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Interfaith: One Size Fits All?

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Interfaith: One Shoe Size Fits All?

Presented at 14th Bi-annual Conference of Student Services in Ireland

Mind, Body Spirit, the Holistic Approach to the Student Experience

Conference Wednesday the 19th – 20th of June 2013

Introduction

This paper will provide a framework for interfaith activity in contemporary Western European settings. A further exploration of the concepts of globalisation, immigration and cosmopolitanism reveals how these 'global' phenomena have impacted on and transformed the local environment and have resulted in the emergence of the term 'glocalisation'. The paper then extrapolates as to how these contemporary phenomenon reveal something of the nature of religious belief. The paper discusses how religion is manifesting itself in various ways in our globalising world and it further examines a theoretical framework to assist in understanding this manifestation. Using the knowledge gained from this framework the paper will draw the boundaries for a theoretical framework for those interested in promoting interfaith activity in their local setting. The framework for interfaith activity will be tested applied to the work of two current interfaith groups the *Mid West Interfaith Network* (MWIN) and the *Dublin City Interfaith Forum* (DCIF). Finally the paper will show how the framework is useful in the establishment of an *ispace* in a third level institute. The *ispace* is a room set aside for prayer, reflection and meditation by people of all faith and none.

Diversity

Despite what we may think the world has always lived with diversity. History records that when orders were given in the Imperial Army of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

orders they were issued in sixteen languages¹. Whether diversity took the form of Assyrians, Medes or Persians for the Israelites; they, like many people throughout history, had to live alongside diverse groups. There is evidence to show that Ancient tribes of aboriginal peoples in Australia developed norms and guidelines defining how they related to neighbouring tribes². Among many religious groups, diversity was cultivated through a spirit of hospitality. This is especially evident among the older Christian religious orders in Europe notably the Benedictines who have been present at the core of European society for over fifteen hundred years. One Benedictine writing about the significance of hospitality quotes from Tukaram, a Hindu poet of the seventeenth century;

You are making your prayer to your God
When a man knocks on your door.
If you ignore him, your prayer is an impiety...
You close your heart to the unexpected guest
And offer a ritual meal to your God.
If you make a distinction between your guest and your God,
Your liturgy is so much crap.³

Reflecting on how diversity was managed in different eras and cultures may prove helpful for policy makers as they grapple with approaches to the management of diversity in our world today. However, the nature of diversity differs over time and unique challenges are faced in today's world. The one point of learning from the past and indeed from the present is that diversity cannot be ignored. Paraphrasing the words of Ed West; colour blind policies do not lead to colour blind societies⁴. Naming the contemporary policy contexts is a necessary act in order to highlight the factors that give rise to the emergence of religion and interfaith activity in our world today in the face of our increasingly diverse societies. This paper will explore the contemporary policy context by examining the concepts of Globalisation, Immigration, Cosmopolitanism and Integration and will establish a theoretical framework through which interfaith activity can be both understood and promulgated.

At this stage it is important to clarify the significance and purpose of Interfaith activity. This activity can take many forms. In essence the activity involves people of different

¹ West, Ed, (2013) *The Diversity Illusion; What We Got Wrong About Immigration & How To Set It Right*, London: Gibson Square.

² McConchie, Peter, (2003) (Ed.) *Elders: Wisdom from Australia's Indigenous Leaders*. London, Cambridge University Press.

³ De Béthune, Pierre-François, (2002) *By Faith and Hospitality; The Monastic Tradition as a model for Interreligious Encounter*. Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing. (pg. 5)

⁴ Ed West is a journalist who writes regularly for *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Spectator*, *The Times* and is currently features editor of *The Catholic Herald*. His recent publication examines the concept and reality of diversity in the United Kingdom. West, Ed, (2013) *The Diversity Illusion; What We Got Wrong About Immigration & How To Set It Right*, London: Gibson Square. (pg. 100)

religious faiths and belief systems engaging with one another. Not all religious faiths find they can engage in interfaith activity but there are many who do. There are many initiatives at a local level this includes two groups mentioned in this study, one based in Limerick, the other in Dublin. These local initiatives reflect a global interest in interfaith activity. At a broader level, in 1970 the World Conference of Religions for Peace, convened in Kyoto bringing leaders of the world religions together to pursue a peace agenda. The Parliament of World's Religions hosted a conference in 1993 to mark the centenary of the first Parliament meeting in Chicago. The Parliament encourages dialogue and discussion among members of various faiths and none. The last Parliament took place in Melbourne Australia in 2009. Much of the effort in interfaith activity, especially those that have an objective of mutual peace, focuses on building personal relationships between people of various faiths⁵. For the purpose of this study interfaith activity refers to a range of activities promoting understanding and tolerance among people of various faith backgrounds.

Four Social Policy Perspectives.

Globalisation.

Globalisation in literature has three points of reference. The first relates to an actual definition of globalisation; the second studies the effects of globalisation and the third aspect of the study of globalisation is a judgement as to whether it is a good thing or a bad thing. Focusing on the first and second point this study will not attempt to make a value judgement on the subject in question, rather in this short overview of globalisation this study will attempt highlight how it has contributed to a change in the fabric of society.

The heart of globalisation is the global marketplace. This market place is undergoing rapid and constant change which is accelerated due to rapid technological developments. These changes shift power and attention away from the nation-state 'towards the abstract, decentred global market place, where business and finance capital operate in a zone outside the reach of any global polity, or any international political/legal entity'⁶. Hand in hand with this 'new world order' that facilitates the movement of capital is ever fearful presence of 'a new world disorder' as traditional borders and boundaries that formerly contained and sustained homogeneous identity are now flung wide open allowing more fluid, diverse, multi-cultural identities become the more normative

⁵ Dufy Toft, Monica, Philpott, Daniel, Shat, Timothy Samuel, (2009) *God's Century; Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*, London: W.W. Norton & Company. (pg. 183-4)

⁶ Somers, Margaret R. (2008) *Genealogies of Citizenship; Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pg. 16)

manner of being. Without making a judgement on the benefits, disadvantages or inevitability of this phenomenon in the midst of these changes there is a loss of what was for many. There is little time to express this grief and loss as everything changes at a spurious rate. The predictable, stable, homogenous nature of the local environment gives way to a more fluid diverse space captured in the words of a contemporary Irish poet in a poem entitled Malaga O'Malaga;

We were alone for nine hundred years
now all those loving collisions
are turning us into right ninnies.
We are sobbing and bobbing
and all over happy and secure
but our clothes are all creased⁷.

The 'loving collisions' encouraged by globalisation are felt most acutely by people. Though the fixation of globalisation with the global marketplace, globalisation has an immense impact on those who occupy this space. For those who dwell in that space the reality of globalisation and the parallel desire for republican self-rule, self containment and predictability are at odds with one another. If a border opens up to the former; something of the latter is sacrificed. Commenting on this phenomenon Christopher Caldwell is of the view that;

both forces...are spreading through acts and concessions, each of which is too small to protest, but all of which, taken cumulatively, spell a permanent and undesirable cultural alteration to their (European) continent⁸.

It is because of these 'loving collisions' and their impact on the fabric of society that leads one commentator to state that most of the problems and issues confronting any understanding of religion are related to globalisation⁹. The most obvious expression of the changes taken place is felt in migration where people from various religious backgrounds are meeting on one another's doorsteps.

Migration

From earliest times when nomadic people moved according to the seasons to seek food and shelter for their livestock, labour has followed capital. The same rule applies today. The unrestrained movement of capital is accompanied by the movement of labour; some legal and managed; some illegal and unmanageable. Migration into the developed world

⁷ Higgins, Rita Ann,(2011) *Ireland is Changing Mother*, Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books. (pg. 26)

⁸ Caldwell, Christopher, (2009) *Reflections on the revolution in Europe; Can Europe Be the Same with Different People in It?* London: Allen Lane. (pg. 270)

⁹ Turner, Bryan S. (2011) *Religion and Modern Society, Citizenship, Secularisation and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pg.vii)

occurs because people from poorer countries wish to make their fortunes in countries that they perceive to be wealthier. They perceive that there is more opportunity in that place rather than the place of their birth. Another factor contributing to the growth of migration worldwide is that the wealthier, developed countries have lower birth rates. This creates the need for immigrants to take on roles that the long term settled population no longer have an appetite for¹⁰. Furthermore the global market place favours immigration because the availability of migrant labour often serves to keep downward pressure on wages in the service sector. Despite the perception that migration offers more opportunities for those who migrate to use their skills and increase their incomes, recent research in Canada has shown that immigrants face greater barriers in obtaining jobs that match their skills base in urban settings when compared with rural settings. The research also shows that immigrants settling and living in these cities have lower wages than their counterparts in rural areas¹¹.

These push and pull factors show the inevitability of migration in our globalising world. The implication of this is that people from various backgrounds, nationalities, religious and cultural settings now meet and engage in ways they never imagined. When a country imports factors of production, legally or illegally; they are importing factors of production who are agents of social change. This is happening so fast that policy cannot keep up with the immensity and speed of change. Governments are quite simply incapable of knowing in what particular place and in which particular time, workers are needed. Despite this, there is an increasing amount of research highlighting the impact of immigration on society generally (Caldwell, 2009; Newbold, 2007; Fetzer, 2000, Hieronymi, 2005). Referring to the various waves of immigration Caldwell noted that 'the economic benefits immigration brought were marginal and temporary...the social changes that immigration brought were massive and enduring'¹².

These changes have an impact both on the members of the society who pre-date the arrival of fresh waves of immigrants and the immigrants themselves. There are varying degrees of reaction by the long term settled member of the communities. Some love the idea of immigration but may not like immigrants. There are those who welcome the diversity made manifest in the phenomenon of chicken tikka masala and other oriental dishes that create diversity for their palate while they may dislike the broader aspects of

¹⁰ In 2001 the United Nations published a report called *Replacement Migration* noting that if Europe is to offset the pressure on society created by an aging population up to 2050 it will have to increase immigration rates of 25 million per annum. This is almost 50 times the present rate of immigration.

¹¹ Frank, Kristyn (2013) Immigrant Employment Success in Canada: Examining the Rate of Obtaining a Job Match. *International Migration Review*, 47, 1, 76-105.

¹² Caldwell, Christopher, (2009), (pg. 22).

immigration made manifest in statements like 'they take our jobs'. Research by Robert Putnam found that in the face of diversity most long-term settled people 'hunkered down' in order to avoid contact with their changing neighbourhoods and the people in it; he further noted that in ethnically diverse societies people tended to trust their neighbours less¹³. The sense of alienation and isolation has created a shift in the discourse on migration. Initially migration and migrants may be discussed in an economic framework; (scholars such as Friedman and Galbraith support the notion that migration is the oldest action against poverty) but recently the discourse has shifted from one of redistribution to one of identity. Those who see old familiar neighbourhoods changing wonder to whom they belong in their rapidly changing world. Those who arrive, particularly if they experience discrimination or ghettoisation, cling to their identity as a means of belonging in the midst of uncertainty, insecurity and fear.

Whether it is a defensive stance adopted by those who do not wish to change or a more progressive stance by those that want change and recognition, identity politics is now a policy lens through which groups articulate their role in society.

The new attention to issues of inclusion, participation and identity has thus vastly expanded the legitimate scope of citizenship studies to include gender, sexuality, race and even environmentalism – to name just a few¹⁴.

A notable absence from this identity list is religious identity. Many scholars have attempted to categorise religious identity within a cultural or ethnic identity or context; however Olivier Roy posits that 'globalisation has shattered the link between religious and cultural markers, a link that was already impermanent'¹⁵. One of the main manifestations of this phenomenon is the observation by Roy that many emerging churches identify themselves apart from traditional religious affiliation, seeing themselves as religious communities that override ethnic and national identities¹⁶.

This phenomenon creates challenges to two political mindsets. Firstly those who espouse the importance of national identity express a concern when they see minority 'identities' claiming greater status than the national identity. This is seen as a threat to national security and a country's stability and identity which they see as further undermining citizenship and democracy. The Iranian Revolution in 1978-79 was an instance when religious identity was more important and sustaining than the secularist one promoted and supported by countries in the west. Secondly, those promoting global outlooks, who

¹³ Putnam, Robert, D. (2006) *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century*; The 2006 Joahn Skytte Prize Lecture, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30, 137-173.

¹⁴ Somers, Margaret, (2011), (pg. 17)

¹⁵ Roy, Olivier, (2010) trans. Ros Schwartz, *Holy Ignorance; When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, London: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd. (pg. 152)

¹⁶ *Ibid*, (pg.156).

perceive a universal vision of humanity with accompanying transnational ethical norms such as that encapsulated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, find identity politics at variance with their political standpoint. The term Cosmopolitanism describes those who adopt this universalist outlook. This outlook which is promoted by various academics has itself given rise to an increase in the expression of religious and ethnic identity as the next section will outline.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism in essence is a belief in the fundamental unity of the whole human race. Just as the nineteenth century advocated for nationalism; cosmopolitanism advocates a postnational state of being. One of the proponents of cosmopolitanism is Kwame Anthony Appiah; born to a mother from England and a father from Ghana; he spent most of his early life in his father's home country. He sees cosmopolitanism as 'the simple idea that in the human community, as in the national community, we need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association'¹⁷. There is no doubt that cosmopolitanism has evolved as a concept in the face of globalisation. Much debate is had as to whether cosmopolitanism is promoting a more globalised world or has come about to initiate a moral reorientation in the face of a world where the human impact on the natural world is more consequential than nature's impact on the human world¹⁸. This phenomenon is occurring for the first time in the evolution of the planet earth and subsequently deserves attention.

Whatever the view of others proponents of cosmopolitanism are of the view that it gives a person the opportunity or ability to stand outside a life that is composed by a single dominant narrative i.e. by any one faith or tradition. Cosmopolitanism allows one 'to draw selectively on a variety of discursive meanings'¹⁹ in the construction of identity and meaning. However this is where cosmopolitanism falls on its sword so to speak. Despite claiming to not be influenced or dominated by any one narrative there is evidence to suggest that cosmopolitanism adopts a world view that favours certain sections of the global community. One commentator goes so far to say that the search for a global ethic is a form of *Pax Americana*; 'for too long American cultural exporters has been

¹⁷ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, (2006) *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, London: Penguin Books (pg. xvii)

¹⁸ This era is referred to as the 'Anthropocene Era' by environmental scientists. Yates, Joshua J. (2009) Mapping the Good World: The New Cosmopolitans and Our Changing World Picture, *The Hedgehog Review*, 11:3. (pg. 21)

¹⁹ Waldron, Jeremy (1992) quoted in Vertovec, Stephen and Cohen, Robin, (2002) Introduction: Conceiving Cosmopolitanism in Vertovec, Stephen and Cohen, Robin, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, London: Oxford University Press. (pg. 4)

constructing narratives for others'²⁰. In a similar vein the global advertising of transnational corporations is being counteracted by a growth in television series depicting rural havens. The programs are 'indicative of a longing for simple stability that is thoroughly exploited by the global-local style advertising of the world's largest corporations'²¹.

One of the main critics of cosmopolitanism is the sociologist Craig Calhoun. In an article entitled 'The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers'²² he examines the elite occupational status of the archetypal person who is cosmopolitan in outlook. Calhoun also sees the cosmopolitan viewpoint emanating from a domineering western mindset which he comments has a tendency towards 'organised non-perception' with regard to human beings who have diverse starting points caused mostly by adversarial economic circumstances and ethnic identities. From the perspective of this article the most interesting observation by Calhoun is that cosmopolitanism ignores the range of solidarities that those from less privileged backgrounds and those displaced by globalisation depend on for their well-being and survival. These 'solidarities' include religious and ethnic belonging, solidarities that are of the utmost importance for those treated unfairly in the world²³. There is no doubt that a global movement or at least a philosophy trying to promote a global outlook has the ability to subvert structures of tribe, state or religion by ignoring or by avoiding them i.e. 'organised non-perception'. The term used to describe this process in social policy, namely that which aids the inclusion of all people in society with due regard for those on the margins or who run the risk of being on the margins is called integration.

Integration

There are as many problems defining integration as there is difficulty finding consensus as to exactly what integration is. In a work entitled *Integration: Mapping the Field in 2002* by the Home Office in London, the authors of the report commented that 'there is need to develop a good theoretical and conceptual framework for addressing and understanding integration issues'. The framework that is most consistently provided is social cohesion. Again this concept is difficult to define. However when one sees that the concept of a socially cohesive Europe is set against the backdrop to two World Wars in

²⁰ James, Paul (2006) *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism; Bringing Theory Back In*, London: Sage Publications. (pgs 202-3)

²¹ Ibid pg. 299

²² Calhoun, Craig, (2000) *The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers*, in Vertovec, Stephen and Cohen, Robin, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, London: Oxford University Press.

²³ Calhoun, Craig, (2004) *Is it time to be postnational?* In Stephen May, T. Modood and Judith Squires, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights*, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

the twentieth century the idea of and the motivation for social cohesion is easier to understand. The challenge of integration within a social cohesion framework has acknowledged some important characteristics which offer guidelines to those charged with cultivating integration. Firstly integration is a two way process; if not, it is simply assimilation, forcing people to adopt the dominant norms and values of a particular nation or group. Secondly, the process is not composed of any one single incident but it is a process that occurs on several planes. Thirdly, certain groups follow different patterns of incorporation which cannot be forced. Fourthly, it is more than likely an umbrella term with overlapping process within certain spheres or domains some of which are economic, some cultural others that are social. Fifthly, and more recently, integration has come to mean the management of diversity without divisiveness²⁴. Good integration within a progressive social cohesion framework is encouraged not solely for the benefits of individuals but because it has an overall contribution to the well-being of civil society. Those who have an eye on economic outcomes are all too aware that the 'social capital' arising from a cohesive and integrated society is immense. Research by Robert Putnam, alluded to earlier, shows that; 'it was these horizontal ties and norms of trust that served as the lifeblood of prosperous liberal democracies'²⁵.

It is clear from this overview of integration that interactive bonds between people are at the basis of a well integrated, cohesive and productive society. From the perspective of this article it is fair to ask, does religious practise and religious affiliation have a role in this task within society? Resulting from an increased interest in the sociology of religion a number of findings are emerging. Going back to Durkheim's work among aboriginal peoples in Australia to contemporary sociologists it is emerging that 'religion is somehow critical in the construction of the social world'²⁶. The industrial world according to Bouma and Ling was focused on the production of goods to support the ever growing and expanding work-place brought about by the industrial revolution. The role of religion was to produce workers that would show up on a Monday morning sober, morally enthused, loyal and fit to work i.e. to produce. The shift from the industrial to the post-industrial age has brought a further shift whereby the person is no longer seen primarily as a producer but as a consumer. The implication for religion is that;

religions are seen not as durable institutions integrating individuals (*as in the past*) into substantial cultural belief systems and social norms. Rather, they are

²⁴ For a more complete study of these concepts see Hilliard, Alan (2009) '*Mind the Gap: Social Cohesion, Migration and Integration*', MSocSc Thesis, Dublin: UCD

²⁵ Somers, Margaret, (2009), (pg. 233)

²⁶ Turner, Bryan S., (2011) *Religion and Modern Society; Citizenship, Secularisation and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pg. 30).

seen as sellers of identity...consumers may buy an identity as one part of a complex self-designed identity²⁷.

The theme of identity once again comes to the fore when giving consideration to religious belief and affiliation in society today. From the perspective of policy of integration, the preservation and cultivation of identity is complex. When a person or a group of people settle into a new country as migrants which identity is that country trying to cultivate? The one they have brought with them or the identity of their place of recent settlement? Furthermore when is the fostering of identity at a religious, ethnic and cultural an advantage and a disadvantage to the overall integration program of a receiving country? Referring back to the sociologist Robert Putnam he is of the view that the bonds that occur between people are very important in the promotion of a prosperous liberal democracy. However he also points out the distinction between what he terms 'bonding social capital' and 'bridging social capital'. Bonding is what happens between groups who have similar interests, values and culture. Bridging is bonding across various divides. Putnam is of the view that

'a society that has only bonding social capital and no bridging social capital looks like Beirut or Belfast or Bosnia...tight communities but isolated from one another'²⁸.

'Globalisation'

This overview of globalisation, immigration, cosmopolitanism and integration reveals a constant interplay between the global and the local. Decisions taken at a global level i.e. the easy movement of capital and the actions of multinationals has an impact at the local level; various industries need labour supplies which have an impact on the place that people migrate from and the place to which they go. This impact, as we have seen, has many social and cultural layers disturbing what may have been an insular, homogeneous environment. Within this complex interchange the need for identity and belonging still exists. This manifests itself in the way in which people seek to nurture their ethnic identity and their sense of belonging. One of the ways in which this is achieved is through religious belief and affiliation.

This interplay between the global and the local has been noted by researchers and in 1992 Roland Robertson coined the phrase 'glocalisation'. The advance of globalised processes has not led to the extermination of localised particularities and cultural

²⁷ Bouma, Gary D. Ling, Rod, (2007) *Religious Resurgence and Diversity and Social Cohesion in Australia*, in Jupp, James and Nieuwenhuysen, John, *Social Cohesion in Australia*, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. (pg. 88) (italics added)

²⁸ Quoted in West, Ed., (2013) (pg. 111)

standardisation; in some cases it has meant the strengthening of local particularities rather than their expected annihilation. There has been a growth in global phenomenon such as, global tourism, world sport, world organisations, global health crisis (SARS and HIV) however, as our overview above has shown this should not lull promoters of globalisation or cosmopolitans into a false sense of the world as a culturally integrated space. Neither should a policy of 'organised non-perception' be allowed to continue unchallenged.

Theoretical Framework

There is no doubt that the global processes that the world is subject to today has affected the nature and manifestation of religious belief and affiliation nevertheless it would be wrong to see religious belief or affiliation as a by product of the globalisation process. Before we look at the characteristics of religion today in the face of our changing global context it is important to examine whether these observations in a theoretical framework. The work of Lehmann in Latin America among the Liberation Theology/ Basic Christian Communities and the Pentecostal Movement led him to an interesting observation²⁹. Noting the way both these groups traversed borders, using modern telecommunications techniques, and adopting English as their language he noted that these groups are as much carriers of modernity as reactive to it!

Lehmann's work highlights the need for a theoretical framework from which to view religion in our world today. One emerging finding is that rather than religion being understood as a object of private devotion it is 'somehow critical to the actual constitution of the social world' that we inhabit³⁰. It is incumbent on sociology then to present a framework through which this 'critical' presence is manifest. Amongst the many sociologists who have tackled this issue it is Peter Beyer who has made a contribution of note. His analysis starts with a reflection on the 1989 *fatwa* pronounced by the Ayatollah on Salman Rushdie. Following his research in Europe and North America he notes that religion has two institutionally specialised and systemic forms: the first is the purely private and the second is the place of religion in the public, political arena. It is the second of these that is of most interest to this study as it helps to frame the observations from the four social policy perspectives in the early part of this paper. In the second of his systemic form he further notes that religion operates in two ways. Firstly there is a tendency towards particularism and cultural distinctiveness and secondly there is what he terms a form of 'ecumenism'³¹. At this stage it is important to

²⁹ Davie, Grace, (2007) *The Sociology of Religion*, London: Sage Publications Ltd. (pg 211)

³⁰ Turner, Bryan S. (2011) (pg. 30)

³¹ Davie, Grace (2007) (pg. 210)

ask if these observations fit into a broader sociological analysis and if so does this analysis support the findings of Lehmann and Beyer?

Otherness

The sociologist Ulrich Beck argues that we cannot be backward looking; we cannot look back to the days when nations gave us safe and comfortable borders within which we flourished or died. Regardless of the shortcomings of cosmopolitanism, religions have to adopt a gaze that acknowledges the porous nature of borders and accepts the reality of the subsequent interactions with people of varied religious and cultural outlooks. Observing the impact of this in Europe, Beck sees the emergence of what he terms an ever shifting pantheism and a situation where the core of dialogue is based less on peace and more on truth. This environment presents what he describes as the clash of universalisms, to highlight this Beck refers to the occasion when Benedict XVI condemned the Iraqi war in the presence of President George W. Bush. This 'clash of universalisms' sees Beck note that this is an instance where for the sake of peace, the truth of one cannot be sacrificed. This example reveals that the ecumenical dynamic of belief is at the heart of the interfaith movement. The fact that there are commonalities amongst believers from different belief systems is not permission to ignore differences rather it provides a platform to come to terms with difference.

The interfaith platform is a place where universalism can be understood and celebrated instead of clashing. What then is the value of ecumenism among global religions if it is not a quest for peace by the avoidance of truths that may cause conflict, what is ecumenism if it is only a form of pantheism where everyone essentially believes the same thing? For Beck the core of this 'ecumenism' is tolerance as he posits that 'there is no strong religious identity without the willingness to recognise the religious otherness of others'³². At an even deeper level he writes in the conclusion of his work that 'we have to include the excluded others in order to survive'³³.

The insights of Beyer, Lehmann, Bouma, Beck and others reveal that the interfaith movement generally is not a by product of our globalising, cosmopolitan world; it is rather religions contribution to modernity. This is in keeping with the finding of this study that religion and religious groups play a key role in the development of the various phases and evolutions in our societies, nations and transnational alignments. Not relegated to the private sphere alone even though our framework shows that the private domain is important in religious faith in our globalising world, religion also plays a key

³² Beck, Ulrich, (2010) *A God of One's Own*, Cambridge, Polity Press. (pg. 175)

³³ *Ibid*, (pg.199)

part in the construction of the social world we inhabit. The interfaith movement helps embrace the two manifestations of globalisation which is awareness of bonds of our common humanity and the acknowledgement of what one might term ethnic, religious and cultural differences. Religious interfaith dialogue is at the forefront of 'glocalisation', not just to promote a false syncretism but to allow individual identity (especially that of minorities) to flourish in the face of globalising, cosmopolitan outlooks.

To conclude then interfaith is less about 'One Shoe Size Fitting All'. Interfaith is the opportunity to stand in the shoes of another who may adopt a different worldview. The other may see their world through a different religious and indeed, a different cultural lens. This awareness of mutual survival as formulated by Beck is an insight into how society in a contemporary Western European context can survive, even flourish. However, what is most interesting is that his words are similar in tone and outlook to those of an elder from an aboriginal tribe in Australia; some of these tribes have been in existence of over 50,000 years. These words of Grandfather Walter Nona are the distilled wisdom of many generations, he said, 'If you do not have respect for the culture of another then your chances of survival will be decreased'.

Policy Implications

The framework provided by Beyer noting the role of religious faith and identity in the purely private domain and its role in the more public, political arena where both particularism and 'ecumenism' are promoted are key to interfaith policy today. The overview of the four social policy categories alludes to the risk that those whose who feel marginalised may retreat deeper into their cultural, religious and/or ethnic identities thus dwelling in a purely private sphere, further isolating themselves from their broader social context. They may even perceive the public, political arena as a place that reinforces their sense of alienation. Great skill is needed in interfaith dialogue and organisations to facilitate the privacy of belief while at the same time drawing out those elements that are 'ecumenical' and those elements that are particular to individuals and groups. The word 'ecumenical' may not be suitable to an interfaith setting that has a history of Christian dominance. Ecumenism conjures up the engagements and impasses among the dominant Christian churches in a Western European context. The question lurking behind ecumenical activity is what can peoples from varying faith backgrounds and beliefs participate in together? This same question is at the heart of interfaith activity. Drawing on the work of Lehmann and Beyer and their framework for religion in a contemporary European setting, these questions leaves us with the possibility of a three stranded approach to interfaith policy: The Private, The Participatory and The Particular.

The Private, The Participatory and The Particular...Exploring a Framework

This three stranded approach that this paper proposes as a theoretical framework for interfaith activity is helpful in settings such as third level institute that presently experiences an influx of students from various faith backgrounds and cultural settings. Before we examine how this framework might apply to third level institutes let us first examine what might be meant by The Private, The Participatory and The Particular. The role of the author as a co-founder of the MWIN and as facilitator and advisor to the DCIF Forum is a helpful resource in this exploration.

The Private

Firstly the facilitation of interfaith activity is considered from the perspective of what we term *The Private*. How can an institution facilitate the private devotional needs of people from various faith backgrounds? How can this be achieved without one faith tradition remaining dominant or interfere with the private space of another person or group? These are all very important questions and at the heart of an institutions wish to set aside a space for a person, regardless of their faith, to develop and nurture their spiritual life. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. The great charter of the Roman Catholic Church on migration which marks the tenth anniversary of its publication in 2014 underlines the importance of piety in the life of the migrant. Though it speaks from a Catholic perspective, its teaching can be applied to many faiths. Referring to the care of migrants the document informs us that;

'Popular piety ...deserves particular attention as it is characteristic of many migrant communities...it is a fundamental link with their church of origin and with their ways of living and understanding their faith'³⁴.

Attending to the private needs of a person of another faith translates into the provision of a place where they can pursue their private devotions, prayers and pious practices in a manner that nurtures their unique faith without an imposition or expectation that they have to compromise their belief system or that of others. This is the focus of what we term *The Private* in interfaith activity. One effort that has been made to achieve this is the provision of an *ispace* at the Dublin Institute of Technology in Bolton St. The article will return to this provision at a later stage.

The Participatory

Secondly our theoretical framework now considers the concept of *The Participatory*. This is a more complex element of the framework. Forced participatory activities by a well

³⁴ Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelling People, (2004) *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, Vatican City: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20040514_erga-migrantes-caritas-christi_en.html (Para. 46)

intentioned third party can impinge on the private belief system of members of different faiths. Forced participation can cause hurt, offense and even cultivate feelings of racism and discrimination. At another level, some members of an interfaith group may believe that all are one; however this perspective may not be shared by all in the same group. Sikhs and Bahias for instance have little problem in believing that we all worship the one God whereas others may not share this same tenet of faith. These underlying beliefs beg the question can interfaith groups be participatory especially when there may be a myriad of belief systems that may even appear to be in conflict? The answer is that there can be plenty of participatory activities if due regard is paid to various sensitivities.

There are a range of activities common to most if not all faiths, these include, pilgrimage, fasting, meditation and desire for peace among peoples. Furthermore there is a difference between praying together and meeting together to pray. The first of these is difficult as prayer chosen by one group may be offensive to another. However there are prayers which are acceptable to most faith groups. For example when Pope John Paul II called for an International World Day of Prayer in Assisi in 1986 those of the one hundred and sixty religious leaders who gathered shared the text of the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi. In most instances public interfaith prayer involves giving each faith tradition time to prayer their prayers in the presence of their brothers and sisters from other faiths. As in most activities but especially in interfaith activity, in order to develop good participatory structures, it is necessary to cultivate healthy consultations and systems of dialogue to ensure that there is due regard to those involved in the group. To assist in this regard both the MWIF and the DCIF have vision statements which all members sign up to³⁵. Basically membership is decided on the basis of a person's or a group's willingness to accept the norms and principles of the vision statement. This exercise cultivates a basis for participatory activities from which other activities grow. It is worth noting that most antagonism with regard to views on participation of various religious groups in society in ventures of faith arises from well meaning secularists and not necessarily from faith groups different to their own. The topic arising from this is to what degree all those who espouse a strictly humanist or atheistic outlook can participate in interfaith groups and activities. This is a complex topic that deserves further research in its own right.

The Particular

Thirdly and finally, how can interfaith activity cultivate The Particular aspects of an individual or group faith while involved in interfaith activity? It is worth noting that the

³⁵ For details see <http://www.dublincityinterfaithforum.org/resources/> and http://www.midwestinterfaith.org/about_us.php

particular manifestations of a persons or groups religious tradition cannot be expected to be manifested in the private domain alone; public recognition and display of a particular aspect of a person religious tradition appears to be significant. Experience within the MWIN and DCIF shows that the consideration of the particular elements of the various faiths other than one's own which rather than causing alienation, is precisely the element that deepens the bonds between the members of the group. Visit to one another's places of worship, invitations to and participation in the celebrations of the feasts of the various faith groups have proven to be an uplifting experience not only for those who visit and participate but also for those who extend the invitation. Furthermore one significant element of growth for DCIF in particular is involvement in facilitated discussions by the Forum members. These discussions take place in public settings, one of which included a meeting of *The Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Conference*³⁶ hosted by Ireland as part of the European Presidency. These discussions ponder the emergence and effect of the particularities of member's faith traditions and systems and their impact on the members of the Forum individually and collectively. These facilitated dialogues often impinge upon comfort zones for the participants as they move a person from their own belief system causing the participants to reflect on the commonality and diversity within and among the group.

This overview of the theoretical framework helps those who are interested in the provision of resources for interfaith groups and for those who wish to encourage interfaith activity. The categories of The Private, The Participatory and The Particular may be used individually to meet the needs of people or elements of all three may be incorporated into interfaith activity and provision. An example as to the usefulness of the framework will be examined now in the response made to interfaith needs in a third level college of technology in Dublin.

...ispace...

Bolton Street College is part of the Dublin Institute of Technology and is located on the North side of the city close to the city centre. The college has approximately five thousand students comprised mostly of members of the *College of Engineering and Built Environment* with a small number of apprentices. Recent years has seen a growth in the numbers of Erasmus students from various European countries and other international students from many countries including those of a largely Muslim background. The chaplain observed that many Muslim students were seeking out empty classrooms at prayer time, often disturbing those who were waiting to use the classroom for college

³⁶ For details of the work of the Intercultural Cities Conference see <http://www.dublincityinterfaithforum.org/event/26/dcif-seminar-at-intercultural-cities-conference>.

activities. The students themselves were uncomfortable when they were disturbed at prayer. Many other students were using classrooms for meditation or 'headspace' as practises of mediation and mindfulness are now encouraged to offset mental health issues experienced by young adults.

The chaplain put in a request for a room to be set aside as a quiet room to be used by all students and staff. The dominant ethos of the room was that of a quiet, meditative space. A room was allocated and as requested it was adjacent to bathrooms as some faiths require washing facilities before they enter their prayer space. The chaplain developed a number of protocols for the space which prove helpful to the variety of people who use the room. The room was named the *ispace* highlighting in contemporary terminology that this was a space for individuals to use. The protocols are posted on the door of the room and on the inside wall and are as follows: *ispace*, Room 143 is designated as a quiet room for staff and students. It can be used for prayer, reflection and meditation; please contribute to the atmosphere in *ispace* by refraining from talking; please be respectful when entering and leaving *ispace*; *ispace* is open during college hours and will close thirty minutes before the college closes (9.30pm Mon –Thurs and 5.30 on other college days and during holidays); the only literature and items permitted in *ispace* are items that are core to the worship of those who use the room; these items are to be placed in the lockers provided when not in use. All other literature and items will be removed; those who use *ispace* are asked to promote tolerance between people of all beliefs; if any issues arises regarding the use of the room please inform the chaplain in room 254 or the Student's Union Office; please return all items (including chairs) to their designated place when you leave the room; under *no circumstances* is the door to be locked from the inside.

The *ispace* is proving very popular and is meeting the needs of all without being invasive to anyone. The name has caught on and the room is referred to in terms of its name rather than it's number. The room is furnished with chairs, cushions and standard office partitions offering a degree of privacy to those using the room. It is intended to fit the room with shelving which contain separate spaces for items that are core to the various faith traditions and belief systems. These items will be used by individuals as they require, returning them to the allocated space afterwards. In terms of the framework the *ispace* works within the first category namely 'private'. It does not seek to encourage 'participation' among faiths, groups or individuals nor does it in any way seek to engage individuals with the 'particular' elements of another faith system. Providing a space that encourages 'participation' and elements of the 'particular' of different faiths while not being offensive to the private space of those who use the room is difficult. In order for such a space to be effective a lot of discussion, engagement and agreement would need

to be forthcoming from all those who intended to use the room. Fostering such activity also depends on other elements such as the presence of a chaplaincy, its vision and the facilities at the disposal of the chaplaincy and of course the overall ethos of the college.

Conclusion

This paper, by looking through the social policy lens of globalisation, migration, cosmopolitanism and integration, has shown that the nature of the world we live in has changed radically. This is due largely to the movement of people and the participation of people in ideas promoted by new technologies. The day of homogenous nation states is ended. Countries now, particularly those in a Western European setting, have to deal with ethnic, cultural and religious diversity on their doorstep. This study shows that any desire to promote a global world order which overrides local identities is foolhardy and short-sighted as there is a constant interaction between the global and the local captured in the term 'glocalisation' coined by Roland Robertson in 1992. The paper also highlighted the manner in which religious diversity cannot be captured in overarching categories such as culture or ethnicity as some have tended to do in the past. Referring to contemporary sociologists this study revealed the manner in which religious identity is emerging as a category in its own right.

The recognition of religious faith in social policy is important as this study revealed that religious (and ethnic) identities are adhered to more often by those who are feeling excluded or isolated. Furthermore the promotion of bonds between individuals and groups aids the productive capacity of a country, increasing social capital especially if there is an emphasis on bridging between groups from various backgrounds and not just bonding between groups of similar mindsets and outlooks. An overview of the work of Lehman and Beyer provided us with an overview of the manner in which religious belief manifest itself in a globalising world today. Using this framework a basis this study concluded that it is possible to establish a theoretical framework for interfaith activity; the framework is comprised of three elements The Private, The Participatory and The Particular. The framework was further examined in the context of interfaith activity involving two interfaith groups and a facility to foster interfaith space in a third level institute in Dublin. The application of the framework to these particular activities shows its value for those who wish to provide facilities and activities in places of religious diversity in keeping with the desire in integration policy to have diversity without divisiveness.