland.

A structural analysis could also enable listening. One recurring framework of thinking in integration discourses is to understand integration work as "helping the migrants". To really listen requires an alteration of this framework of thinking. Even if social workers, or other service providers whether in projects, NGOs or municipality, help the individual migrant that they are working with at that very moment, to cast migrants as a group to be "helped" is problematic. To alter this constellation requires an analysis of one's own position, and even more challenging, it requires politics that make hegemonic positions truly deconstructed. It is not enough to make hegemonic positions visible, to show (or expose) their existence, but their normative character needs to be properly analysed. Let me illustrate this with the help of a debate over so-called whiteness studies within postcolonial feminism. There has been increased interest in examining whiteness as racial category, to make it visible and to study the norm and the hegemonic. However, and now I turn to Irene Molina (2010) for an analysis, studying whiteness is often left half-way. Whiteness is acknowledged as a racial category and as an identity, but not properly analysed *as a norm*.

When a normative category is made visible but not deconstructed, it makes possible to stay comfortably within the position of privilege. Molina analyses compassion for the other as the paternalist and "nice" side of colonialism. To feel for those in need, is possible from a position of privilege, a position from above.

In discussion of Finnish relations to colonialism, Ulla Vuorela (2009) writes about learning to feel pity for the poor as a colonial feeling. Now, there is not much of critical examination of whiteness in Finnish multicultural politics. But there is a lot of helping, guiding and feeling for. In Irene Molinas (2010, 81) words, the paternalist and nice side of colonialism, is the one that "tolerates and includes, which gives a hand and assists, but which does not revolt, which does not rise in rebellion against the power structures that reinforce whiteness and its privileges." (my translation).

Listening understood as I do it here therefore means decolonizing forms of understanding. It means that we need to decolonize knowledge production. The basic assumptions that lie behind "helping the migrants" relate to the formative understandings of Europe as the locus of modernity, and also superiority. To let go of this perception is both a necessity and a challenge. Those of us who are trained in social sciences have learned to analyse society in ways that include a disconnection between colonialism and modernity. Thus, we need to learn to analyse modernity and ideas related to the modern society being dependent on colonialism. In Walter Mignolo's (2007: 466) words:

> From the Caribbean, you see that modernity not only needed coloniality but that coloniality was and continues to be constitutive of modernity. There is no modernity without coloniality. From England, you see only modernity and, in the shadow, the 'bad things' like slavery, exploitation, appropriation of land, all of which will supposedly be 'corrected' with the 'advance of modernity' and democracy (e.g., today's US policy in Iraq) when all arrive at the stage in which justice and equality will be for all.

2 Structural problems and individual people

My interviews are rich with talk about "migrants". I have interviewed people who work to help other migrants to find job or education, to deal with social services or authorities, people who are in charge of NGOs and people who work at municipalities. According to the interviews, it seems that migrants' "abilities" need to be enhanced. Migrants are portrayed often as lacking abilities in relation to work, language or knowledge of the society, and the task of the projects is to help participants overcome these shortcomings. This way of talking was surprisingly dominant among otherwise heterogeneous group of interviewees.

One reason for this is in the way the projects are working with individual migrants and seeing their task as helping them to gain access to the labour market. A tradition of anti-racist or anti-discrimination policies is weak in the Finnish context (e.g. Valtonen 2001). On a level of discourses and statements, there is some awareness of structural questions, while practices and working methods are highly individualized. In project work that emphasizes "empowerment" of the participants and "activation of migrants" easily cast individual migrants as the agents of change. This happens often in a way that leaves unattended the way in which society and culture are constituted by racialised structures.

Multicultural politics have been criticized for their lack of interest in the effects of social structures. Familiarly enough, emphasis on culture and particularly cultural differences puts focus on the characteristics of migrants (not necessarily individual, but collective) and provide with culture as an explanation. As many researchers have shown, many of the questions that are dealt with in relation to integration, particularly labour market, have more to do with social structures than with features of the migrants (e.g. Wrede & Nordberg 2010). From the point of view of project politics, one could ask how can the structural aspects of migrancy be taken into account in the work with individual migrants. And, formulated somewhat differently, what might be "individuals' potential to act as subjects within the structures of society, institutional practices and current ideologies" to quote Paulina de los Reyes and Diana Mulinari (de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005: 16, my translation)?

Project work is precarious work. A project needs to secure for future funding and project employees need to secure following employment in the following project. This results in strategic ways of speaking. Too discomforting ways of framing problems are perhaps not possible. An essential feature of precarious conditions is that they are seen as particular, individual situations widely different from each other (Precarias a la deriva 2004). As the collective Precarias a la deriva point out, sex worker, translator, call center worker and PhD student do not necessarily find common cause for a fight. The project employee of migrant background, her or his client who moves between traineeship, courses and unemployment and university researcher both share and do not share their differently precarious conditions. There are vast differences in possibilities relating to different positions in intersections of class, race, gender or national status, while there are contact zones in relation to character of the labour. As a university researcher, I can relate to many of the realities of project employees also on the level of experiences. However, I can not say that I have been in the "same" situation despite precarious character of work as our conditions of employment are in many other ways different. The project employee and her/his client might share some of the racialised conditions, but be divided in relation to access to the society through work and position.

Also Raija Julkunen (2008) asks why do we go to therapy as a result of burnout rather than mobilize politically in order to fight the conditions. As part of neoliberal politics, precarious conditions are often analysed in individual ways. We need to see that integration is not a question of helping individuals, but of social justice, equality and freedom. As a more concrete claim, NGOs and experts of migrant background need to be seriously included in the work for integration. As they are working now, with scarce, short-term and precarious funding, they are left with the possibility of working with individual migrants. It leaves the NGOs to do peripheral work, as their knowledge is not seriously engaged with.

Salla Tuori, PhD, is Senior lecturer at the Swedish School of Social Sciences University of Helsinki. Her research fields are contemporary multiculturalism, migration and gender from postcolonial and feminist perspectives. Her recent publications include a co-edited
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Notes

1. The article is based on a lecture held at the Nordic Migration Research Conference Immigrants and Civil Society: 16th Nordic Migration Research Conference & 9th ETMU Days, 13-15 August 2012 University of Turku, Finland.
2. http://www.adelabidin.com/index.php/works/2004/cold-interrogation.html

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