Beyond Social Cohesion: The Role of 'Fusion of Horizons' in Inter-group Solidarities

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British policies towards immigration have recently been preoccupied with cultivating a sense of social cohesion among ethnic and cultural groups in the United Kingdom. Such policies highlight the increasing uneasiness of the British state regarding cultural diversity, which is seen as being at odds with solidarity. In this paper we move away from this dichotomy between solidarity and cultural diversity and the pursuit of social cohesion and order to propose that solidarity is not a universal social and cultural condition to be achieved, but a transient part of the process of intergroup understanding. Drawing on Gadamer, we argue that intergroup solidarities are temporary bonds that already exist between groups but need to be brought to consciousness through a 'fusion of horizons'. We look at British people's representations of immigration and the tensions that arise out of their encounters with the perspective of the 'other'. We provide an analysis of the conditions that permeate the process of fusion through a study on social values conducted in London with members of the British public.

For Beck and his colleagues (Beck, Bonss *et al*., 2003; Beck & Lau, 2005), there is a qualitative difference between the past and the present. They claim that we are currently experiencing a 'reflexive' redefinition of society which results in the dissolution of boundaries and of taken-for-granted certainties. Transnationalism is an example of the process whereby conventional 'either/or' dualisms no longer hold. As certainties are relapsing, people are constantly forced to deal with ambiguities. As a consequence, we encounter a proliferation of discourses in the context of cultural diversity, which construct a dichotomy between solidarity and cultural diversity. Such discourses can be found on many different levels. Taking the case of immigration, we currently focus on the possibilities for cultivating a consciousness of solidarities that already exist in plural and multicultural settings such as the United Kingdom.

This paper will first review Britain's recent policies of managing diversity, which are predominantly based on an idealised image of social cohesion. Acknowledging the need to move beyond such 'orderly' discourses, we argue that we need a conceptualisation of solidarity, which takes under consideration not only plurality and difference but also the challenges that the process of coping with plurality is marked with. It emphasises the need to confront the finitude of our knowledge and the unpredictable possibilities that uncertainty, mistakes and failures imply for people and governments (Geyer & Rihani, 2010).

This paper discusses solidarity in light of Gadamer's (1989a, 1989b, 1989c) thoughts about understanding and dialogue as a 'fusion of horizons'. Gadamer's conceptualisation of solidarity emphasises the particular bonds that already exist between individuals, which are anchored in various societal, political contexts and historical moments. He argues that these are not immediately visible, but can be brought to awareness through an understanding of the other in the manifold contexts in which s/he exists (Gadamer, 2001). This process can enable a 'fusion of horizons', which is linked with a broader understanding of the other in light of the various contexts which shape the other's and one's own perspective. This process leads to a joint creation of a new understanding about oneself, the other, the subject of discussion and the encounter as well as about the limits of knowledge.

In this paper we exemplify these ideas through a study on social values and immigration conducted in the UK. Three types of social recognition with regards to

migrants have been identified in this study: positive recognition without perspective taking, partial perspective taking, and 'fusion of horizons'.

BRITISH POLICIES OF SOCIAL COHESION

Britain's policy towards managing diversity has traditionally been based on a 'race relations' framework. In particular, a combination of strict immigration controls and racial equality legislation has shaped public policy in Britain (Favell, 2001; Well & Crowley, 1994). Limits on migration in Britain have been accompanied by a series of Race Relations Acts (1965, 1968, and 1976, as well as the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006) and the establishment of the Commission for Racial Equality (the Equality and Human Rights Commission since 2007). In fact, the 1976 Act contained legislation against indirect discrimination and for this reason is considered a step towards the recognition of the right to cultural difference and a clear example of multicultural policy compared to the more assimilationist approach of the rest of Europe (Mitchell & Russell, 1996). Good race relations in the UK are seen as a way of ensuring social order and seem to have been shaped by the British imperial history (Favell, 2001).

However, in the past few years the effectiveness of 'multiculturalist policies' has been severely challenged. Critics argue that it enhances separatism and undermines solidarity; that it stresses differences and de-emphasises commonalities. The current debate on multiculturalism and cohesion was sparked by the 'race riots' in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in the spring and summer of 2001. According to the Cantle report (2001), commissioned by the Home Office, the root of those disturbances was the lack of cohesion and contact among ethnic groups.

In the aftermath of the events, the concept of cohesion emerged in the New Labour political agenda and became the central component of a new framework in managing race relations policy in the UK. Policies on community cohesion have since been implemented predominantly on a local level. In the meantime, the 7th of July 2005 attacks in London intensified the cohesion-versus-multiculturalism discourse leading to a call to move beyond multiculturalism into a new way of managing diversity guided by 'shared British values'. The key concept in all these recent developments is an emphasis on failed integration which will be supposedly adressed

by establishing a common bond among the British (McGhee, 2005a). However, policies of social cohesion have been severely criticised. MacGhee (2005a, 2005b) has argued that the current community cohesion strategies target ethnic and religious minorities and function as a risk management strategy to avoid tensions like the ones in 2001. Several scholars have also argued that the Labour government has revitalised an assimilationist project concerning its handling of diversity and migration (e.g. Alexander, 2007; Back, Keith *et al.*, 2002; Shukra, Back *et al.*, 2004; Yuval-Davis, Anthias *et al.*, 2005).

Such debates on integration and immigration highlight the tensions between similarity and difference in inter-cultural encounters. While we do not subscribe to the public policy approach in the UK, which has viewed solidarity as the opposite of cultural diversity, we acknowledge that solidarity in plural globalised societies needs to be re-conceptualised in a way that balances the tension between difference and identity. This multicultural question has been eloquently formulated by Stuart Hall: "How then can the particular and the universal, the claims of both difference and equality, be recognised? This is the dilemma, the conundrum –the multi-cultural question– at the heart of the multi-cultural's transruptive and reconfigurative impact. It requires us to think beyond the traditional boundaries of the existing political discourses and their ever-ready 'solutions'. It suggests that we have to put our minds seriously not to reiterating the sterile arguments between liberals and communitarians, but to some new and novel ways of *combining* difference and identity…" (2000, emphasis in original).

FROM SOLIDARITY TO SOLIDARITIES: GADAMER AND THE 'FUSION OF HORIZONS'

By emphasising 'shared British values', British policies of cohesion and immigration, seem to be premised on a Durkheimian view of solidarity. Durkheim's (1933) seminal understanding of organic solidarity stressed the role of interdependence between individuals and societies. However, Durkheim's conceptualisation of solidarity was formulated in a different societal setting, wherein cohesion, order and stability were treated as the only bases for societal functioning (Moscovici, 1988). However, as we move today towards a globalised society marked by plurality in the public sphere, the

meaning of social solidarity is changing. Therefore, we need a conceptualisation of solidarity which takes into account the plurality of representations and perspectives and the tensions inherent in the process of dealing with plurality.

In the past knowledge was more localised and served as the social 'glue' that bound communities together (Jovchelovitch, 2001, 2007). It took the form of collective representations, as Durkheim described them, which functioned as facts or truths. Any deviation from these was viewed as source of disorder that threatened cohesion. However, if collective representations, by forming a 'collective consciousness', cannot offer solidarity any more, how can we advance solidarity in an era of plurality and change? Recognition has been put forward as a key quality of just intergroup relations in multicultural societies because it enhances agency and participation (Honneth, 1995; Taylor, 1992). With this in mind, it is proposed in this paper that solidarity is more than a universal stable socio-economic and juridical condition. Instead, as Gadamer (1989a, 1989b, 1989c) argues, we need to shift our awareness to solidarities that already exist but need to be brought to our consciousness through a process of discovering the various historical, cultural, societal, personal contingencies that bind us together in various ways. Perspective taking is situated at the heart of this process. Yet, it is important to define its conditions whereby this process takes place.

Beck (2006) discusses the role of perspective taking in solidarity through his conceptualisation of 'cosmopolitanism'. For Beck (2006), cosmopolitanism is a way of dealing with difference in an increasingly interconnected world. It refers to a type of solidarity established not among fellow nationals, but among 'strangers', people who are not 'us' (Beck, 2000). Cosmopolitanism rejects the dualism between what is 'same' and what is 'different' and recognises sameness in difference. The cosmopolitan perspective replaces the either/or principle with the both/and logic of inclusive oppositions and can, thus, accommodate rival rationalities. This openness towards otherness is defined by Beck as the 'cosmopolitan outlook' (Beck, 2002, 2006). The cosmopolitan outlook is based on 'dialogical imagination', which acknowledges the presence and legitimacy of alternative ways of thinking. In a way, the 'other' becomes internalised and people become able to compare, contrast and combine different ways of thinking (Beck, 2002). As Hermans and Dimaggio (2007)

argue, the increasing cultural encounters of our globalised world create the need for dialogical capacity, meaning the capacity for dialogue between self and other.

This seems to suggest that people are increasingly more able to take on different perspectives and that solidarity with others is a natural concomitant of knowledge plurality. However, as Beck notes, "even the most positive development imaginable, an opening of cultural horizons and a growing sensitivity to other unfamiliar, legitimate geographies of living and coexistence, need not necessarily stimulate a feeling of cosmopolitan responsibility" (2002:29). The plurality of social representations does not necessarily mean that people have become more open to different perspectives (Gillespie, 2008a). Rather, there is a fundamental tension in self-other relations between recognition and lack of recognition. On the one hand, the desire for recognition of one's perspective is the driving force of dialogue and change (Linell & Luckmann, 1991; Marková, 2000, 2003a; Marková, 2003b). Marková (2003a) argues that "there could be no dialogue if participants were not opposed to one to another through mutually experienced strangeness. Strangeness creates tension between them, which is not bound to either of them but actually exists between them". It is the heterogeneity of perspectives, the lack of consensus, which creates the drive for dialogue and co-ordination of perspectives.

On the other hand, this diversity creates a sense of powerlessness, fragmentation, instability and disorder. The fear of disorder is fundamentally a fear about losing control in a globalising world (Sennett, 1970). Anxiety over disorder is embedded in the ontological need for security and control. Inter-relatedness and mutuality are seen as threats to the continuity of identity and our existence (Giddens, 1991). Such anxiety is associated with efforts to keep different and unknown situations and people at a distance and look for definite and solid answers (Sartre & Mairet, 1948), thus concentrating on controlling our environment and diffusing responsibilities to external forces (Sampson, 2009; Van Deurzen, 1997).

The challenges arising from such tensions suggest that solidarity is a complex process, which does not rest on recognising the other's similarities and differences that can make us see how the others are unique as well as similar to us. Such encounters perpetuate the division between the 'I' and the 'other', as they are grounded in the certainty of understanding oneself and the other without allowing the other to articulate his/her claims, which often clash with one's point of view (Walhof,

2006). Solidarity is not about conscious preordained collective interests and concerns about a universal common good. For Gadamer (1989a, 1989b, 1989c), uncovering and realising the historical contingencies that bind people together in particular contexts under particular circumstances is a key condition for experiencing solidarities among people. That is why for Gadamer there is no universal solidarity but, rather, solidarities as temporary and intermittent bonds that already exist. The challenge is to bring them to consciousness.

Gadamer considers the 'fusion of horizons' as a key condition of reviving solidarities. In line with Heidegger (1962), Gadamer acknowledges the historical situatedness of being and argues that we are bound to our horizons in perceiving the world and others. A horizon involves all the values, beliefs, norms, experiences that frame our expectations and representations of ourselves and others, our interactions with them and the context in which these occur. Gadamer maintains that understanding always takes place through the different horizons that people carry with them, thus highlighting the impossibility of transcending one's biases, challenging in this respect Habermas's (1988) concept of critical self-reflection. Horizons can be limits to our understanding (Hirsch, 1967) but can also be expanded to see beyond to what is explicit and readily available to us. A "[H]orizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular standpoint" (Gadamer, 1989c:302). Each horizon belongs to a historical, cultural, societal, political world(s). Hence, our understanding is usually shaped by our conscious horizons. But horizons can fuse if we focus our efforts on understanding someone within the context(s) that shape his/her claims. In this case, a fusion would result in a broader understanding that is anchored in the totality that ties us together, which includes the changing world that we all exist in.

Gadamer concurs with Sartre (1948) in claiming that it is through becoming attentive to the manifold social, political, cultural and personal contexts that this experience is born out of, so that we can better understand our inevitable connectedness with others as well as the contingencies associated with being with others. Certainly, Gadamer acknowledges that we can never achieve a full understanding of this totality that the world as a whole, which frames our interactions with others. Understanding is a never ending process.

Fusing horizons is a difficult process that is transformative and rooted in practice. This entails "thinking along with the other from the perspective of a specific bond of belonging as if he too were affected" (Gadamer, 1989c:323). It is based on opening oneself to the claims the other is making even when they contradict one's own beliefs and values. It means allowing oneself to be challenged by the other in ways that lead to 'new' understandings that have not been anticipated. This process is fraught with tensions and conflicts that expose the self-certainty of the 'I' (Fairfield, 1999) and one's preconceived knowledge about himself/herself, the other as well as the interaction.

As such, the fusion does not unfold along a predetermined pathway but is underpinned by a series of mis- and non-understandings. The aim is not to synthesise our respective views, in a Heggelian sense, nor to agree with each other but, rather, to illuminate the various contexts in which this process unfolds, which eventually can enable horizons to fuse (Walhof, 2006). The result would be the co-understanding of something that is common to the individuals that did not exist before: "something comes into being that had not existed before and that exists from now on… Something emerges that is contained in neither of the partners alone" (Gadamer, 1989c:462). This experience uncovers the finite nature of one's knowledge and power and results in new understandings about ourselves and the other. Reviving solidarities requires, therefore, opening oneself to change and to the unpredictable possibilities of uncertainty and failures.

Drawing on these ideas, we will focus in this paper on the social representations of migrants in the UK using data from a research project on social values conducted by the first author. In exploring how participants represent migrants, we identified three types of recognition. The first type refers to the positive recognition of the contribution of the other, without, however, engaging with the perspective of the other. The second type refers to the partial recognition of the other through a process of perspective taking that is yet grounded in a fixed understanding about oneself and the other. However, this type of understanding reflected some elements that are embedded in a 'fusion of horizons'. The third type of understanding unfolds within the various historical and socio-political contexts that shape the encounter between the subject and the migrant and is more indicative of Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons'.

We aim to show that solidarity is not a simple social attribute or a stable state of affairs but is grounded in a 'back and forth' process of trying to understand how the various time and space horizons frame our encounters with the other. Following Gadamer, we believe that it is only through such a process that it is possible to revive and experience solidarities, which are contingent on these situated common understandings. We believe that Gadamer's conceptualisation challenges the paradigm of social order that permeates theories that see solidarity as a stable goal that can be achieved through the abolition of differences and prejudices and the acknowledgment of similarities between individuals (e.g. contact hypothesis, Allport, 1958). Instead, Gadamer emphasises that solidarities are fundamentally based on an on-going dialogue with the other and oneself through the scope of time and space that is laden with conflicts and tensions but leads to a better enunciation of one's claims. The role of mis- and non-understandings in reviving solidarities is inevitable and central, which needs to be acknowledged rather than be controlled and eliminated and to be seen as providing the natural context for understanding the other.

METHODOLOGY

The interviews were part of a study on social values and the meaning of work in the European knowledge society and were conducted in Britain and Greece. The purpose of the interviews was to offer the opportunity to the participants to talk about their lives and reflect on their position in the changing British or Greek socio-economic, cultural and political reality respectively. Specifically, questions targeted their views on a variety of issues ranging from the social, economic, cultural and political situation in their country, the European Union, the EU enlargement, immigration trends, to well-being and the meaning of work. The interviews followed an in-depth and semi-structured format to allow the interviewees to talk about the issues that were most salient to them. Here, we present the findings from the British context.

Interviews were conducted in London between October 2006 and April 2007 with twenty participants in total. Given the aims of the study, participants were sampled on the basis of their profession. Ten participants worked in the service sector

and ten participants worked in the knowledge sector[1] (Table 1). There was equal representation of men and women in the sample. The mean age of participants was approximately 45 yrs. The interviews were conducted in different locations (i.e. workplace, public spaces, respondents' houses etc) according to the interviewees' preference and convenience. The duration of the interviews was between 35-100 minutes, depending on each interviewee's level of engagement. Interviews were digitally recorded, fully transcribed and analysed with the assistance of Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software.

Participant	Gender	Occupation
1.	Female	Admin Assistant
2.	Female	Research Technician
3.	Male	Accountant
4.	Male	Bookshop Sales Manager
5.	Female	Bank Employee
6.	Male	Bartender
7.	Female	Cultural Events Organiser
8.	Male	Sales Manager
9.	Female	Hairdresser – Salon Owner
10.	Male	Porter
11.	Female	Biochemist – Post Doc Researcher
12.	Female	Executive Director of Research Consultancy – Geneticist and Molecular Biologist
13.	Male	Economics Journalist
14.	Male	Furniture Designer

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[1] The distinction between service and knowledge workers was based on Richard Florida's classification (Florida, 2002). The *service* sector includes people employed in clerical, office, health services jobs, such as clerks, service workers, shop, market and sales workers. The *knowledge* sector includes people coming from the art, entertainment, design, the wider cultural field, the educational, the research, scientific and high-tech sector and the writing industry, but also people from the health-care system, legislative, financial, business and management and high-tech sector.

15.	Male	Entrepreneur & Consultant
16.	Female	Entrepreneur/ Managing Director of IT Company
17.	Male	R&D Manager
18.	Female	Architect
19.	Male	Corporate Lawyer
20.	Male	Musician & Osteopath

Table 1: Participants' Gender and Occupation

The overall aim of the analysis was to document the differences in the meaning of values between knowledge and services workers, but also to identify the processes and functions of meaning construction in relation to different topics. We are currently focusing on *how* workers discussed the value of openness to change and openness to diversity in the context of migration.

FINDINGS

On an explicit level, in representing migrants, the interviewees were concerned about social and economic inequalities and segregation, which were seen as consequences of Britain's openness to change and diversity (i.e. immigration). This however was also acclaimed as an important social value and a source of national pride. Discourses about immigration had two sides. On the one hand, migrants were described in a favourable way, perceived to be bringing their skills, talents and customs to British society (and especially London), thus making it an exciting place to live. On the other hand, participants referred to the pitfalls of immigration in terms of space resources and social tensions. In some cases, the future was envisaged in an unsettling way through the prism of racial tensions, identity alienation and constrained space and work resources.

Shifting the attention to how these representations were communicated, we will show the three ways in which discourses of openness to change and diversity were produced, focusing on the tensions that characterised them and the strategies that interviewees employed in their attempt to cope with them.

1. Positive recognition without perspective taking – Objectifying the other

The ways participants discussed immigration were structured around a core tension between openness to change and stability. Thus, migration was perceived both positively and negatively. While the tension between change and stability framed the argumentation of participants, two main themes, immigration as an economic phenomenon and immigration as a cultural phenomenon, provided the thematic content for constructions of immigration.

With regards to the economic sphere, this tension was exemplified in discourses of migration as a resource and migration as a burden. On one hand, migrants were described in a favourable way, as both a cultural and a financial resource for British society. On the other hand, respondents referred to the constraints immigration imposes on space, health, education and work resources and how these mainly affect the isolated and poor areas in the UK. Therefore, migrants were not simply viewed positively or negatively. Rather, as the following extract shows, there was a 'back and forth' process of constructing migration both as a burden and as a resource.

> Yeah, it (immigration) has positives and negatives. […]   I think sometimes it has gotten to the point where it is a very big issue and I think eventually possibly the more people come in over the years puts a restrain on certain resources like health and education and things like that… when you have to accommodate… things like housing […] but I think it has a lot of positives about it and I think it is a lot more noticeable nowadays… I think every time you sit down and talk with certain people it crops up you know... it is a very big thing. Well we have like a lot of farm workers and most of them are I suppose more willing to do lower paid jobs and they fill certain gaps that other people don't want to do especially in hospitals and things like that. It has really helped the economy and but you can be so blinded by the negative effects and people going on and on and it is very difficult to see positives out of it. (Participant 2)

What also emerges from the above quotation is a lack of engagement with the perspective of the other. The participant discusses migration solely from the perspective of Britain as the 'host' society. She argues that migration is both positive and negative for the British economy, but the migrants' perspectives are not elaborated at all. Thus, she negotiates the tension between migrants as resource and migrants as burden by considering the effects it has for Britain. In a way, this type of engagement with the other is similar to the British public policy approach on immigration. Within the recent framework of skilled migration, introduced by the British government in 2008, migrants are viewed from a cost-benefit approach. Skilled migration is seen positively as it contributes to the economy of the country, whereas unskilled migration is viewed as detrimental to the resources of Britain. This 'managerial' discourse constructs migrants as an investment and assesses them in terms of their employability and productivity. This leaves room neither for social recognition, as it objectifies migrants, nor for agency, since participants see themselves as the passive recipients of social change produced by immigration. There is no real recognition of the migrants' perspective here, but, rather, there is only a fundamental distinction between migrants, who can be trusted and migrants, who cannot be trusted in terms of their potential to contribute to the economy.

In addition to the socio-economic sphere, migration was also constructed in context of the cultural sphere. Here, there is a tension between cultural enrichment and fragmentation, between unity and plurality. Participants vacillated between the need to recognise and establish a dialogue with people from different cultures and the need to preserve their cultural identity. Although they acknowledged the importance of respecting plurality, at the same time, plurality was also constructed as being conducive to identity disintegration. As in the previous case, the following quotation is uttered from the perspective of the participant as a member of the 'host' society. This participant sees migrants as objects, who can either enrich or degrade British culture, thus, disregarding their perspectives.

Everybody is moving around so your culture will go, do you understand? Because it is all right, all having the same culture like you can be an onion, you can be a tomato and I will be a potato, do you know what I mean? But if we are so close and we are put in a blender we just get yuk... it is like I have

a house and you can say I have a couple of people can I come and stay in your house? And you say yeah! That's okay… two is nice… but 24?! You start to get a bit nasty because you haven't got enough food to go around and you haven't got enough beds to go around, so it brings arrogance and nastiness… it is like seeds: if you put lots of seeds in a pot you get weedy plants but if you give them room to grow you get beautiful plants and they reimburse. Do you understand? We can learn from each other but we need to give room and respect. There is no respect nowadays. (Participant 9)

Overall, participants unfolded their reasoning about the two dilemmas of resource-burden and unity-fragmentation by connecting migration with benefits and risks, which applied to them personally and to the UK as a whole. We can argue that it was their personal circumstances and Britain's socio-economic conditions that guided their narratives on openness to diversity and change, thus excluding the migrants' experiences. In these discourses, migrants were talked about in a depersonalised way that gave little credence to their voices and perspectives.

2. Partial perspective taking

In this type of recognition, participants oscillated between openness to change and stability through interchanging between their own and the migrants' perspective. In the following extract, we see how the interviewee is having difficulty in understanding how her life is connected with that of migrants, referring to how as a Londoner she does not experience the negative implications of migration. Hence, she starts her argumentation by distancing herself from British people in the province, whose living is regarded as directly interlinked with the socio-economic risks of migration, moving on to describe how, as a Londoner, migration has affected her life only in a positive way.

I have to admit immigration has not really touched my world so I am not somebody living in a provincial town outside London that has suddenly had an influx of ethnic Albanians or something taking up half my child's classroom […] I think it is easy to say it is liberal and generous if you

yourself are not being adversely affected. I probably in my life weigh the benefits […] I was surprised that there was a street sweeper and I said something to him and he was obviously Russian, yeah he was Russian, and I was quite surprised and I was thinking why did you come here to do that job? Is this really better? I think the thing that I feel quite strongly about which is slightly turning the tables is that what worries me more is the people that get up to come to this country to do some terrible job. I sort of wonder if they use that energy to build up businesses or to work in their own country they can build up their country better and that is sad if their country is suffering because it takes a lot of energy to change country […] maybe they need to learn certain skills here or maybe they need money here to invest in their country and there is a cleaner in our office on Newman street and we chat a bit… she is from Ukraine and she said to me, I work here for 2 years and I go home and buy a house, and I think, good for you, and that is a 20 year old girl, to go home and buy a house that is something. (Participant 12)

In the extract there is, furthermore, a tension between the idea that migration is a burden to British resources and the idea that migrants should be welcomed. This dialogue takes place from the 'host' perspective as in the previous quotations. What follows, however, is an attempt to embark on a dialogue with the migrants' perspectives, through seeking to understand the reasons, choices and rationale of their mobility. Migrants are objectified here but are also recognised as agents, as intentional social actors. Gillespie (2008b) has described this as perspective taking on the level of meta-perspectives.

This participant tries to understand the contexts that frame migrants' experiences and livelihoods in terms of the reasons of their mobility. She takes her own experience as a starting point, which leads to a misinterpretation about migrants' motivations to move to Britain. But further on, through her encounter with the cleaner from Ukraine, she gains a broader understanding of the economic and personal conditions underlying her mobility. For Gadamer (1989a), misunderstandings are inevitable in human interactions and are always part of the process of fusing one's horizon with another's. Although, she integrates her initial understanding into a broader understanding, she does not 'fuse her horizons' with those of the migrants'.

Her understanding of the other is rooted in a presumption about who she is (i.e. she would be annoyed if immigrants took half her child's classroom) and who the other is ("I have to admit immigration has not really touched my world so I am not somebody living in a provincial town outside London that has suddenly had an influx of ethnic Albanians or something taking up half my child's classroom"). Overall, in the following extract, there is an iterative process of stepping in and out of a dialogue with the other, which does not reflect a failure of understanding but rather the struggle for discovering possible entry points that understanding can be built on (Dallmayr, 1993).

3. Towards the 'Fusion of Horizons'

The third type of discourses – which was the least typical of all – was closest to what Gadamer describes as 'fusion of horizons'. In the following extract, the participant dealt with the different tensions embedded in the process of inter-group encounters by becoming attentive to the contexts in which migration is forged. He discussed connections between the different temporal dimensions (i.e. past and present immigration trends), the political practices and the role of the public, the need for authority and the fear of uncertainty and the role of power asymmetries between the rich and the poor. The participant used these contexts and tensions to emphasise the role of reciprocity between oneself and the other in creating 'shared histories' (i.e. commonalities between Celts' immigration and today's immigration), affirming in this way his contingent intentionality in shaping such experiences. In other words, the participant does not create new solidarities from scratch, but rather shifts his consciousness to already existing bonds between himself and immigrants, drawing on common histories of immigration (see also, O'Sullivan-Lago, this volume).

The process of representing migrants operated on the basis of the recognition that migrants play an essential and active role in the constitution of individual and societal being and becoming. The participant's own existence was perceived to be entangled with that of the migrants, grounding it in intimate relationships with them. Indeed, the participant drew meaning in his life from the existence of migrants (i.e. as bringing change and diverse possibilities and perspectives), in tandem with opening up himself to them (i.e. forming close social ties and allowing himself to change). For

this respondent, this process of taking as well as offering something back to the migrants (i.e. friendship, opportunity to build their lives) contributed to the making of his own but also Britain's reality.

> Well, immigration has affected the UK very very positively. You will be very hard pushed to find someone who is a native Celt. There are almost no native Celts left. There is a few people who are left who are actually of the earliest stock that we know of as English that are left in the far corners of Wales and Cornwall. Most people don't remember that. They say 'oh immigration is people who came after I was born and so this lot of people are evil immigrants that are stealing our jobs'. Whereas the fact that my family came here two hundred years ago, that wasn't immigration? In fact we even have politicians who trade on that. You make people feel scared by something then we can make laws to give us more power. Once you have moved down the track of acquiring power… I don't really see that much of the problem with mass popular migrations. What I do find interesting is the migrations of the poor. If a wealthy person wants to come and live in England then that is absolutely fine no problem what so ever. If a poor person wants to come to London and set up a business or find a job or whatever they will do as much as possible to try and do their life as difficult as possible for them. And that seems to me, well, I call it double standard but it is actually a traditional British double standard where the wealthy are above question and the poor are below complete contempt… Where I live, it is the most ethnically diverse place on the planet. Most of the people that I know are not English. So yeah I would say it does make a difference in my life. I know people from anywhere because of where I live. And I would say it has been a benefit. (Participant 17)

In sum, these findings show that identifying similarities between self and other is not enough in advancing solidarity. Rather, solidarity is based on being able to 'revive' the historical and social contingencies that bind people together in specific ways. This process is grounded in the willingness to acknowledge the limits of one's own knowledge and broaden one's perspective through a 'fusion of horizons'.

It is interesting to note that there was an absence of 'purist' discourses in this set of interviews; that is, discourses characterised by complete exclusion of the perspective of the other and rooted in solely negative representations of the other. In contrast, 'purist' discourses took an eminent role in the interviews with the Greek participants of this research, which were not presently presented here. In light of this, in interpreting the present findings, we need to emphasise that the interviews were conducted in London, a place with a long history of cultural diversity and belongs to a country with an equally long history of democratic stability.

DISCUSSION

British immigration policies have tried to support the ideal of coherence through promoting shared British values and have been based on the illusion that they can master Britain's destiny, promote harmony and preserve a past-oriented view of Britishness. The recent decision of the new government to impose an annual cap on immigration goes down a similar path. This type of reasoning promotes the myth of 'lost solidarity' as an absolute end-state rooted in the importance of fostering coherence and order through cultivating a climate of tolerance of differences and appreciation that others are like 'us'. However, insofar as the human condition is essentially fraught with struggles and conflicts and "each state of the social world is no more than a temporary equilibrium" (Bourdieu, 1997:41), we agree with Thompson and Wildavsky (1986), who argue that policies should be preoccupied with tensions and struggles rather than cohesion and order.

With this in mind, we have tried to reconcile the notion of solidarity with the importance of acknowledging and dealing with the tensions that arise from our 'thrownness' in the world (Heidegger, 1962). Drawing on Gadamer's concept of dialogue and solidarity, we have argued that understanding is always bound to historically given contexts of meanings, what Gadamer terms 'horizons'. However, horizons are not static but can be broadened if we direct our consciousness to these manifold contexts, enabling us to evaluate our being and being with others in the world as a whole and realise specific projects that we share and tie us together. These horizons are not always visible insofar as our understanding is often habitual and our attention is drawn to what is immediate and easy to us. Hence, expanding and 'fusing

horizons' unfolds through a never-ending agonising dialogue with the other that is fraught with mis- and non-understandings, transformations and re-adjustments and, fundamentally, with the ontological conflict between stability and change.

In the present study, participants dealt with these tensions in different ways. Many participants constructed positive representations of the migrants but did not engage with their perspective, viewing immigration only in terms of what it can bring to (or take away from) Britain. This objectification of migrants, as a burden or an investment to British economy, resonates with the public policy discourse of 'managed migration'. In the second type of encounters, there was partial perspective taking, that is, a back-and-forth process of engaging with and disregarding the perspective of the other. This type of encounter with the other was indicative of the processes involved in the way towards a 'fusion of horizons', whereby the respondents misinterpreted, re-evaluated their claims, recognised their biases, but could not embrace these as integral of their encounters with the others. The final type of encounter was closer to the Gadamerian 'fusion of horizons' with participants engaging with their own historicity and its inevitable links with the migrants' historicity, which provided the contexts for constructing a meaningful relationship with the migrants.

It is only through exploring different ways of perceiving, making sense of and dealing with the different and often competing situations and representations that compose social life, can 'otherness' become part of an integrative narrative about ourselves, our identity and a source of meaning and strength rather than a threat (Giddens, 1991). The experience of 'fusing horizons' demands that we face the challenges, tensions and struggles emerging out of it. But as Dellmayr (1993) notes, the acknowledgement of these tensions needs to be approached with care, as they can easily lead to mutual repugnance and segregation. 'Fusing horizons' and reviving solidarities presupposes willingness and commitment to such a difficult endeavour.

In light of this, Gergen (2009) argues that the challenge is to find ways to cultivate 'relational responsibility' between self and other. As Park (this issue) argues, moral responsibility towards others is a prerequisite for the development of social solidarity. Gergen uses the term 'relational responsibility' to emphasise the role of collective action in cultivating commitment to mutual recognition and dealing with the tensions arising out of this process. He explains that this is a type of responsibility

does not just hold the individual accountable and goes beyond the compassion for the other. It is a responsibility that emphasises the role of synergies between communities, institutions, governments, organisations to cultivate dialogical relationships on many practical levels, such as the family, education, community, organisations, government. This responsibility should be cultivated not only on the interpersonal level but also between governments, between large institutions and communities, which have a great control over these relationships.

How does relational responsibility relate to the British policies on immigration and to the present study? Controlling immigration influx, managing 'suspect communities', or increasing the opportunities of contact between different communities have been the main strategies of British immigration policies. However such policies construct and sustain stigmatising representations of migrants which hinder social solidarity (Kessi, this issue). Insofar as socially shared perceptions of migrants play a central role in dealing with plurality and heterogeneity (Sampson, 2009), these strategies do not suffice to change British representations of migrants and restore interpersonal and inter-group trust. Reviving solidarities is a process that is contingent on a minimal readiness to allow ourselves to be confronted and changed by others through 'fusing our horizons' with those of others. In other words, solidarity in multicultural societies rests upon mutual accommodation and readiness to change (Berry, this issue). Yet this readiness goes hand in hand with learning. And learning relies on participatory systems of relations, wherein dialogue can be practiced (Linehan & Maccarthy, 2000) and people can learn that there are no better answers, guarantees and certainty. As long as the structures that promote such learning are absent on an institutional, societal, political and educational level, it is difficult for people to become willing to confront the finitude of their knowledge, come in conflict with themselves and others and learn how to adapt.

With this paper we tried to shed light on the difficult and challenging conditions that contour the process of understanding different knowledge systems. We hope it can provide some tools to policy makers as well as to all actors of collective action to better understand the contingencies inherent in intercultural communication in order to empower people to deal with these in more flexible and adaptive ways.

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