

# Turn left for Murmansk: 'Fourth World' transculturalism and its cultural ecological framing

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper we review briefly histories and ideologies underlying multiculturalism in Nordic countries, highlighting tensions between integrationist and inclusive approaches. We propose a cultural ecological framework through which we discuss the possibility of a transculturalism based on Fourth World engagement with the environment. Cultural ecology is about the reciprocal interactions and transactions between people and their environments. The Fourth World is a circum-global, pan-arctic region which includes the northern parts of some Nordic countries. We argue that whether or not there is a distinctively Nordic version of multiculturalism, Nordic countries have access to Fourth World ways of engaging with the environment which transcend notions of inter- and multiculturalism and the ideological tensions associated with them.

## PREAMBLE

This paper was originally prepared for the conference 'Is there a Nordic version of multiculturalism?' held in Turku, Finland in September 2010. It was written as a direct response to the question raised by the conference. The question arose from the need for the world's industrial nations to find new strategies for incorporating ethnic minorities into the mainstream of their respective societies. Multiculturalism is a contested term; it is both controversial and misunderstood. It comes in a number of versions, reflecting the distinctive imprint of different societal cultures and political systems. In our conference presentation we focussed on 'Nordic' multiculturalism because the term 'Nordic' is associated with the socio-political-economic systems of several north European/

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north Atlantic countries, although in the case of our argument, 'Fennoscandian' might have been a more appropriate term, as we concentrated on the systems of Finland, Sweden and Norway. The crucial point of the argument, however, is not the labels we attach to the countries, but rather the fact that all three countries have Arctic territories in the Barents Region, a place in the so-called 'Fourth World'. The notion of the 'Fourth World' has less to do with rigid socio-economic-political boundaries and much more to do with a way of life arising from an engagement with the environment that transcends boundaries and indeed transcends notions of multiculturalism.

## INTRODUCTION

"Turn left for Murmansk" may appear to be a somewhat obscure metaphor, but it opens up an important line of argument. It is a metaphor for how worldviews shape the way we engage with our environment and thus how we perceive 'culture'. Travelling south by road from Inari, on the outskirts of Ivalo in Northern Finland, one comes across a sign to Murmansk. To most Europeans (at least to those who have heard of it) Murmansk is some distant outpost in arctic Russia, a place of sub-zero temperatures; it is part of a different world. Travelling from the South, the 'majoritarian' route, one turns right for Murmansk. In turning left, we aim to reverse the cultural metaphor of the dominant South, to take the perspective of the minoritarian North. To the relatively few people who live in those parts, and who enter Ivalo from the north, Murmansk is the next stop on the way to the White Sea. The fact that it is distant place in a different country is of little consequence. What is important is that it is part of the 'Fourth World': a circum-global, pan-arctic region where the ways in which people engage with their environment are cultural in a life-defining manner.

In this paper we first address the question of a Nordic version of multiculturalism by briefly reviewing underlying histories and ideologies. We then outline a cultural ecological framework which forms a theoretical foundation for 'transculturalism' based on Fourth World engagement with the environment. Our argument, which is built up systematically through the paper, is that Fourth World transculturalism transcends notions of inter- and multiculturalism.

## PROBING THE QUESTION:

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A NORDIC VERSION OF MULTICULTURALISM?

According to Greve (2007), the main ethic of the Nordic model of welfare is a form of *universalism* that has its precursors in the Age of Enlightenment, Utopian Socialism, Trade Unionism, the European revolutions of 1848 and Orthodox Marxism. It is deeply rooted in Lutheran Protestantism and concepts of equality. Greve (2007: 45) argues that: "in the welfare state literature different key words have been attached to the Nordic model when analyzing welfare regimes." In the following typology of ideologies, presented by Greve (2007, 45), the 'Nordic' model is embedded in trans-European models of welfarism:

- Social-democratic: high level of de-commodification; universal benefits and high degree of benefit equality;
- Scandinavian (modern): right to work for everyone; universalism; welfare state as employer of first resort and compensator of last resort;
- Non-right hegemony: high social expenditure and use of equalizing instruments in social policy;
- Protestant social-democratic: true work-welfare choice for women; high level of family benefits paid to the mother; importance of Protestantism;
- Scandinavian: social protection as citizenship right; universal coverage; relatively generous fixed benefits for various social risks; financing mainly through fiscal revenues; strong organizational integration;
- Nordic: low percentage of social expenditure financed through personal contributions; high social expenditure as a percentage of GDP; entitlement based on citizenship and labour force participation; use of flat-rate and earnings-related benefit principle.

The key principles to emerge from this typology are related to the interdependence of economic rights and obligations as part of a social compact between a Government and its citizens. But such a model (the Nordic Model) is predicated on ethnic homogeneity, which, according to Andersen et al. (2007, 39), was the norm at the time the welfare state developed and was associated with 'trust', a key ingredient in the 'social capital'

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which was widely believed to improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action. Since then, as Andersen et al. observe, immigration has been substantial and policies have not succeeded fully in integrating immigrants into the labour market and society at large.

Now, there is a widespread perception that the challenges of increasing immigration and of European convergence are creating imbalances in the ethnic composition of Nordic countries. For example, consider the following statement from Andersen et al. (2007, 23): Migration is a natural part of globalization, and flows of labour can support economic growth by, e.g., alleviating specific skill shortages. Immigration could also bring a temporary relief to the demographic challenge – but only under conditions which we believe to be politically unacceptable or unrealistic for other reasons. First, we must reserve the right to admit only young immigrants who are ready to join the labour force quickly and to accept the jobs offered. That puts high demands on the selection of immigrants with respect to age, education, health and language skills. Second, we must not admit dependents (children, parents, relatives) to come with them unless they also fulfil these criteria. Third, we need to ensure that the immigrants do not rely more on the welfare systems than the resident population, i.e., they must not have higher frequency of, for instance, sick absence, unemployment or early retirement. Even if these politically unrealistic conditions could be met, the positive effects of immigration would peter out as immigrants reach retirement age.

The challenges of immigration often result in assimilationist policies (as described by Andersen et al. above) which are in accord with the spirit of inclusion inherent in European Union social policies generally. *The European Index for Inclusion* (Leonard and Griffith, no date; Geddes et al. 2005) states: The duty that falls on states to readapt their societies in order to welcome new communities is immense. Governments must underline respect for the universal values that their states stand for and that attract immigration. But it should not be forgotten that the process of adaptation is not a one-way track. Immigrant communities have to respect the identity of their host society and attempt to develop a sense of integration. (Forward by EU Commissioner António Vitorino)

Integration (in the sense in which it is used in EU policy documents and assimilationist stances) is not the same as inclusion, although generally both terms are used interchangeably. Integration can be seen as a ‘simple’ process of assimilation and accommodation. The minority group, in order for it to be acknowledged as part of the

majority, needs to change and adopt the characteristics of the majority. The majority group accommodates the minority by changing some of its 'entry qualifications'. Integration does not fundamentally change the cultural characteristics of either group and results in a simple 'mixing' of social groups within given social settings. Integration, so defined, focuses on access and participation. Nancy (1991) talks of the 'inoperative community', whereby membership is defined as a 'given' (by the dominant group) and the conditions of membership of the pre-figured community are also determined in advance. In the examples discussed by Greve (2007), listed above, these social settings are essentially economic.

Inclusion on the other hand represents a series of values which are represented in social structures through emergence. A community comes into being only through the participation of its members. The nature of the community is not pre-figured, nor are membership conditions established *a priori*. Instead, social structures emerge through mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence (Bayliss 2003) and necessarily transcend the merely economic or political to embrace the sociocultural aspects of community.

The view of integration expressed in *The European Index for Inclusion* is based on a complex model of citizenship predicated on a series of dimensions (Table 1) which bear a striking resemblance to the Nordic Welfare Model:

DIMENSION	SHORT-TERM	LONG-TERM
ECONOMIC	Entry into the job market Financial independence	Career advancement Income parity
SOCIAL	Established social network Accessing institutions	Diversity within social networks Engaging in efforts to change institutions
CULTURAL	Adaptation of various aspects of lifestyle	Engaging in efforts to redefine cultural identity
POLITICAL	Voting	Participation in political parties Participation in sociopolitical movements

Table 1. Dimensions of integration (Leonard and Griffith no date: 10)

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In the European (and Nordic) project of continuing a universalist welfare system based on citizenship – which, in turn, is based on access, participation and rights – the cultural aspects of *integration* (in both the EU and Nordic systems) are dependent – following from Leonard and Griffith above – on ‘adaptation and redefinition of lifestyles/cultural identities’. The multiculturalism inherent in such a model, which could also be based on a ‘Nordic Model’, attracts such labels as ‘social-democratic’, ‘non-right hegemony’, ‘Protestant social-democratic’, and ‘encompassing’. If the process of integration is integral to the notion of the nation state (or confederations of nation states), then a dominant cultural identity can act as a ‘normative hegemony’ (Bayliss & Dillon 2010) which can be defined, transmitted to other cultural groups, and translated into assimilationist policies which, in turn, create transformations in the cultural minorities (Cowen 2006; 2009). Such a crude ‘multiculturalism’ embraces difference, requires it to change, and then to be assimilated in the majoritarian understanding of the ‘home state’.

Here we would argue that the precursors to the Nordic Welfare system (the Age of Enlightenment, Utopian Socialism, Trade Unionism, the European revolutions of 1848, Orthodox Marxism and Protestantism) are also precursors to a ‘universalist’ multiculturalism that seeks the integration – but not necessarily the inclusion – of ethnic minorities. If we are seeking to move beyond assimilation (of the minorities) or accommodation of difference (by the majorities), we must move towards understanding ‘multicultural’ as something different from a universal model of a ‘common culture’, which may or may not warrant the label ‘Nordic’.

Giroux (1992, 15) observes that the attempt to accommodate pluralism to a ‘common culture’, rather than to a shared vision grounded in the radical possibilities of democratic public life, underestimates the tendency of the dominant culture to eliminate cultural differences, multiple literacies, and diverse communities in the name of one-dimensional narratives constructed around issues such as nationalism, citizenship, and patriotism. Further, he notes that “conservative and liberal discourses that conflate multiculturalism with the imperatives of a ‘common culture’ generally suppress any attempts to call into question the norm of whiteness as an ethnic category that secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible” (Giroux 1992, 15).

For Giroux (1992, 23), ‘borders’ are arenas where big cultural issues may be explored. He sees borders as representing, both metaphorically and literally, how power is inscribed differently on the body, culture, history, space, land, and psyche. Borders, he

says, “elicit recognition of those epistemological, political, cultural, and social margins that distinguish between ‘us and them’”; they create “new cartographies of identity and difference” (1992, 23). In terms of education, Giroux proposes a ‘border pedagogy’ where the relationships between self and Otherness may be explored, allowing educators to “move out of the centre of the dominant culture to its margins in order to analyze critically the political, social, and cultural lineaments of their own values and voices as viewed from different ideological and cultural spaces” (Giroux 1992, 32).

Giroux recognises that communities have emergent qualities which are inclusive, not merely integrative; the implication of self in the construction of Otherness requires an ideological shift from integration to inclusion. Whereas no single theory exists of what multiculturalism is or how it should be at all times and places (Rex and Singh 2003, 116), Giroux offers a route out of crude definitions towards ‘culture’ as a construction which emerges from different ideological (and ideational), political and social spaces.

The distinction drawn by Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) between ‘old thinking’ and ‘new thinking’ is helpful here. Old thinking, in seeking universal truth, has a propensity to: abstract from the contexts in which people experience the world around them. Rosenzweig calls this ‘abstraction from time’; reason out a single ground by way of explanation, thereby reducing particular things to something other than what they are. Rosenzweig calls this ‘reductive reasoning’; reason that the ‘All’ can be grasped in its unity. Rosenzweig calls this ‘thinking from an absolute standpoint’ (Pollock 2009).

Culture cannot be understood by abstracting the concept from time, by reducing it through reason to a crude essentialism, or by seeking to understand it from a universal stand-point where ‘culture’ can be apprehended as an ontological object in its entirety. As Pollock (2009) says, “Faced with the reductive tendencies of the ‘old thinking’ Rosenzweig proposes a ‘new thinking’ that pursues knowledge of ‘God’, the world, and the self in their interrelations, *from out of the individual standpoint of the human being in time*” (Pollock 2009, original emphasis).

### **CULTURAL ECOLOGICAL FRAMING**

In probing the question ‘Is there a Nordic version of multiculturalism?’ we have revealed a number of historically based ideological trajectories which account, in part, for the uneasy relationship between integration and inclusion and which underpin widely held views about multiculturalism. In this section we re-frame the question from a cultural

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ecological perspective. Such a perspective emphasises the reciprocal interactions and transactions between people and their environments, where 'environment' is taken to mean not just physical surroundings but also psychological, social and cultural dimensions of human engagement. In framing the argument in this way, we also address the tension between Rosenzweig's 'old thinking' and 'new thinking'.

A cultural ecological framework recognises that, on the one hand, people experience, understand and conceptualise the world around them in qualitatively different ways and, on the other hand, there are bodies of collectively agreed, 'disciplined' knowledge. In the first, the meaning arising from a situation is contingent on that situation (i.e., the two are co-constitutional) and it is thus essentially phenomenological. In the second, meaning arising from a situation may be related to disciplined knowledge through a variety of socialisation processes (i.e., it is relational) (Dillon 2008).

In cultural ecological terms, the particularities of the ways in which people engage with their environment – more specifically, the dynamics of the relationship between co-constitutional and relational forms of meaning – define notions of both 'place' and 'worldview'. The western, industrialised worldview places great emphasis on relational categories, on how one thing is defined in relation to another. The ideologies underlying the historical development of the notion of multiculturalism, which were reviewed briefly in the previous section, are an outcome of the systematic categorisation that is typical of relational thinking. Relational thinking, by its very nature, emphasises difference and gives rise to organisational structures that make distinctions and show how one thing *relates* to another. Immigration becomes a matter of assimilation, of 'educating' immigrants or minorities into the ways of the majoritarian culture. This is a relational way of dealing with immigration and ethnicity: incomers and minority groups are seen in terms of what they need to become, the values, behaviours and ways of thinking they need to adopt. In such a worldview, 'multiculturalism' remains a contested construct.

An alternative way of viewing immigration and the situation of minority groups is through what in cultural ecological terms are co-constitutional processes. This means going with the flow of how incomers and minorities engage with their environment. It is certain that this will involve adopting some majoritarian ways, but it also leaves the door open for the emergence of something different, new configurations (co-constitutions) of behaviour and environment. This is not cultural fusion of the type implied



by inter- and multiculturalism, where elements of cultures are brought together either harmoniously or in a state of tension. Rather, it looks beyond cultural fusion for new possibilities. The cultural ecological configurations are locationally dependent; they recognise that human behaviour and the environment co-construct each other in complex ways which cannot be reduced to economic determinism.

The cultural ecological approach seeks to avoid privileging one form of meaning over another (co-constitutional-relational; relational-co-constitutional). Rather it recognises that 'in the moment' experience and established ways of thinking about the world are constantly re-forming each other in ways that are themselves co-constitutional and relational. Systematic understanding of the world is derived through cumulative organisation and rearrangement of experientially acquired understandings of the world (Marton 1993). This is compatible with Husserl's (1954) 'phenomenological tradition' and its more recent representations in, for example, the work of Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991) and Thompson (2007), who argue that life and mind, experience and cognition, share a core set of formal, self-organising properties. It also offers a new take on Rosenzweig's old and new thinking, seeing them in a condition of dynamic tension rather than as being mutually exclusive. A transcultural worldview recognises a similar dynamic between the relational and the co-constitutional (see also Dillon et al. 2008).

### **TOWARDS A FOURTH WORLD TRANSCULTURALISM**

Pentikäinen (2006,120) suggests that: ...the Fourth World of (arctic) indigenous peoples [...] represents a symbiotic relationship between the environment, ways of life, religion and language, cemented through harsh living conditions where cultural, religious and economic activity focuses on survival. The scarce and varying supplies of natural resources, food and vitamins, the darkness and cold represent risks which people can eliminate if they have access to a wide variety of alternative ways to make a living.

In cultural ecological terms, Pentikäinen's assertions can be framed around a constantly adapting dynamic between co-constitutional and relational ways of being. The western, industrialised notion of the nation state and its confederations (e.g., the European Union) privileges systematic definition and organisation. Policy documents both define multiculturalism and establish criteria through which it may be demonstrated. In one sense this is multiculturalism as the abstracted notion of people who no longer have to worry about their own survival.

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By 'survival' we mean conditions conducive to a 'good life'. These include: conditions of the physical environment such as clean water, clean air, acceptable climatic conditions, and minimal contact with parasites and pathogens; dietary conditions concerning the quality of food, calorie intake, a balanced diet, and social norms governing the consumption of food; and conditions of the personal and social environment including sensory stimulation, patterns of physical work and sleeping, opportunities for learning and practice of skills, involvement in recreational activities, opportunities for spontaneity in behaviour, emotional support networks, access to extended family, peer and friendship groups, a social environment that confers responsibilities and obligations, freedom of movement, and an environment and a lifestyle that are conducive to a sense of personal involvement, purpose, belonging, responsibility, interest, excitement, challenge, satisfaction, comradeship, love, enjoyment, confidence, and security (for more detail see Boyden 1987 and Dillon 2008).

Relational structures are 'comfortable' and have defined the Western industrialised notion of a 'good life'. But they dilute the imperative of addressing the particularities of locality, of the 'in the moment' experiences of individuals. 'Survival' is now a matter of access to economic activity (market economics) or support (welfare), both highly regulated and thus relational forms of being. If we see 'survival' in the modern state as a manifestation of the dimensions offered by Leonard and Griffith in Table 1 above, we are in danger of resorting to 'old ways of thinking' where 'survival' is seen as an abstraction from time, reduced to an essentialist position of 'minimum living standards', and seen from an absolutist standpoint of 'the citizen' as defined by the State.

Reconfiguring 'old thinking' into 'new thinking' - thinking that pursues knowledge of 'God', the world, environment, community and self in their interrelations through engagement with a Fourth World cosmology - allows us to revisit the concepts of both 'culture' and 'multiculturalism'.

Thus, the concept of 'culture' has a '*topos*' (Muckelbauer 2008) or, more appropriately, *topoi*. The Greek word *topos* can be roughly translated as 'place', 'site', 'location' or 'space'. If we reject the abstraction, essentialism and absolute standpoint of a majoritarian culture, then the concept of 'culture' has a variety of *topoi*. Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) argue in their seminal work on the complexity of the concept of culture that 'culture' can be analysed at different levels of operation: Culture has a 'site': it can operate at the level of the phenomenological 'body' of lived experience; it can operate at

the level of the 'social body' and the 'body politic'; Culture has a 'location': temporal and geographical; It has a 'place': the interrelationship of 'site' and 'location'. Following Rozenzweig, this relates to the 'individual standpoint of the human being in time'; It is situated in a 'space': the ideational/conceptual/historical/cosmological/worldview interweaving of 'place' and its discursive practices.

A 'Nordic model of multiculturalism' might be seen in terms of environment, ways of life, religion and language, cemented through living conditions where cultural, religious and economic activity focus on 'survival' (seen in terms of access and participation). If we re-configure this 'old thinking' into 'new thinking' and ask questions about 'site' and 'place' as relational and co-constitutional configurations of what it means to be human and 'survive', then we might understand 'survival' through the lens of the *dynamic complexity* of the conditions listed above by Boyden (1987) and Dillon (2008) and the possibilities that emerge from this complexity.

Mikkel Nils Sara was brought up as a reindeer herder within the traditional reindeer Sami *siida*. He explains: This meant I had to learn all about the reindeer and the landscape that we migrated through – and to know who my relatives were, both close and distant relatives, and also how to know how others were connected to each other through family of the *verdde* (the *verdde* relation is a Sami institution of mutual friendship and cooperation, including exchange of services, between herders and people outside reindeer herding e.g., settled people by the sea or inland farming peasants), institutional bonds. In all your doings it was a matter of case to keep a broad view of all [these] things, which means both the ecological and social matters that were relevant to your utterances, conduct or uttering" (Sara 2002, 23).

Sara is describing a dynamic between the co-constitutional and the relational, a particular relationship between 'being in the moment' and social and ecological structures. This dynamic relationship might be termed 'transcultural'. It recognises and acknowledges difference but at the same time seeks an accommodation that reflects a temporally dependent dynamic between site, location, place and space. This is adaptive rather than categorised culture. It recognises inclusivity in the collective endeavour.

## CONCLUSION

Analysis of the ideological and political foundations of both European Union and Nordic versions of multiculturalism reveal them to be essentially assimilative, driven by

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economic imperatives and located within conceptions of universalist national 'cultures'. Pihl (2010) argues that we need a framework for analysis that transcends the nation state. She adds that taking 'identity' and 'culture' as primary ontological concepts is not helpful because they can be used indiscriminately by both sides in an argument. She suggests taking 'difference' as the primary ontological concept; then 'all' are different. Similarly, Faist (2006) suggests that rather than use ascriptive categories (e.g., gender, age and ethnicity), we should look instead at worldviews, dispositions, capabilities, and so on.

In a cultural ecological framework, individuals and groups, no matter how defined, represent different configurations of the relational and the co-constitutional, different configurations between people and the resources of their environment, where 'resources' denotes not just material potential but also individual and collective beliefs, skills, capabilities, and so on. The cultural ecological frame is thus broadly compatible with the assertions of both Phil and Faist in the way it is predicated on the possibility of an emergent and adaptive (rather than a prescribed or presumed) accommodation between difference and inclusion.

To return to our metaphor 'turn left for Murmansk', the changing of direction signifies a reconfiguration (a Deleuzian 'deterritorialization'; see Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 1991) of the cultural understanding of the relationship between dominant (majoritarian) and minoritarian, between majoritarian and the Fourth World. We argue that whether or not there is a distinctively Nordic version of multiculturalism as such, or indeed any other bespoke version of multiculturalism, Nordic countries have a place in the Fourth World and as such have access to ways of engaging with the environment which transcend notions of inter- and multiculturalism.

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