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Intercultural City in the Context of a Polyethnic Community Governing

Lyudmila Afanasieva¹, Iryna Bukrieieva²,

Lyudmila Glyns'ka³, Andrii Orlov⁴, Natalia Hlebova⁵

Abstract

A distinctive feature of modern civilization is the cultural heterogeneity of societies. Industrial mode of production processes, wars and conquests, various forms of migration, democratization processes, and trends of openness served as the basis for the formation of modern multiethnic and multicultural nations. In the context of the processes of modernization of modern society, the deep transformation of culture and complex intercultural relations, the problem of mutual understanding and interaction between representatives of different cultures has acquired great significance. In today's world, the population of many states and cities is becoming multicultural. One of them is the Ukrainian multicultural city Melitopol. The article analyzes the principles of interculturalism as a modern approach to the policy of managing the cultural diversity of Melitopol, developed by the Council of Europe in the program "Intercultural Cities". The main idea of the program is the understanding of the concept of diversity benefits, based on the perception of migrants, refugees, representatives of different cultures, their languages and beliefs as a development resource, and not just as a vulnerable group only requiring the state support. The program aims to develop a local intercultural policy by attracting representatives of ethnic groups step by step to an active public life and community governance. Interculturalism emphasizes the need to ensure the survival and prosperity of each culture and seeks to enhance intercultural interaction as a means of building trust and society strengthening. The program aims to combine the efforts of politicians, government officials, business representatives, various qualified specialists, citizens, and even the media to create a city that is proud of its diversity and strengthens it in every aspect. The article presents the following steps to develop an intercultural strategy for the multi-ethnic Melitopol: public opinion monitoring, content analysis of local media publications, methods of positive segmentation, focus group research in the World café format, and design thinking. The research justifies why it is important to use sociological support while forming an intercultural competence, defining it as a means of identifying the relevance of global public self-government principles to the democratic development of modern Ukrainian urban communities.

Keywords: Interculturalism, Intercultural integration, Sociological support, Governance of local communities, Minority rights, Vulnerable groups.

¹ Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Ukraine. E-mail: lyudmila.csr@gmail.com

² Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Ukraine. E-mail: irina.bukreeva@ukr.net

³ Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Ukraine. E-mail: glinskay.lyudmila2016@gmail.com

⁴ Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Ukraine. E-mail: orlov.socio@gmail.com

⁵ Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Ukraine. E-mail: nat.glebova2005@gmail.com

Introduction

Due to global migration processes, there are almost no mono-ethnic states in the modern world. However, it caused complex dynamic interactions between people of different ethnic cultures and religions, marked by discrimination and intolerance. Historically, Ukraine has formed as a multi-ethnic state with the representatives of about 130 ethnic groups and nationalities living there. This diversity accounts for regional cultural differences in the population. In Ukraine, there are mono-ethnic regions with a bilingual culture (Center and West) and bi-ethnic with a Russian-language culture (East and South) represented by the Zaporizhzhia Azov south region where Melitopol is located.

Melitopol is a territory with a complex and peculiar history of ethnic and cultural development. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, representatives of various ethnic and religious groups such as Mennonites, Greeks, Germans, Bulgarians, Jews, Poles, Turks, Karaites, and others moved to these lands. With the course of time, the ethnolinguistic composition of the city population became more complicated. While there was no indigenous population, the presence of many cultures in one area ambiguously influenced the level of ethnic conflict and caused particular ethnic, social, and status-role changes in city life. The development of the city as an industrial center during the Soviet era significantly influenced the mentality of the city population. Due to the political and cultural dominance of Russia in the industrialization process, the ethnic identity value of the communities leveled down. As a result, acculturation and deculturation processes, and the gradual assimilation of ethnic communities took place. The identity of the city inhabitants became “segmental”, while the lifestyle and subculture became “hybrid” (Sliushchyns’kyj, 2008).

Today, more than 100 representatives of ethnic and national communities live peacefully in Melitopol. Ukrainians, Russians, Bulgarians, Tatars, Belarusians, and Jews are the largest communities in the city. The main religious communities are Orthodox, Greek and Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Karaites, Judaist, Buddhist, and Hare Krishna. The city has 31 national-cultural societies that in 2000 united in the public association National Societies Council. Considering this, the city has been participating in the Intercultural Cities Program by the Council of Europe since 2008 (Intercultural Cities Programme, 2007).

The aim of this study is to analyze theoretical and practical tools of the intercultural city functioning in the context of modernization of Melitopol multicultural space.

Multiculturalism-interculturalism as ethnic cultures coexistence practices within a common space

The intercultural approach was formed within the concept of multiculturalism, which gained popularity in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Both approaches offer insight to the main philosophical foundations and policies of intercultural interaction. However, there are significant differences between them.

Multiculturalism as a scientific approach and political practice was developed in Western Europe to figure out new ethnic and cultural diversity caused by the multimillion emigration mainly from the Third World countries, and from Eastern Europe in the 60-80s. This multicultural situation brought certain problems to the value systems of the Western nations.

Multiculturalism is broadly defined as the coexistence of many cultures on a certain territory, where none of them dominates. In *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies* by O'Sullivan and Hartley, multiculturalism is understood as “the study of a society which contains many distinct, but interconnected cultural traditions and practices often associated with various ethnic components

of this society” (1994). To summarize, a multicultural society is the one where cultural differences are regulated by “integration without assimilation” formula, and where cultural diversity is promoted and supported. At the same time, it is the society that practices the policy of cultural tolerance and good neighborliness of communities within a single state.

Right before the 80s of the 20th century, the key postulates of multiculturalism have become the basic political principles of most Western states and international organizations. Along with that, one of the founders of the multiculturalism concept C. Taylor (1992), points out that multiculturalism is not only in the struggle of individuals for recognition, but also the demand for their authenticity and group uniqueness recognition from the others. A. Kolodiy (2008) defines multiculturalism as the principle of ethnonational, educational, and cultural policy that recognizes and supports the right of citizens to preserve, develop and protect their (ethnic) cultural characteristics with all legal methods, and obliges the state to support the efforts of citizens.

On analyzing the main approaches to the understanding of multiculturalism, we can identify the following features of the concept:

- it recognizes the cultural diversity of society and the state as a value;
- it denies the hierarchy of cultures from higher to lower, or from backward to advanced;
- it recognizes the right of citizens to preserve, develop their cultural identity and traditions;
- it refuses the idea of overall civil integration in favor of a policy of tolerance, and neighborliness of communities.

However, the practice of applying a multicultural approach has revealed many contradictions, in particular, the group identity was enhanced by the individual one. This is because the benefits provided by governments in support and development of cultural and ethnic identities were for the groups, rather than for individuals. Moreover, such a policy has led to increased closure of national-ethnic communities and the creation of artificial borders between them.

In response to this criticism, a model of interculturalism aimed to solve the problem of the coexistence of various cultural and ethnonational communities in a common space was developed. Unlike multiculturalism, which upholds good neighborliness of communities and cultures, interculturalism focuses on finding interaction modes between the communities as carriers of different cultural systems rather than on protecting cultural differences.

Interculturalism envisages that citizens of different nationalities and religions are united by a common sense of civic responsibility for their state. Thus, interculturalism does not deny multiculturalism principles supporting them with the idea of community integration on a civil basis. The identification and consolidation of people should be built not on an ethnic, but a civil-political basis. All communities and groups should mutually contribute to the welfare and development of the state.

In the work *Intercultural Cities: Towards a Model for Intercultural Integration*, which is a joint program Intercultural cities of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, interculturalism is defined as a policy or practice that supports interaction, understanding, and respect among different cultures and national and ethnic groups (Council of Europe, 2009). Thus, while the main idea of multiculturalism is to separate cultures and preserve their differences, interculturalism claims that these differences can mix up. “Interculturalism aims to discover the commonalities occurring while getting the benefits of interaction, which strengthen cultural relations and help create a common cultural code” (Anan’eva, 2018).

Multiculturalism and interculturalism are the most popular political practices for understanding and regulating the cultural diversity relations in the modern world. The differences between them are primarily in the facilitation mechanisms for the support and development of various national, ethnic, religious, linguistic, racial, and other minorities. Multiculturalism suggests the policy of preservation and development of cultures based on the principles of good neighborliness and tolerance while interculturalism explores interaction modes between different cultures. In our opinion, the most constructive model is an interculturalism one, which is dynamic enough and fully relevant to the national and state orientations of the Ukrainian multicultural society.

The Intercultural Cities Program of the Council of Europe

In 2008, the Council of Europe, together with eleven pilot cities (Lyon, Lublin, Izhevsk, Neuchâtel, Berlin-Neuqueln, Subotica, Tilburg, Reggio Emilia, Patras, Oslo, Melitopol) launched the Intercultural Cities Program (ICC) which is an ambitious initiative to integrate different communities that lack social cohesion. The main criteria for the selection of these cities were the commitment of the city government to work with ethno-cultural diversity, the availability of a reliable public organization network, and the interest of city officials and local media to the issue (Afanasieva & Rubicondo-Khovanova, 2015).

An intercultural city is a community that values cultural diversity and prioritizes the principles of mutual understanding, respect, and equality. Crossing the ethnocultural boundaries between "majority" and "minority", these cities facilitate the "blending", mutual enrichment of "dominant cultures" and "subcultures", localities, classes, religions, which serve as a source of cultural, social, and economic innovation (Afanasieva & Rubicondo-Khovanova, 2015).

The focus of the Council of Europe Program is to enhance intercultural competence and help participating cities reconsider their policies from the perspective of interculturalism, and positively manage ethnic and cultural diversity, appreciating the benefits and unlocking the potential of that diversity (Intercultural Cities Program, nd).

At present, 140 cities in the world are applying an urban model of intercultural integration, including not only European cities but the cities in Australia, Japan, Africa, Mexico, Canada, and the United States. More than 50 cities are the members of the international ICC network. There are national networks in Italy, Morocco, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Ukraine (Intercultural Cities Program, nd).

The Ukrainian Intercultural Cities Network, which includes Melitopol, Yuzhne, Zhytomyr, Pryluky, Nizhyn, Khmelnytsky, Vinnytsia, Kherson, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Pavlograd, was launched during the official signing of Memorandum Ukrainian Intercultural Cities Platform in 2012 between The Development Center Democracy through Culture and the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine under The Council of Europe support.

However, the cities Yuzhne, Zhytomyr, Pryluky, Nizhyn, Khmelnytsky, Kherson, Ivano-Frankivsk withdrew from the Program. Primarily, this is due to the fact that these cities solely assigned cultural diversity development activities to the departments of culture. Having a superficial and "holiday" vision on the problem, they lacked a systematic and comprehensive approach to the issues of multicultural management. Due to the low intercultural competence of local governments, the community failed to "monetize" either successful cross-cultural communication policies, or the level of self-realization achieved by traditional subcultures within a multicultural community.

The Melitopol Forum Reconsidering the Concept of the Intercultural City in the Context of the Ukrainian Present was held to revisit the concept and renew the network. As the outcome, mayors of Melitopol, Vinnytsia, Pavlograd, Lutsk, Odesa, and Sumy signed the National Network of Ukrainian Intercultural Cities Memorandum.

These are the cities that consider ethnocultural diversity as a resource for the economic, social, and cultural development of the community, and have a strategic approach to introducing the intercultural integration model into the governance system of their communities. The model covers all spheres of life of these cities and is implemented through the mobilization of administrative institutions and professional bodies with the involvement of broad civil society circles. Such a strategy requires dedicated leaders and team collaboration.

Fundamental strategic planning of the socio-cultural development of intercultural cities is impossible without sociological support. Well-grounded forecasts enable agents of change to identify effective mechanisms for attracting the urban community to cultural activities, highlight the urgent needs of the citizens, and their vision of personal contribution to the implementation of the city's cultural policy and effective cooperation mechanisms between the state and public sector. A sociological data analysis that identifies local and cultural values, the priorities of the community, and cultural policy experts' ideas is a scientific basis for planning further city development. Along with that, sociological support of the processes is a fairly reliable marker of the successful implementation of social and cultural projects.

Research Methods

Development tools for the Melitopol intercultural integration model were selected at the stage of designing the first strategic approaches using the recommendations of the Council of Europe for city leaders and specialists (The Intercultural City Step by Step: A Practical Guide for Applying the Urban Model of Intercultural Integration, 2013).

The Intercultural Index (The Intercultural Cities Index, nd) consisting of 14 indicators, developed by experts of the Council of Europe Program, helped the Sociological Research Center of Melitopol Bohdan Khmelnytsky State Pedagogical University (the Center) to adapt basic approaches of intercultural integration to the realities of the city (Melitopol Intercultural Integration Plan 2015-2020, 2016).

Another effective tool was the intercultural citizenship test (First Draft of Intercultural Citizenship Test, nd), developed by intercultural competence experts, representatives of participating cities, and the Secretariat of the ICC Program. The test was aimed to identify citizens' awareness of human rights and their intercultural competence, evaluate their perception of diversity as an asset, and their determination to act in an intercultural way.

The Center applied the above-mentioned tool to design a survey Melitopol public space through the lens of interculturalism. While developing and conducting the survey, it was important to calculate and design a representative sample so that it would take into account not only the socio-demographic structure of the city but also the cultural component, and reflect the opinion of the representatives of all local national and cultural communities. The survey toolkit was designed using the "SWOT analysis" principle that allowed considering the opinion of Melitopol citizens about external and internal factors, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the city, and the opportunities and risks for successful implementation of Melitopol intercultural integration.

On identifying the cultural component of the respondent's portrait, the researchers proceeded to a "snowball" method to reach other representatives of a particular national and cultural community. The questionnaire designed by the Center was applied for regular surveys (for example, once a year) to monitor the dynamics of changes and evaluate the performance of local self-government bodies in implementing the intercultural policy.

This knowledge-based approach revealed the best methods and approaches for implementing an urban intercultural strategy such as forming a positive public attitude to the diversity and pluralistic identity of the city through public discussions and symbolic actions; initiating steps to evaluate the main functions of the city through the lens of interculturalism; and developing pilot projects in various socio-cultural spheres.

Another tool for exploring the intercultural urban environment is a content analysis of local media publications that cover the life of various national and cultural communities and internally displaced persons along with the analysis of citizens' feedback on the information. Under the analysis was the sample of publications selected from several news agencies of the city including print media, television, and online news platforms. Along with the content and titles, timelines and the frequency of publications were analyzed. Accordingly, we selected the publications within the past five year period with a three months frequency.

To design the urban intercultural integration model for Melitopol, working groups and researchers of the Center applied the methods of positive segmentation, design thinking, and focus group research in the World café format.

Positive segmentation is methodologically based on a comparison of three segments of the investigated space: the positive and negative sides of the development, and suggested solutions to these problems. A focus group research in the World café format combined an expert survey and elements of a business game and group paper-and-pencil interview. To hold focus group discussions, we used the inducing questions like What kinds of city intercultural activities you would prioritize? What cultural resources are available/unavailable in the city? How can you contribute to Melitopol intercultural development using your personal or professionals skills? What are the three things you would change in the city to create conditions for intercultural exchange? Who would help you to provide these changes? What are the pitfalls on the way to the city's intercultural integration? How to overcome these obstacles?

The research results obtained by the joint efforts of the scientists and city authorities have a tangible practical effect. In addition, the findings can be used to improve the implementation methods for cultural programs and projects aimed at the socio-cultural space modernization of intercultural cities and the use of the creative potential of their communities.

Theoretical Foundations

The best European practices of creating a new type of urban community served as a model for Melitopol renewal as a multicultural city. To develop an intercultural urban model, Melitopol designed a strategic paper Intercultural Integration Plan 2015-2020 (the Plan) (Melitopol Intercultural Integration Plan 2015-2020, 2016). The Plan considers the intercultural strategic elements recommended by the Intercultural Cities Program of the Council of Europe which are the following: positive attitude to diversity, assessment of the functions of the city through the lens of interculturalism, mediation and conflict resolution, support in language learning, media strategy, development of international city politics, increasing intercultural awareness, hospitality, process management in the intercultural sphere (Afanasieva & Rubicondo-Khovanova, 2015).

Modern universities are of key importance in the process of civil society development. They provide knowledge, skills, ideas, and basic research required for socio-economic and political development and growth. Their mission is to become centers for education, science, and culture and regional development centers. Universities are actively creating a system for transferring knowledge from the field of science to economics, industry, culture, ecology, and social spheres.

The Sociological Research Center of Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University is an active participant in the development and implementation of the city's strategic programs.

To identify top-priority goals and strategies for Melitopol intercultural development, local authorities primarily required the investigation and assessment of all functional city elements and their interconnections. So the specialists of the Center joined the working group on the research and development of the intercultural integration potential of Melitopol.

The analytical report made by the Center provided an opportunity to determine the priority areas of intercultural integration of the city, and identify strategic goals which are: intercultural consciousness, education, and intercultural communication; intensification of social activities, economic and information support for intercultural development; intercultural planning and arrangement of creative urban space; welcoming policies and cultural and religious practices of the community; tourism and local history as factors of intercultural integration (Melitopol Intercultural Integration Plan 2015-2020, 2016).

On the order of the Mayor, the group engaged in the Plan development, included the scientists of the Center and more than 80 officials and volunteers representing the City Council, deputy corps, public organizations, national and cultural societies, entrepreneurs, journalists, and students. The activities of the group were based on a clear vision of the urgent problems of the city in the context of the general political situation in Ukraine, the European integration course, and the sociocultural foundations for Melitopol development, included to the Melitopol Development Strategy until 2020 (Melitopol Development Strategy until 2020, 2012).

The main objective of the Plan is to create new conditions and opportunities for a dynamic, inclusive, and intercultural city life by a combined force of the residents, regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, or education. Essentially, the Plan documents the strategic choice and approaches of the city's policy in the field of intercultural integration. Since that point, Melitopol urban life has meaningfully become an integral component in the process of creating a common intercultural European urban space. Owing to the collaborative efforts and coordinated work of the city hall, the chosen development vector enabled the Melitopol community to approach many issues creatively.

Today, it is certain that interculturalism has become the social priority of Melitopol. This is due to the participation of all the above-mentioned subjects in acquiring practical intercultural competencies as a powerful tool for the urban cultural space development (Afanasieva, Orlov, 2016).

In 2012, the Center surveyed to investigate the residents' opinion as to the development vector of Melitopol. 22,9% of respondents considered interculturalism (peaceful coexistence of many nationalities) a key advantage of Melitopol compared to other cities. It is strong evidence that for the majority of residents, interculturalism is an integral component of the city brand. The survey results were used while designing the Melitopol Development Strategy until 2020 (hereinafter – the Strategy).

Over the past four years, significant political and economic changes in Ukraine made it necessary to update the Strategy and adjust it following the needs of the residents. In February –

March 2016, there was a survey to monitor the situation with the Strategy implementation. It showed that 25.5% of respondents consider interculturalism as a social priority for the development of the city. 76.3% of the urban community supported the intercultural policies of the local authorities (Afanasieva, Orlov, 2016). It should be noted that the number of Melitopol intercultural integration supporters is growing due to the increasing migration stress in the region, caused primarily by the need to receive a significant number of internally displaced persons from Donbas and the Crimea.

The data analysis indicates that the intercultural factor may become a solid foundation for better social communications, active interaction, and solidarity among members of the urban community.

Another tool to track and analyze the process of Melitopol intercultural development was the Index of Intercultural Cities. As of March 2017, a combined city intercultural index of Melitopol was 69%. Due to this, Melitopol took the eighteenth position among 85 cities of the European Intercultural Network (Results of the Intercultural Cities Index, nd). Along with these remarkable results, the index shows that there is still room for further improvement. Melitopol quickly scored points in the following areas: commitment, intercultural relations, educational system, good neighborliness, cultural and social life, public space, language, the media, international cooperation, mental competence, hospitality, and self-governance. On the other hand, the local authorities should strengthen their policy to improve these weak points: public service, business, the labor market, mediation, and management. All this encourages our city to greater self-reflection and stimulates the search and acquisition of new knowledge. Moreover, this is an opportunity to increase the intercultural competence of the urban community through cooperation with the European and Ukrainian network of cities and to develop the Melitopol Intercultural Integration Plan for 2021-2023 (hereafter the Plan).

Under these circumstances, there is a timely need for the sociological support of Melitopol sociocultural policy programs. It will provide the opportunity for the city hall and the community to effectively solve an urgent humanitarian regional problem.

As more than four years have passed since the adoption of the Plan, the current challenges prompt the Melitopol community to implement the policy of the intercultural integration. It is urgently required to combine the efforts of all sectors and inner resources to improve the living standards of the city natives and internally displaced persons who together represent different nationalities.

Therefore, it is high time to intensively apply new approaches and methods that have been successfully implemented by the cities participants. One of the comprehensive strategies is the development of intercultural competencies of the subjects who actively participate in the cultural life modernization in multiethnic communities. Intercultural competence is understood as a system of analytical and strategic abilities of the agents of change. To be an intercultural competent citizen means having a set of appropriate behavior models, knowledge, and skills. It is also the awareness and sensitivity to all groups of the population, which enables the organizations or groups of specialists to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Thus, Melitopol, and the intercultural cities community to develop and provide practical assistance to influential politicians in pursuing the following objectives: to combine the efforts of city departments and services to work effectively with citizens; to identify and increase the rights and opportunities for intercultural innovators and the people who create connections; to create a vision of the city diversity of the city and translate it into a workable strategy; to benefit on consulting; to get support from colleagues from other cities; to request the knowledge required to meet the city needs; to develop the expertise of working with international and national communities regularly.

Results and Discussion

Sociological research methods enabled the Center to monitor the intercultural integration activities of all city hall units, timely reveal the dynamics of changes, and assess the performance of the city government and the community in implementing intercultural policies.

Public and expert surveys, a content analysis of publications of the local media, the ICC index, the Intercultural Citizenship Index, and focus group research were the main tools to study the intercultural urban environment and sociological support when designing Melitopol Intercultural Integration Plan for 2015-2020 and Melitopol Development Strategy until 2020. Their application formed a solid foundation for the development and implementation of the intercultural integration in the city.

The survey of public and expert opinions made it possible to obtain reliable and qualitative data about particular benchmarks of the intercultural community, and the whole system of intercultural interaction in an urban environment. Besides that, the surveys enabled to assess the effectiveness of interaction between local authorities and the community; prioritize the main approaches for intercultural integration development; and identify the best implementation methods for the Melitopol Intercultural Strategy.

The content analysis of media publications revealed deeper aspects of the processes of intercultural interaction in the community; identified the level of informational coverage of particular cultural community life; disclosed to hidden conflicts between different national groups in the city.

The ICC index, developed by the experts of the Program, helped to define strategic and operational goals for the Melitopol Intercultural Integration Plan for 2015-2020.

Focus group research in the format of "World café" identified the maximum creative potential of working group members; helped to view different aspects of the research area, and to analyze and coordinate all proposals; enabled to develop operational approaches and tasks.

The intercultural citizenship test, developed by experts of the Council of Europe, allowed us to learn what citizens think about intercultural integration. Also, it evaluated the impact of intercultural policies of the cities, for example, by tracking the results in specific urban areas. In a broad sense, the test results make it possible to assess the condition and dynamics of various intercultural community life spheres, identify the challenges, and initiate relevant measures or projects.

Melitopol has gained valuable experience in implementing creative practical initiatives that promote intercultural dialogue in the city due to the following aspects:

- consideration of substantive aspects of the intercultural experience of Melitopol citizens;
- relying on the opinion of the community and the national societies on the advantageous forms of the intercultural activity (municipal and self-organizing);
- systematic development of a variable intercultural policy in the context of the interaction of all aspects of urban society.

Thus, a comprehensive strategic approach is that achieving a transparent sociocultural policy managed by competent specialists, cultural authorities, and moral leaders of the community outside of their political views. It encourages citizens and municipal institutions to focus on developing skills and talents of all city residents, including migrants, and create optimal conditions for their active participation in social, cultural, and economic activities.

As practice shows, a proposed methodology inevitably requires a revision of the city's policy and the development of a new management strategy that will take into account current needs and resources of the city (including human capital) and ensure comfortable living conditions. Participation in the project is beneficial as it creates the following opportunities:

- free ICC's expert support, advisories, resources provided by the European and national resource networks;
- free training and experience exchange programs with other cities through the ICC platform;
- free study visits, meetings, and thematic events enabling to create international connections and improve the city's image.

It should be noted that applying the most functional and internationally recognized models and strategies for the city governance, and most importantly, the employing the Program's tools for tracking the vectors and rates of intercultural development of our city at the initial stage makes it possible to build partnerships and create cooperation projects with other cities.

In the long term, the systematic approach that provides free access to new information and enables community members to master various professional and self-government skills, to get creative and use innovations, can ensure access to new capital markets and contribute to the successful development of entrepreneurship in the region.

Conclusion

The intercultural urban development strategy developed within the framework of the Intercultural Cities Program allows introducing new management, public participation, and intersectoral interaction techniques, and new project approaches for successful development. Cooperation with the intercultural city networks and associations creates opportunities for the exchange of experience and intercultural dialogue ideas.

Interculturalism as a social priority for Melitopol becomes a living resource and a source of accumulation of cultural capital. When transformed into political priority, it will consolidate the urban community on the basis of civic values and social responsibility. More recently, under intercultural communication, the community understood friendly domestic relations traditional for Melitopol residents. Cultural development meant only certain support of ethnocultural centers, folk art groups, etc. Participation in the ICC Program enabled the Melitopol community to intensify and deepen the interaction among urban cultural space subjects in many spheres. This led to the following achievements:

- Strategic reorientation of urban management and policies aimed at attracting representatives of various (ethnic) cultural groups to administrative bodies.
- Encouragement of intercultural mixing.
- More active interaction among all city residents.
- Development of local institutions competences to resolve (ethnic) cultural conflicts and promote intercultural interaction and integration.
- Support of the public discourse that promotes the benefits of diversity.

In the complex realities of the Ukrainian life, the Melitopol community is enthusiastic enough about the future of our intercultural city, the development of which relies on the joint efforts of the

governing team, and the creative and civic-responsible attitude of the residents. Therefore, Melitopol Development Strategy until 2030 includes the following priority tasks: intercultural integration planning for 2021-2023, increasing the level of intercultural competence, designing roadmaps, and creating intercultural dialogue platforms in the educational and cultural institutions.

It is safe to say that Melitopol has gained valuable experience in implementing intercultural principles and creative initiatives which is essential to create efficient intercultural dialogue and consolidate the community. It would not be possible without the application of best intercultural practices and relying on the attitudes and opinions of the Melitopol community. Moreover, today Melitopol can offer its own unique methods for the development of the new community type.

At a time when the world communities are becoming more diverse (from an ethnocultural point of view), the intercultural community governing model and methods of communicating with the public have proved that the diversity is an advantage, not a threat to these communities. Today it is recognized that successful cities and states of the future will be intercultural, that is, those that are able to explore and manage the potential of the cultural diversity of their communities to stimulate creativity, innovation, effective democratic (and therefore decentralized) governance and, thus, contribute to economic prosperity, community cohesion and high quality of life.

Summarizing the studies, there is every reason to state the need to expand the range of sociological studies of the phenomenon of the modern city since by its very existence it produces living conditions formed under the influence of the subjects of the urban environment and, at the same time, influences the citizens themselves. One of the main elements of the study is the strategic planning of the socio-cultural development and modernization of intercultural cities.

As shown in the case of Melitopol, that sociological support as a success marker of the development process is an essential element for the implementation of advanced intercultural policies for a modern city. Thus, the sociological support experience of the Sociological Research Center of Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University deserves the closest consideration and dissemination.

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