

The Ethical Dimensions of Dialogue Between Policymakers: Learning Through Interaction Over Migrant Integration Dilemmas

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This article explores how dialogue between policymakers from different countries can help generate learning which responds to the dilemmas they face when seeking to integrate migrants more fully within local communities. These dilemmas include reducing prejudice and discrimination between those who don't want to interact, and building collective belonging whilst valuing the complexity of diverse individual identities. The article highlights ways in which the ethical dimensions of the dialogue process can interact with the ethical dimensions of the issues under discussion within such policymakers' dialogues. In the process, the article demonstrates how research which adopts dialogical approaches, whilst being critically aware of these ethical dimensions, can help to address the gaps and limitations in existing policymakers' understandings, by generating improved exchanges of learning.

Key words: Dialogue ethics, policy, learning integration dilemmas

Introduction

Dialogue is frequently promoted as a way to enable learning to take place among a wide range of participants from different backgrounds, who bring diverse understandings with them to the dialogic encounter. This article begins from Bohm et al's (1991) premise that:

Dialogue, as we are choosing to use the word, is a way of exploring the roots of the many crises that face humanity today. It enables inquiry into, and understanding of, the sorts of processes that fragment and interfere with real communication between individuals, nations and even different parts of the same organization.

This article explores the potential of dialogue to enhance the learning generated in exchanges between policymakers from different local and national contexts over prominent issues and 'crises', drawing on a case study example involving the controversial field of migrant integration policies. Various kinds of exchanges between policymakers have long formed a common feature of international

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networks established to enable the transfer of policy learning on such issues across different contexts, with exchanges between these contexts often facilitated by ‘policy entrepreneurs’ who support the learning process involved (Stone 2001). However, as Stone and many others have highlighted, critical questions can be asked about this learning process, including the power dynamics involved and the transferability of particular policies and practice interventions between such diverse contexts. This is particularly true in policy fields such as migrant integration, where responses within any particular context are highly debated, even without contextual and cultural differences to consider, and are complicated by the emotive and political nature of much public debate. This has led leading researchers, such as Penninx and Scholten (2009, 4), to describe migration policy as an ‘intractable policy controversy’, whilst calling for research that provokes critical reflection among policy actors which:

... fully recognises the multiplicity of knowledge claims in this policy field and the difficulties for policymaking in such contested settings. The role of social research can reach beyond that of speaking truth to power. It can promote a ‘making sense together’ by helping policymakers reflect critically on policy alternatives and their possible consequences.

In this context, this article begins by considering the existing contributions made by various forms of international exchanges between policymakers concerning migrant integration. It goes on to highlight the importance of generating deeper exchanges that incorporate more critical mutual reflection by using dialogical approaches which can contribute to this ‘making sense together’. One particular series of dialogical events that were facilitated by the author, which involved European policymakers exploring migrant integration policies together, is then used as a case study to explore the potential of dialogical approaches to generate collaborative learning as part of wider research. In engaging with policymakers as active agents within the policymaking process, this article follows Freeman et al (2011) in considering the way that policymakers’ everyday practice involves interacting actions, norms, knowledge and rationales as they engage with the messiness of the policymaking process. As a result, I argue that deeper critical reflection and learning can be created by proactively facilitating learning spaces in which policymakers engage in dialogue over their practice and explore the everyday ethical issues that they face, especially in those situations where they face dilemmas. Like all action-oriented research, research that involves creating opportunities for and the facilitation of such deeper dialogical learning processes inherently involves moral, political and ethical dimensions (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). In this case, these dimensions include how those involved come to determine what a ‘good’ policy response to the issues raised by migration may be, and the impact of any dialogue on participants’ future actions. These dimensions are also present in the way that the dialogue itself is carried out, including the ways in which the process is facilitated and that diverse

perspectives from different contexts are brought together.

The particular dialogues considered in this article involved policymakers from a range of different countries, including the UK, where widespread continuing attempts have been made to develop policies which support the integration of migrants within them. These developments in integration policies have occurred in response to complex trends, including significant rises in the numbers of people moving across state boundaries, debates over the effectiveness of border controls, and concerns about the impact of migration on existing local communities, as well as on the welfare of those moving (Spencer 2011). Particular concerns have arisen from an increased awareness of diversity within state boundaries, and the potential fragmentation of patterns of social relationships among groups and individuals within particular contexts (Cantle 2005). However, migrant integration policies have often proved controversial. They have been criticised (from a range of different perspectives) in terms of their principles, underlying policy aims and understandings, and their effectiveness in practice (Sales 2007; Spencer 2011). This is arguably because policies relating to migration bring to the surface a range of broader underlying transnational tensions about changing understandings of citizenship, national identity and belonging in an increasingly globalised world. In the process, they also embody significant wider controversies about how diverse individuals and groups might live together justly and peacefully within shared local communities (Sacks 2002; O'Neill 2010). Such debates are inherently ethical in nature, involving the consideration of values and social norms, both in themselves and in how different perspectives concerning them might be discussed (Parekh 2006, especially 264-294).

The Existing Contribution of Learning Exchanges to European Migration Policy, and Related Challenges

Deliberation between diverse perspectives is at the heart of a range of political processes within democratic societies, and deliberative exchanges between different politicians and civil servants who play key roles in shaping public policy are part of this broader picture (Escobar 2011). The particular policy field of migrant integration is no exception to this, with exchanges between policy-makers both within and between different countries having contributed significantly to previous collective learning and policy development in this field. The particular series of dialogue events that will be introduced in this article took place in a wider international and historic context in which policy attempts to manage migration have proliferated at many levels (Geiger and Pécoud 2010). Migrants' rights have developed increased recognition (at least in principle) building on foundational international frameworks, such as various United Nations' declarations and the European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe 2010). Such

frameworks are profoundly ethical in themselves, of course, as they state explicitly (in the language of ‘rights’) those values on which these international agreements have been reached about both ‘*what is right*’ and ‘*how different ‘rights’ might relate together*’. These agreements are not static, but are the subject of ongoing discussions, as the contexts and agendas of related political actors change. For example, as Geddes (2008) extensively documents, ongoing European integration processes have continued to raise controversies on migration and integration issues for member states. Existing responses to these issues have been tested by the pressures of migration from outside the European Union, perceived differential patterns of dealing with migration between existing member states, and the joining of each new state. This has led to a complex Europe-wide structural developmental process (Rosenow 2009), in which multilateral political discussions have continued to play a significant part (Mendez 2012), resulting in further common policy statements and shared principles being carefully agreed (e.g. Commission of the European Communities 2005; Taran 2008). However, underlying these practical developments and common statements on rights, there remain substantial cultural, political and philosophical differences between the responses of different states, not least concerning their understandings of citizenship and how difference is managed within their polities. There also remain substantial differences in terms of the degree to which rights and related understandings have been implemented at national and local levels, as a range of related indices show; for example, see data from the Migrant Integration Policy Index (Migration Policy Group 2013), which shows widespread disparities between different areas and polities.

These developments have led to a substantial *growth in multi-national networks* of initiatives that are sharing related local and national experiences across Europe and more widely. Examples of such networks include the ‘European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policies for Migrants’ (European Commission 2013a) and, more globally, the ‘Cities of Migration’ network (Maytree 2013). Other networks have collaboratively sought to develop new conceptual and practical approaches that are based on members’ experiences, such as the ‘Intercultural Cities’ network (Council of Europe 2013). Some networks have developed shared resources which have been made more widely available, such as the ‘European Website on Integration’, developed by the ‘National Contact Points on Integration’ network (European Commission 2013b). Another example is the European Commission’s *Handbook on Integration for Policy-Makers and Practitioners*, now in its third edition (Niessen and Huddleston 2010). This handbook contains mutual learning on the support that policymakers can provide for the processes of migrant transition, such as language support, introductory information and welcoming, access to employment and education, and the co-ordination of services at local, national and European levels. Such resources seek to embody the collective outcomes of learning

from previous dialogues between policymakers on key practical policy areas that have been identified as being important.

In this context of an increased sharing of experiences, a key challenge has been *how to deepen the learning exchanges between those involved in substantially-different contexts*. Despite policymakers and practitioners promoting their own examples of 'best practice' initiatives to build positive relationships between different individuals and groups within local communities, robust comparative evaluations of such initiatives and their wider effects have not always been available (e.g. see Stephan and Stephan 2005). Furthermore, even when evidence of an approach's success in one context does become available, there can be substantial difficulties in transferring the insights which made this successful to alternative contexts. These potential difficulties and limitations of more superficial exchanges highlight the continued need for the more systematic and deeper comparisons of initiatives from abroad, including why they work or don't work in particular places, as well as more integrated ways to combine examples with other systemic evidence (Ettelt et al. 2012).

In this article, I will argue that these limitations also highlight the need for a more dialogical approach, in which those involved in different contexts can critically and comparatively explore their learning *in the context of deeper dialogue and relationships with each other*. This is important because attempts that focus on sharing particular project ideas or policy measures as the primary means to promote improved integration can miss the everyday practical learning of policymakers and practitioners about *how* and *why* these ideas or policy measures work in particular contexts. Furthermore, in merely attempting to share examples of 'good practice', there is a risk that valuable learning is lost from those initiatives which were perceived to have less positive effects, and/or why approaches that work in one context may be more problematic in others. Engaging in improved critically-comparative dialogue over controversial policy arenas within migrant integration may help policymakers to become more aware of how their own context and cultural/political assumptions are influencing (and perhaps limiting) the options available to them in responding to these difficult policy challenges. This dialogue may also point to improved approaches which take the complexity and inter-related nature of the challenges for policy-makers in this field more seriously. These include significant research challenges concerning how systematic comparison of data and interventions are engaged, how different levels of analysis and action on these issues (from interpersonal/local to global) are integrated, and how interdisciplinary learning to support this process is brought together (Penninx et al. 2008).

Furthermore, these challenges take place within complex and highly political processes in which the *relationship between policy and research evidence* is particularly

contested and fraught with ethical difficulties. Despite the continued use of political rhetoric that claims ‘evidence-based policy-making’, the relationship between research evidence and migrant integration policy is complex and far from clear (Penninx and Scholten 2009). Indeed, some commentators have questioned whether the process is more akin to ‘policy-based evidence-making’, in which policy-makers use their power to sponsor research to generate findings that support their pre-determined policy positions (European Commission 2009, 35). Such debates form part of a broader set of ‘boundary troubles’ at the academic-policy interface, where research seeks to contribute to policy debates as part of a complex governance landscape in which the use of research ‘evidence’ by policymakers is itself part of debates about power and whose voices are heard (Newman 2011; Stevens 2011). In politically-charged public debates about migration, mass media also play an influential role in integration. This includes not only affecting public opinion and everyday interactions (Niessen and Huddleston 2010, 25-47), but also shaping policies developed in response to public or media owners’ opinions in ways that can be biased and are not necessarily evidence-based (European Commission 2009, 35-36). Given all of these challenges, developing a critical process that both problematises the ways in which power may be affecting these relationships and creates opportunities for deeper dialogue at multiple levels is particularly important.

This Case Study: Introducing the Participants and Process

It was in response to these persistent challenges that the participative dialogical process of this particular research case study was designed. It aimed to address a common desire amongst the participants to generate deeper mutual learning that would help them to address continuing inequalities and divisions among migrants and others across the local and national levels. The collaborative process began with the European Committee on Migration (‘CDMG’) of the Council of Europe in 2009, when this Committee engaged the author to explore innovative ways of improving policy approaches to migrant integration. A process was subsequently designed in collaboration with this Committee which was initially carried out between 2009-2010 (Orton 2010). This included a participative conference held over 2 days in Barcelona in September, 2009, which drew together 35 experts with experience of the policy-making process from different countries across Europe and sought to engage them in dialogue with each other. The policymakers involved in this particular dialogue process came from countries with diverse experiences of migration, including Armenia, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the UK.

The process critically explored the experiences of these policymakers in designing and implementing effective integration policies within their own policy contexts. It did this by proactively creating space for dialogue in which individual perspectives

could be shared with others engaged in similar roles in a comparative European context and in the context of wider interdisciplinary research. Facilitated participatory approaches (described in more detail below) created opportunities for interactions between participants that stimulated deeper dialogue by drawing on their experiences in different contexts and understandings from different disciplinary approaches.

The understanding of dialogue used within this process recognised the diversity of theoretical and practical approaches to dialogue and deliberation that have been proposed, not seeking to exclusively follow any one particular model, but seeking to draw them together pragmatically in a similar manner to that subsequently outlined by Escobar (2011). The process involved elements of both dialogue and deliberation, with a focus on dialogue, but with an awareness that each participant, as a policymaker, was in the position of having to make concrete practical, evaluative and ethical decisions in their daily jobs. Hence, the process included a shared endeavour to critically evaluate their diverse experiences and policy approaches that were located within particular contexts which could then be discussed in the light of wider experience and research. Participants also sought to consider what tentative recommendations they might helpfully make based on their experience of this dialogue for others who had not been part of this process to consider.

The resulting process centred around a process of collaborative inquiry, in which participants sought, through the dialogical process, to learn and create new understandings together in response to their own struggles, whilst seeking to be responsible for their own learning and the actions arising from it (Bray et al. 2000). The role of the researcher within this process, working collaboratively with the participants, was to design and facilitate the conference and other related discussions as learning spaces that enabled shared learning to take place through individual and collective critical reflection on experience, whilst building relationships of understanding between participants across diversity. The facilitation approach taken sought to embody Palmer's (1998, 74-77) paradoxes of designing and facilitating learning processes in such spaces; for example:

1. by being both bounded (by shared concerns/questions) and open (to new learning, which may challenge the assumptions behind our questions and lead us to better frames of understanding);
2. by being hospitable (welcoming, with appropriate safeguards, such as the ground rules agreed at the start of the process about how any information shared would be used) and 'charged' (with the risk of change inherent in any learning process);
3. by respecting the integrity of participants' own learning journeys, whilst

setting them within a community through ‘a dialogical exchange in which our ignorance can be aired, our ideas tested, our biases challenged, and our knowledge expanded, an exchange in which we are not simply left alone to think our own thoughts’ (Palmer 1998, 76);

4. by inviting the voice of the individual (from their own perspectives/experience) and the group, seeking to bring these individual voices into dialogue with each other and making time within the process to ‘listen for what the group voice is saying and to play that voice back from time to time so that the group can hear and even change its collective mind’ (Palmer 1998, 76);
5. by honouring the ‘little’ stories of the individual and the ‘big’ stories of the disciplines’ (Palmer 1998, 76), by critically and reflectively considering together what the relationships might be between individual experience and academic bodies of research on related topics (such as identity and inter-group relations, for example).

Prior to the conference, participants had sent in initial contributions relating to their experiences that had helped to shape the agenda and process. Practically, the conference began with participative exercises that encouraged participants to share their diverse experiences of how their contexts were affecting migrant integration, before discussing the similarities and differences between their contexts and responses with each other. A range of questions and activities were then used to stimulate deeper sharing of individual experiences and understandings. For example, in one activity, participants were initially asked to describe practical actions that had positive effects and those that had hindered the integration of migrants in their context, and to note these on sticky notes. Participants were then asked to: (i) group similar contributions together; (ii) ask for further information on any written contributions which were not clear; and (iii) consider whether they thought the ideas suggested would have the same effect in their local context, and if so, why? If not, why not? The resulting small group discussions were carefully facilitated using open questions to enable comparative learning from the different contributions made. Where disagreement was encountered, this presented an opportunity for the facilitator to encourage participants to ask further questions of each other in order to explore the reasons for this, helping to build deeper relationships and understanding of contributory factors, and hence to generate deeper learning. Detailed notes concerning the dialogue from small group discussions were taken. These were supported by other contributions written directly by the participants during the participative exercises as ways to record the dialogue process. Translators assisted in selected sessions to support the dialogue processes where necessary. The findings from individual exercises and small group discussions were then tested

against the experiences of the whole group of participants to explore whether they resonated with this wider experience or whether any points made needed further discussion. Short presentations summarising related academic theory and evidence from a range of related disciplines, as well as the experience of particular case study cities, were interwoven between these interactive discussions, to encourage critical engagement with wider theory and learning. The process was designed to engage with the issues at progressively deeper levels, moving on to tackle questions of how belonging might be developed, before considering the dilemmas policymakers faced within their work on these issues.

At the end of this process, participants developed a wide range of practical actions which they proposed to undertake for themselves as a result of their learning (see the full report; Orton 2010, 85-87). In addition, the collective recommendations which arose from this process led to a recommendation to all member states of the Council of Europe being adopted (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe 2011). Subsequently, further presentations and discussions were held at various related European conferences and meetings in 2011-12 and a guide for policy-makers and practitioners was developed to assist others in engaging with these findings (Orton 2012). Together, these illustrate (through the experience of this particular case) the potential of this dialogue-based approach to generate findings useful to the wider policy development process.

Exploring Dilemmas as a Way of Deepening Dialogue

As noted above, a key feature of the approach adopted within this dialogue process (which was instrumental in leading to this range of impact) was asking policymakers to consider their *challenges and dilemmas* in implementing policies to build migrants' belonging in their respective countries. During the two day workshop, this element was designed to emerge gradually from the dialogue process, as tensions between different contributions were collectively identified. Towards the middle of the second day, participants were invited to share their own personal dilemmas, once their relationships with each other had started to become more established. This approach of using challenges and dilemmas to stimulate dialogue drew on developed literature that explores dilemmas for practitioners (e.g. social workers and community workers) which deliberately seeks to engage with the ethical dimensions of their work (e.g., Banks 2004, 2013; Hoggett et al 2009). It was also founded on the author's earlier research that explored how such practitioners deal with everyday challenges and dilemmas in relation to cultural and religious diversity (e.g. Orton 2007, 2008).

Within this broader literature, dilemmas have often been understood as being 'a choice between two equally unwelcome alternatives – when it seems that "whatever

I do will be wrong” (Banks 2013). Within the dilemmatic spaces created by being in this position (and the related everyday decision-making practices that people adopt to respond to them), ‘values can provide a crucial resource for navigating a terrain that is ambiguous, shifting and contested’, as Hoggett et al (2009, 9) argue. Such spaces thus open up a moral and ethical landscape in which participants have to develop responses for ‘handling the everyday dilemmas that policy does not provide the solution for’, as Hagelund (2010, 79) describes in related research with local practitioners in Norway.

By focusing dialogue on areas of policy and practice where all responses appear to be problematic to those involved, the reasons *why* current policy frameworks and responses are understood to be limited, inadequate or compromised in their implementation can be explored by those directly involved in the policymaking process. In the context of comparative dialogue, many ‘blind-spots’ in participants’ understandings were revealed as their previously-hidden assumptions and cultural biases in their approaches to these issues became more self-apparent, enabling alternatives to be seen and discussed. However, this potential learning can only be fully realised by creating safe spaces within which policymakers can acknowledge and reflect together on these ethical and dilemmatic dimensions and how they relate to the policymaking process, whilst doing so in light of wider evidence and in dialogue with other important voices (including those most affected by the policies concerned).

The potential for the wider applicability of this approach was also illustrated by the use of this process in several other workshops and discussions with policy-makers and/or practitioners that have been held across Europe since 2009 as part of different events attended by the author. These have included a workshop co-organised by the author with Daniel de Torres from Barcelona, Spain, and Helena Rojas from Botkyrka, Sweden, at the Intercultural Cities Milestone Event in Dublin, 2013. A related strategy for using dilemmas to develop learning more locally had also been independently developed in Botkyrka, further illustrating the potential transferability and contribution of this type of approach into different situations and with different participants.

To further explore and illustrate the potential for learning from dialogue over dilemmas, I will now consider two key examples of dilemmas that face policy-makers which arose in the research. In exploring the ethical dimensions of these further, I will show how the dialogical approach taken in relation to both comparative experience and multi-level inter-disciplinary research helped to deepen understandings about potential responses to them. They also both reflect areas where dialogue studies can contribute to ongoing development of practice. The particular dilemmas discussed relate to ways to reduce prejudice and discrimination where people do not wish

to be involved in activities designed to achieve this, and how feelings of common belonging can be built across diverse populations whilst recognising the complexity of people's multiple identities in contemporary society.

Dilemma 1: How Can Prejudice and Discrimination Be Reduced If People Don't Want to Be Involved in Interaction with Each Other?

A significant concern underlying many of the policy and research developments noted above has been how to encourage good social relations between diverse people, especially including migrants. A frequently-stated key policy aim within these developments, building on the various international frameworks cited above, has often been the promotion of community cohesion (Cantle 2005) and the reduction of any discrimination among migrants and others that may pose challenges to migrants' integration.

Much of the related theory and practice that addresses these aims has been influenced by variants on Allport's (1954) 'contact hypothesis', namely that the prejudice which underlies discriminatory behaviour can be addressed through equal status contact between different groups, and that it is enhanced when this process is lent wider institutional support. This theory has continued to have an impact after nearly 60 years of empirical testing, albeit with continued debates over aspects of its application and effectiveness (e.g. see Dovidio and Glick's 2005 review of the first 50 years' evidence). Moreover, under certain conditions, such positive contact experiences can be generalised more widely in ways that can change interpersonal bias not just for the individuals directly involved, but also for others perceived as belonging to the same groups (Gaertner and Dovidio 2005). However, this depends on there being opportunities for positive contact to take place, and people being willing to engage in it. Even where policies or local projects proactively sought to create appropriate spaces or activities within which this contact could take place, the policymakers in this research recognised that considerable challenges remained in terms of whom actually then became involved in them; for example, one policymaker stated:

When projects or activities try to bring in the local host society into their activities, they recruit volunteers. These volunteers are mostly informed citizens of the local community that already have the understanding of issues related to integration and migration. Projects (and/or activities) rarely have access to the larger population of the host community that have limited or no information about the migrants living in their communities. Not only that, but [this wider population] might not be interested in the interaction with those migrants. *So the issue often times is how to inform and activate a group that is not interested in engagement.*

Indeed, it is arguably precisely those people with the least existing contact with migrants who might learn most from new opportunities for positive forms of contact with them (and vice versa). Policymakers in this research also noted that not all contact between individuals or groups is necessarily positive in building improved social relationships, tackling prejudice and reducing discrimination; indeed, some interactions may reinforce division. Furthermore, the impact of stereotyping, prejudice, racism and fear, and their effects on patterns of social relationships, can further exacerbate separation between diverse individuals in ways which limit the potential for positive forms of contact to develop naturally. Broader social, economic and political factors were also recognised to contribute to the context of this limited likelihood of developing more positive interactions between diverse individuals and groups where such interactions do not previously exist, or where they are limited/ problematic.

In the face of these social dynamics, the policy-makers described how they faced the dilemma of deciding what (if anything) to do in response to the resulting situation. If they did nothing, they perceived this as a negative outcome because they saw the status quo of unintegrated communities as divisive and problematic for the wider society, and prone to periodic outbreaks of tension, and even violence, between different groups. However, in democratic societies, some were also reluctant to intervene more directly, as any intervention was seen as being a form of 'social engineering' that may be perceived as interfering with the rights to the freedom of association of individuals and groups within those communities. Despite this, some policymaker participants had fewer qualms about imposing requirements for engagement on migrants, who are often subject to compulsory integration activities of various kinds as conditions for their remaining in the new country. However, many of the other policy-makers found this compulsory nature itself problematic, not least because adopting compulsion fundamentally undermined the equality of status required by Allport's (1954) theory in order to tackle prejudice effectively. In addition, the sorts of activities shared by the policymakers that had been made compulsory in many European states tended to focus on one-sided integration courses focusing on the migrants' acquisition of the host country's language and of basic cultural knowledge. These often just involved migrants, hence removing broader opportunities for interaction with the wider public in these spaces. Examples of programmes which involved the wider public were generally seen as being better practice by the policymakers for this reason. However, in participants' experiences, many of the general public may themselves be reluctant to become involved in such activities, whether because of explicit bias, or simply for fear of offending or of stigma if they showed their ignorance or expressed views which were not considered 'politically correct'. In this politically-charged arena of policy, the discourses available for use in dialogue form part of the dilemma of wider

engagement; as one policymaker stated:

In my opinion, the main challenge of our time is to find a way of addressing social problems [associated with migration], which doesn't conceal or deny specific situations, but at the same time, doesn't exclude anybody from the debate. And to find a tone in the discussion that doesn't hinder anyone to play a role in finding the solution by the way issues are formulated.

In response to this challenge, many policymakers and practitioners sought more indirect ways to create and/or support spaces and processes which help to bring people together across their diversity of migration status, without focusing initially on discussing problems. Many suggested that initiatives began by recognising things that those involved may have in common, enabling learning and relationship-building with each other to begin to happen. A wide range of creative projects were cited by the policymakers that did this through shared interests (e.g., sport, music, etc.) and/or aspects of their identities (whether through living in a particular area, being a parent, or some other characteristic). Often this activity had been promoted through supporting voluntary organisations and other selected aspects of civil society activity. This had provided a way for some policy-makers to resolve their initial dilemma by choosing to support those organisations that invited in those from a wide range of backgrounds and enabled them to interact *on a voluntary basis*. Such support could be offered in a range of ways, including through direct financial support (grants, etc.), training and free/low-cost use of public buildings, etc.

However, not all of the voluntary organisations known to participants aimed to build bridges between diverse groups; indeed, many were centred on single issues or identities. Even those voluntary organisations which did explicitly aim to build bridges between different individuals and groups in some way were considered by the research participants to have their limitations, not least in often only attracting a limited range of individuals and groups. These concerns connect with findings in other research, such as Acheson's (2011) conclusion, in the context of Northern Ireland, that the existence of such voluntary associations does not necessarily lead to shared identities being held by their diverse participants beyond the particular space of encounter within them. Drawing on wider research, Acheson also concludes that such organisations can often avoid fully recognising diversity and tackling difficult issues in their attempts to prioritise recognition of similarities, and he problematises the notion that this will necessarily lead to a stronger shared civic identity. This also points to the need for deeper dialogue at the local level, and leads us on to a second key dilemma that was identified by the research participants. This concerned how to move beyond these limitations by considering *what forms of interaction help to build a common sense of belonging*, and whether policy-makers can do anything to specifically encourage these forms of interaction.

Dilemma 2: How Can Policy-Makers Build Collective Social Belonging Whilst Valuing the Complexity of Individual Identities?

Through the dialogue process, the policymakers collectively recognised that a key limitation of many existing activities was that (as one participant put it) they may ‘create knowledge [about different cultures and groups], but this does not necessarily change attitudes and behaviour’. This led one working group of policymakers at the conference to ask ‘How can we develop approaches that positively affect attitudes and mutual recognition across communities?’. Others then built on this issue of mutual recognition, going further to discuss how they could encourage people to build a common identity and sense of belonging, whilst also recognising and exploring differences. However, for some, this combination of building a common identity/sense of belonging among people whilst recognising and valuing the variety and complexity of their identities was experienced as a dilemma. Those who saw this as a dilemma considered at least some aspects of diversity as being inimical to having a common shared identity. Ethical dimensions of these debates included the extent to which migrants should be expected to change any divergent aspects of their own identities to become ‘more like’ receiving communities. These debates reflect wider research discussions about the need to recognise the complexity of identity (e.g. Westin 2008) and work towards what Bosswick and Heckmann (2006, 10) call ‘identificational integration’ for migrants. However, these identity issues necessarily extend beyond migrants, with the national self-identities of existing residents also having undergone sustained challenges in receiving countries, as these countries have experienced increased migration and increased awareness of difference in a globalised world (Papastergiadis, 2000). As a result, the idea of a homogenous pre-existing ‘local community’ was problematised by some of the participants, many of whom pointed to previous waves of migration during their own histories in doing this.

Some of the policymakers in this research who felt that they had been more successful in building a common sense of belonging had found creating a revised common identity, a ‘new us’, through the dialogue enabled by such initiatives was central to this process. This involved reforming the self-perceptions of all those involved in ways which included a more positive embracing of difference, by proactively seeking to place ‘diversity at the core of [a] new identity’, as a ‘resource’ and an ‘asset’. Publically acknowledging the pre-existing diversity present in all European nations, even before the latest waves of migration, was a common part of these strategies. The policymakers using them started with the recognition that, as one policymaker stated:

We all have different and complex identities – [it is] important to recognise

and value this, whilst trying to develop a sense of appreciation of the variety of identities.

Theoretical concepts relating to the ways in which individuals deal with multiple identifications were found by the policymakers to be helpful in exploring these issues further. The possibility of individual migrants combining multiple 'hyphenated' or 'hybrid' identities (relating to both their countries of origin and the receiving country) is something that has long been recognised in research (e.g. see European Forum for Migration Studies 2001; Modood et al 1994). These hybrid identities can extend for considerable periods of time, including over more than one generation of migrants and their descendants. For some policymakers, gaining an understanding that old identities did not always have to be completely given up for new identifications with the receiving country to be made was particularly helpful in understanding longer-term processes of transition for migrants. Even those policymakers who felt less comfortable with these notions responded more positively to the theoretical ideas presented about how people sometimes had 'overlapping' or 'nesting' identities (Peters 2003). Seeing citizens as simultaneously belonging to local, regional, national and European identities was a helpful example for these policymakers, when presented from wider literature (Westin 2008). However, some policymakers felt that 'how the differences are manifested is important'; in particular, it mattered whether there was 'internal conflict of identities', as 'there is a limit to the number of identities a person can sustain'. The key condition here, as Westin (2008) also recognised, is whether affiliations were seen as mutually supportive rather than as being in competition with each other. The importance of this distinction was also supported by wider research on group relationships; as Gaertner and Dovidio (2005, 84) note:

...a key element determining the impact of a dual identity on intergroup relationship is likely [to be] what a dual identity signals – whether it is perceived as a sign of progress towards a desired goal, or a threat.

Hence, a key aspect that these policymakers considered to be required for successful integration strategies was 'political leadership' that supported and affirmed a more diverse national identity, whilst setting out a clear framework of values which enabled diverse groups to live together. Devising such a framework presented further ethical aspects of the dilemma for the policymakers, in what Westin (2008, 3) has called: 'the fuzzy relationship between promoting national values and identities, on the one hand, and seeking to promote acceptance for diversity, on the other'. Whilst the policymakers in this research were quick to point to agreed wording within European and sometimes national policy frameworks about how such matters should be handled, they also shared numerous examples where policy implementation nevertheless differed considerably between their different contexts.

Commonly shared examples of this diversity included the extent of accommodation of migrants' religious practices, where these differed from mainstream secular or established religious practices, especially in contexts where the state perceived itself to be secular. Within these discussions, policymakers frequently operated within their own socio-political and cultural framework for handling practical situations arising from these differences of religion, belief and practice, and were surprised when others' frameworks differed considerably from theirs. This frequently led to intense discussions about *why* the other policymakers thought their approach was right, or at least why a particular position about what was right was held by the government in their country. By exploring comparatively together, the perceived ways in which these different positions in different contexts contributed to different patterns of relationships in local communities, the participants were able to consider what (if any) general principles should be recommended. Based on this, for example, they concluded that to promote integration, it was generally important to 'avoid activities that require people to make [unnecessary] choices between identities; e.g. conflict between religious beliefs and secular society'.

More positively than this, the policymakers recognised that in many of the successful integration activities that had been shared, the multiple dimensions of an individual's identity were potentially a significant asset for building a shared sense of belonging. These activities typically built a shared sense of belonging by enabling participants in them to realise those aspects of their identity that were shared with the other, *on grounds other than their migration status*. For example, as noted above, well-designed activities which enabled people to come together through their common identity as parents were seen as helping all those involved to feel they belonged together, as they recognised their common concerns with caring for their children, irrespective of differences in country of origin. Many of the initiatives that policymakers claimed to be successful in local areas used alternative shared characteristics, or shared social interests (sports, arts, handicraft, etc.) or convictions (e.g. politics, religion) as bases on which to build initial interactions between migrants and others. Moreover, wider research (e.g. Zappone 2003) also notes the importance of recognising how different aspects of an individual's identity (such as gender, being a parent, living in poverty, or being disabled) may relate together in influencing their social position and relationships with others.

Of course, such characteristics and convictions can separate people on as many grounds as they bring people together – the most important factor proposed overall in building integration was the *pattern* of relationships formed. The suggestion agreed here by the policymakers was that the greater the number of different bases on which cross-connections were made between diverse individuals, the less likely any single factor may be to become the fault line down which groups become

entirely divided. However, activities which support such cross-connecting patterns of relationship do not necessarily ‘just happen’. Indeed, there are often significant practical, cultural, social and psychological barriers to their occurring. As a result, they often require, or at least benefit from, the proactive efforts of local ‘bridge-builders’, such as voluntary activists, community workers etc., who are committed to building these relationships across diversity and who seek to develop common belonging in an area. The difference made by these ‘bridge-builders’ was the way they encouraged the development of strong equal relationships across different individuals, groups and communities. Within these, they connected together what wider research has (somewhat controversially) referred to as bonding, bridging and linking forms of social capital (Woolcock 2001; Zetter et al. 2006; Putnam 2007). When these different forms of social capital became linked together in ‘bridge-building’ activities, a stronger sense of common belonging and inclusion could be built between those taking part which was more inclusive and accepting of diversity. Due to the diverse bases and foci of such activities (building on different layers of interests and aspects of identity that were important to those involved), participants considered them much more likely to attract people from diverse backgrounds, including those who were both migrants and those who were existing local residents. In addition, because of the ‘bridge-builders’ focus on intentionally building relationships across diversity when organising the activities, support was available to help overcome any challenges in doing so.

It is important to note that this is different from claiming that all voluntary/community groups or activities necessarily increase senses of belonging. The focus here is specifically on those groups or activities which hold the potential to build relationships across individuals and groups in ways that enable wider networks to form on multiple different grounds. These can then become a basis for building more complex and diverse webs of interaction. Proactively seeking to build such connections between diverse communities was recognised as often a difficult and even sometimes dangerous job, in which the activists themselves (and those who become involved) can be targeted for transgressing established social boundaries. Hence, it was considered important to provide committed support to these activists and to build connections between them so that they can build their own wider links, access mutual support and training, and develop their skills and understanding of this work collectively. This work was also recognised as raising difficult ethical questions for the activists as they tried to build bridges with others where there had been a history of conflict. For example, the dialogue between policymakers included considerable debate over whether discussion which sought to create a vision of ‘shared futures’ also required open recognition of (and public apologies for) past injustices.

Moreover, in considering the relationships between different levels of action, the participants recognised that wider social and political contexts also had a huge impact in setting the context for local interactions, particularly in terms of the extent of inequalities between different groups. As a result, policy initiatives which sought to create a supportive context by ensuring that migrants were given equal status, as far as possible, to support their integration were recognised as important (in line with Allport's original 1954 theory). As part of addressing this wider context, many of the policymakers pointed to the need for local and national political leadership to open up debates over identities, practices and belonging and to enable these to be explored in an open way at a wider level. Wider research also suggests that such dilemmas may also benefit from wider cultural policies which help explore these themes in the public domain, to help contribute to dialogue about how such tensions might be addressed (Xuereb 2011). All of this complexity of individual identity and belonging thus highlights the need to see migrant integration in the context of broader social relationships of inclusion/exclusion and in/equality in wider society (e.g. Carrera 2005).

Other Dilemmas

Each of the example dilemmas summarised above is complex and would bear much further scrutiny in light of research and practice than it has been possible to do here. In so doing, other related challenges and dilemmas would also emerge. The critical summaries provided are not designed to oversimplify and resolve such dilemmas entirely, as if that were possible. Instead, they have sought to show how dialogically exploring some of their ethical dimensions can be helpful in understanding these dilemmas better, and hence improve policy responses by taking into account wider experience, theory and research.

There are many other dilemmas facing policymakers and practitioners in relation to migrant integration (and the broader relationship between policy and diversity) which also have ethical dimensions, with several further dilemmas considered more fully in the full report from this event. These included those relating to how best to resource related activities, how best to gain migrant participation and representation in public decision-making that affects their lives, and whether services for migrants should be provided separately or should be integrated into services for the wider population. Emerging from the dialogue over these dilemmas was an emphasis on the importance of listening to migrants' and other residents' voices, and on generating diverse opportunities for collective participation. Policymakers in this research suggested it involved going beyond a 'one size fits all' approach, avoiding the domination of any process by a limited range of individuals or groups, and involving a wider range of people in designing opportunities for participation at a much earlier stage. This involves being much clearer about the different types of

participation available, and how these relate to each other (Huddleston 2009). It includes recognising that participation in decision-making structures is different from participation in everyday interactions, and that both can contribute towards the improved integration of migrants

Conclusion

The dilemmas discussed in this article, and the issues of identity, belonging, citizenship and interaction on which they are based, provoke numerous ethical and practical challenges for policymakers as they seek to address them within particular socio-political contexts. Whatever response results, each set of dilemmas highlights the need to combine micro-, meso- and macro-level actions which promote improved dialogue within any proposed interventions if they are to successfully address these issues. They also illustrate the need to combine different disciplines and theories that operate at these different levels, and to think about the relationships and interactions between them.

Whilst there are no simple solutions to complex dilemmas facing policymakers such as these, this article has demonstrated that there is much to be learnt from critically and dialogically engaging with them, drawing on understandings from different contexts. Cultural and policy blind-spots in relation to integration policy can easily arise within any particular policy context, but they become more apparent in a comparative dialogical context. Improved international dialogue and learning that integrates ethical dimensions can hence play an important role in supporting policy-makers in recognising and responding to these. These responses are further strengthened when developed through dialogue which incorporates and shapes wider research, including that which listens and learns from the experiences of migrants and others within local communities. Most importantly, this article has demonstrated that engaging directly with the ethical dimensions of these dilemmas can be an important way to stimulate deeper dialogue about the issues concerned, and hence to generate improved learning and action as a result.

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