

# Xenophobia and immigration policies: a comparative approach

Assoc. Prof. Val Colic-Peisker  
RMIT University  
Melbourne, Australia

IMIN's 3<sup>rd</sup> Round Table  
10 Nov 2011, KIC, Zagreb

# Ksenofobija u imigracijskim zemljama? Australija, Kanada i SAD

Xenophobia in the countries of immigration?  
Australia, Canada and USA

Assoc. Prof. Val Colic-Peisker  
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology  
(RMIT University)  
Melbourne, Australia

# Some very basic facts

- **Migration: a global phenomenon on the rise and unstoppable**
- **All societies [and especially developed Western ones] are increasingly heterogeneous due to immigration**
- **Various [in time and space] ‘official’ and ‘popular’ responses to immigrants**
- **Not all immigrants are equally welcome: the reason for migration and national background make all the difference (ethnicity + class)**

# Immigration and diversity: the old and the new worlds

- Ethno-cultural diversity has always been considered (potentially) problematic: diminishing 'social cohesion'
- 'Old nations' of Europe: diversity 'by default' (colonial empires, labour shortages): immigration seen as a 'necessary evil'
- In the **settler nations** of the New World, immigration unfolds more or less 'by design' (as nation-building) but not without resistance
- Different levels of **public acceptance** and **policy development** in different countries (not a straight-line progress!)
- When diversity reached a critical level, **multiculturalism** was introduced (in Canada and Australia, but also Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands) in order to 'normalise' and manage diversity
- Did the ideology and policy/practice of multiculturalism contribute to social harmony and cohesion and diminished xenophobia? The debate is ongoing!
- A recent retreat from multiculturalism in Europe and elsewhere and a rise of xenophobia

# Eurabia? Xenophobia?

Source: 'Tales from Eurabia'  
(The Economist, 2006)



# Two main approaches to immigration

by developed [Western] countries

## **The 'settler nations':** AN ORDERLY APPROACH; FULLY REGULATED IMMIGRATION

- USA: two centuries of the 'melting pot' based on selective immigration
- Australia, Canada and NZ: from 'white only' immigration to multiculturalism (1900-1970)

## **'Old' European nations:** AD HOC APPROACH/RESPONSE TO CRISES; IN DENIAL of the need for immigration

- A fast post-war increase in diversity in Britain, France, the Netherlands, Germany etc. (*Gastarbeiters* and 'colonial immigration')
- Norway, Sweden etc.- larger immigration from the 1970s
- Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Greece): from emigration to immigration
- Eastern Europe: immigration started after 1990; 'new immigration countries' (the EU factor)

# The settler nations: regulating immigration

- ‘White Canada’ and ‘white Australia’ until the 1960s: a reaction to large Asian intakes (mainly Chinese) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- USA introduced immigration quotas for South and Eastern Europeans in 1921 and 1924; ethnically non-discriminatory immigration since 1965
- Nowadays: emphasis is on skills / economic profile of the immigrant; Australia leading the way in skill-based immigration
- The shadow of the past – the white European preference – is still present (not in official policy but...)

# Settler nations: managing diversity

- The starting assumption: ethno-cultural diversity is a problem; that is, the concept of nation implies homogeneity
- The ideology changed with the introduction of multiculturalism – Canada first, then Australia (USA: ‘cultural pluralism’) – the assumption that diversity is good and enriching; anti-discriminatory legislation
- What about popular xenophobia? Not the same across the board e.g. city-country differences; some immigrant groups more welcome than others; recent ones suffer the most)

# Australia: an exemplary civic nation?

- A 'nation of immigrants'-modern Australia created through immigration
- Low incidence of ethnic conflict compared to USA and Britain
- A surge of Anglo-nationalism in the late 1990s-early 2000s under the conservative government
- 'Cronulla riots' 2005 (Sydney): 'Anglos' vs. 'Lebs' (the Lebanese representing the 'foreign' and also Muslim element)