

The Concept of Dynamic Inclusive Communities in Britain

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Introduction

Civil society is driven by a striving for stability, order and a strong sense of belonging to a wider community. Civil society has uneasiness with the widespread concern about civic irresponsibility and loyalty to the identification of citizens with government and a degree of hostility that a growing number of people face (Mostafa 2006: 29). The process of classificatory systems by which people choose to identify differences between themselves and the other (Best 2005:154; Alexander and Alleyne, 2002:54), excessive pressure of individualism, and resistance to inclusion found within the common value system also disturb and destabilise neat boundaries and borders of social divisions and race and hence of community cohesion and integration. These issues have perhaps prompted the need for a change in the relationship between communities and people of different cultures, backgrounds, and institutions.

People live in a world of communities and have some link to a state, family, a class, sexuality, a race, an ethnicity and any number of other categories. The rules of community are to develop emotional bonds, intellectual pathways, enhance linguistic abilities, remove some of the tension of isolation, and achieve freedom and security (McMillan and Chavis: 1986). Fundamental question may be asked about how individual people as agents within the social structure attempt to define themselves and others based on individual differences. Further question may be asked about how people place the community alongside family, state and other configurations of people. It is against this backdrop contemporary British society is now striving for a dynamic inclusive community in which a stable classificatory system will play a significantly important role in social divisions and communities will become stronger more vibrant by embracing positively the diversity of background, culture, and faiths with equality of opportunity.

In this paper the idea of dynamic inclusive communities will be outlined and evaluated. The emphasis will be on the outcomes of the inclusive communities. In other words, the central question will be:

- ◆ What it means to live in a dynamic inclusive community?
- ◆ What are the factors that bring about the process of change in relationship between all communities?
- ◆

The idea of Dynamic Inclusive Communities

All societies appear to have some arbitrary barriers of race, caste, class, religion, gender, fears and prejudice, age and sexual orientation. Besides, they also appear to have some forms of inequality

between people in terms of income, wealth and prestige' (Best 2005:13). Inequalities, discriminations, racial disharmony and all other barriers could easily destroy the opportunities, hope, aspiration, income, civic rights, and overall well-being of an individual. Race although has no real biological foundation (Louis 2002) is still a social fact which is why people choose to categorise people as other people. Race becomes a primary signifier for exclusionary practices (Alexander and Alleyne 2002).

[R]ace (and its non-identical twin, ethnicity) has lost none of its power to draw its borders, legislate its citizens and police its others, though violence: symbolic or, too often, embodied. Racial and ethnic difference remains definitive of our times. (541).

Racial prejudice generated by the bourgeoisie to justify exploitation (Cox 1945:393) hinders communication, prevents the development of class solidarity (Castles and Kosack 1985: 7). Similarly direct or indirect racial discrimination hinders equality of opportunity and good relations between racial groups.

In Britain today there has been emphasis on inequalities, discrimination, and racial disharmony that arise out of gender or ethnic differences or for a range of reasons (Abercrombie and Alan 1994: 246-269). A good deal of studies on inequalities, discrimination and racial disharmony has always centred on a question of looking at differences in income, status, or educational opportunities between men and women or different ethnic groups. But it is also a question of looking at interrelationships of class, gender, ethnic differences and the choice between assimilation and integration. It also concerns about how citizenship is defined in terms of rights, responsibilities and a strong sense of belonging to a wider community.

We have been aware for a long time that in Britain both the white majority population and the ethnic minority communities will play a fuller role in the community. This simple awareness does not say much about bringing positive change in the relationship between migrants and the host community through a process of assimilation and integration. This belief does not even offer a well-balanced analysis of why for almost everyone, a sense of belonging to a wider community is important, what those core integration criteria are and how we underpin this by setting out in practical terms. In fact, there is no general assessment of why a community must exclude somebody or something (Wilmot 1997:28) and includes all the institutions and embraces the diversity of different groups, cultures, and faiths with equal status.

Dynamic inclusive community is therefore about changing this simple belief and building a wider community in which everyone has better chances in life, is able to work together to fight against inequalities and feels he /she has a sense of belonging. In Britain today, the demand for a dynamic inclusive and integrated community is very strong.

It is a fact that all migrants to any society are initially faced with a degree of hostility because they come from very different environments encounter problems at a time when they are in a strange surroundings, having to cope at once with settling into a new environment, and trying to be socialised into a different set of cultural values that may not be compatible with the values of the host

community. Richardson and Lambert explain this in the following terms (Richardson and Lambert 1985):

- ◆ The immigrants are strangers by virtue of their colour and culture.
- ◆ The host society is confused and insecure and, as a result, reacts with both hostility and intolerance.
- ◆ The host society is stable and does not have any fundamental conflicts within it.
- ◆ This stability is temporarily disturbed by immigrants. Order is restored, however, when the immigrants adapt to British society and the white population accepts immigrants.
- ◆ This process of adaptation and acceptance may be broken into several phases which can proceed at varying speeds and may be complete after several generations have passed.

This argument was later reinforced when Best wrote:

In the case of the United Kingdom, Irish, Jewish and Flemish migrants all faced discrimination (Best 2005:155).

Building a positive relationship between the migrants and the host community is the idea behind dynamic inclusive communities. This relationship can be gained through a process of assimilation and integration. With processes of assimilation, ethnic minorities adopt the universalistic value system of the host society without losing their own identity, national characteristics and culture. With processes of integration, the host community can change its value system to incorporate elements of the migrant culture within the culture of the wider community. In Britain today, some of the latest generation of ethnic minorities have begun to reassert their own heritage although many have become assimilated into British or Scottish culture. Inclusive communities are therefore to promote the idea of a shared identity which is nothing wrong. The immigrant population from different countries have brought a variety of cultural identities within a wider British identity. A variety of culture means a variety of behaviour patterns, life styles, characters, traits, language, faiths, norms, values, customs, and traditions. Moreover, variety is the spice of life, as it is still widely believed. There are lessons to be learned from every culture no matter how old it is. An inclusive community always underpins this by providing opportunity for the host community and the migrants to exchange of ideas, experiences, and facts in order to help integration.

What is, however, important is that there has to be genuine respect and acceptance for each others beliefs and social mores. In other word, tolerance between the host community and the migrants is important on which stability of classificatory system or social divisions and the success of dynamic inclusive communities are crucially dependent. Therefore, the emphasis of an inclusive community is on tolerance, balanced and measured positive action, respect for religion and historical events.

And also a strong sense of belonging to a wider community lies at the heart of an inclusive community. A member of the wider community gives his or her loyalty and support to the United Kingdom in general and the Scottish community in particular, respects its rights and freedoms,

upholds its democratic values and observes its laws faithfully and fulfils his / her duties and obligations towards community.

What is important is that as a member of the British society we respect the Rule of Law, norms, values, customs, and traditions of the society. We have tolerance towards the faith of others and those who have no religious beliefs. We have a respect for equal rights and are subject to the laws of the land including Human Rights and Equal Rights legislation. We accept parliamentary democratic culture and respect the formal institutions including the constitutional monarchy, the House of Commons, the House of Lords, the electoral system, the party political system, the judiciary, the police, and the civil service (CFSR 2006: 1)

The requirement to have a dynamic inclusive community is to make an integrated society with equal opportunities.

As it is argued:

The truth is unless people are integrated they can never be truly equal, and if they are not equal, they will never have access to the best services that a community can offer. There can be no true integration without true equality and there can be no true equality without true integration (Mostafa 2006:9).

This is why one of the underlying principles of an inclusive community is to ensure full and active engagement in civic life and civic processes. Greater involvement is important in order to move towards the elimination of discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. By developing community links and meeting people of different culture and backgrounds inclusive communities aim to send this message across a wider community.

Through community links and community consultation awareness of the need and aspiration of members of the wider community can be raised. It will also allow ethnic minorities to be more active because of the effect that active citizenship has had on its role within the wider community. There is a widespread concern about community integration and cohesion as the certain number of minority ethnic have behaved irresponsibly, shown their disloyalty to the United Kingdom and unwillingness to observe laws faithfully and fulfil their duties and responsibilities as a British citizen. However, the outcome of community talks and links is a wake up call for the vast majority of ethnic minorities to understand what it means to be more active and have equal rights and opportunities and how it affects their participation, engagement, and feedback in civic life.

Through community links and consultation racial harmony could also be achieved and a strong sense of belonging to a wider community be created. In response to the growing concern in a wider community regarding sense of belonging, cohesion and integration, an inclusive community has to offer the following questions that may need to be answered in order to find out why ethnic minorities and the white majority population have to play an active economic and political role in the British society.

- What does it mean to live in a civil democratic society?
- Why have people chosen to live, work or study in Scotland or Britain?
- Do people generally have a sense of belonging to the wider community?
- Are certain segments of the immigrant population unwilling to be assimilated and integrated? If so, why?
- Do certain segments of the white population exhibit their ignorance and none-acceptance in their treatment of not whites? If so, why?
- Are there any problems with integration of new arrivals from countries throughout Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Africa, Asia the Caribbean, and the new Commonwealth into British or Scottish culture? If so, what are they?
- Do ethnic minorities face any problems at work, study place or in the wider community? If so, what are they?
- How could those problems be solved?
- How can people contribute to the community they are living in?
- How can they make this country a safer and dynamic community for all?

The Outcomes

A dynamic inclusive community makes the difference to the people who live in it. It has the outcomes, long term changes, by which people and communities will have more power over their relationships and more say in decisions that are made.

Harmony through dialogue

Harmony, not discord, will be the key outcome of the idea of dynamic inclusive communities. In such communities, an opportunity will be provided for members of the wider community to exchange ideas, experiences, and facts in order to embrace positively the variety of background, culture, and faiths that living in civic Britain involves. Continuous dialogues with all on the following areas will therefore lead to greater interracial harmony:

- ◆ Equal opportunity
- ◆ Ethnic diversity
- ◆ Democratic citizenship
- ◆ Approach to a cohesive, well-integrated and inclusive communities
- ◆ Problems of old and new arrivals to the UK affecting community cohesion and integration
- ◆ Solutions to problems
- ◆ Role of Government, voluntary and community organisations in promoting harmony within dynamic inclusive communities
- ◆ Role of Public opinion

As a result of harmony through dialogue it will be easier to achieve a vision shared by the members of the wider community. As members of the wider community will be able to get to know each other, discuss problems affecting civic life and civic processes, be part of an audience and work for the interests of the community, the outcome is an effective engagement with the community, providing

harmony and equal opportunities for participation and feedback.

A constant contribution and engagement from every ethnic group inevitably enhances the social fabric of all communities. In the same vein, the optimum position is for all immigrants to be fully embraced by the host population and to have a vehicle that offers them the opportunity to have continuous dialogue with all (Mostafa 2006:6).

Development of strong sense of belonging to a wider community

By establishing community links and making community consultation inclusive communities will help members of the wider community build one's loyalty lying to the interests of the state first and a sense of responsibility and responsiveness to the wider community. The requirement to have a strong sense of loyalty and belonging to the wider community needs to mean something, and needs to be supplemented by an intellectual stimulation of what it means to live in a democratic civic society like Britain. Through community consultation and other programmes and activities it is possible to encourage the old and new arrivals not to be isolated from the mainstream approach of the wider society. *Greater equality and greater interaction between people of different cultures and backgrounds.*

Understanding ethnic minority communities in Britain in terms of its role-relationship and problems in relation to the wider community is the path to better community and greater harmony. An inclusive community will underpin this by developing a strong and positive relationship between people from different backgrounds, communities, and institutions.

Inclusive communities shall also encourage one's contribution to own culture and to respect other cultures, religious faith, customs, and traditional values. Such communities shall facilitate ethnic minorities' access to essential services including training and employment opportunities through training and development approach. They shall give these organisations stimulus and impetus to build up a dynamic community with equal opportunity.

Positive learning about playing an active role in civic life and civic processes

The outcome of inclusive communities is a positive learning about what it means to be an active member of a community and discharge obligations and responsibilities or how minority communities could or should fulfil civic roles and contribute to the wider community. A general assessment of what is meant by mobility, integration or democratic citizenship will also be made through different activities in such communities.

Finding better ways to work with individuals, various governmental organisations, and communities to identify and address needs and tackle inequalities

A dynamic inclusive community offers effective partnership working with various government organisations, local authorities, NGOs, and voluntary and community organisations in order to

promote the idea of equal opportunity, integration and sense of belonging to a wider community. Partnership working shall give these organisations stimulus and impetus to help build stronger more vibrant communities.

Partnership working could also encourage members of the wider community to participate in a wide assortment of community activities to help them reduce their isolation within their own community and develop relationships outside the community. To encourage one's contribution to own culture and to respect other cultures, religious faiths, customs, and traditional values is the path to community integration. By working in partnership with governmental and non-governmental / voluntary sector organisations it is possible to meet openly people from diverse cultures and communities, share the history and customs of their respective traditions and cultures, and find out all forms of discrimination and inequalities in accessing services and better ways to tackle them.

Development of communities based on equality, understanding, acceptance, peace and tolerance

The outcome of harmony through dialogue, sense of belonging, greater equality and better interaction, positive learning and partnership working will be a major breakthrough as it leads to the development of an inclusive community. What are constantly on display as a result of such communities are acceptance, tolerance and peace.

Summary

The choice of assimilation and integration is not simply a question of giving allegiance to the state in return for its protection or making a pledge to observe the rules, regulations, and fundamental aspects of democratic citizenships, or accepting the elements of the migrant culture within the culture of the wider community. It also involves a consideration of one's awareness and capacity to his own community which is the path to the dynamic inclusive, cohesive, and well-integrated communities.

In Britain today dynamic inclusive communities are emphasizing the benefits to society as a whole of cultural diversity in an environment of equality, mutual respect, trust, cooperation, understanding, tolerance and peace. They are committed to promoting harmony through dialogue and community cohesion and integration of minority ethnics into British or Scottish culture. Such communities are endeavouring to develop the awareness and capacity of all communities to engage with a positive integration agenda. The outcome of such communities is a promotion of equal opportunity and development of a vision shared by the members of the wider community. Helping more people to play an active role in civic life and civic processes and learning better ways to work with individuals and communities to identify and address their needs are also the benefits of such communities.

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