

Social Cohesion, Integration and Xenophobia

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Dictionary wisdom

Social cohesion

- The integration of group behavior as a result of social bonds, attractions, or other forces that hold members of a group in interaction over a period of time. See also *social solidarity*

Integration process 1

Individuals in(to) communities (personal interaction):

- integration by commonly held values
- the extent to which an individual experiences a sense of belonging to a social group or collectivity by virtue of sharing its values, norms, beliefs, etc.

Integration process 2

Individuals in(to) society (anonymous interactions, complementarity):

- integration by interdependence in the division of labour
- the extent to which the activity or function of different institutions or subsystems within society complements rather than contradicts the other

Integration process 3

Communities into one whole:

- integration also refers to the process by which different races come to have closer social, economic and political relationships

Note: A collection of communities may not be coterminous with the boundaries of society, but subsocieties would be

Integration as an outcome

contact

+ diversity maintained:	integration
+ diversity diminished:	assimilation

no contact

+ diversity maintained:	separation
+ diversity diminished:	marginalization

Eurocities, part 1

Major-city mayors in the EU:

- “We consider integration from a policy perspective to be an organized set of activities on the part of local public and private entities and on the part of newcomers – a process jointly performed –
...

Eurocities continued

- ... to enable newcomers to realize as quickly as possible a place in local society in which they are able to function independently from direct state support, with an adequate understanding of the local society and capable of organizing their livelihoods in this context. ...

Eurocities final

- ... Integration is a two-sided process in which the full rights of residence are provided in exchange for the maximum effort on the part of the newcomer to make him or herself an added value to local society.”

Critiques of integration

- the concept has been criticized as implying an over-integrated view of societies ignoring the possibilities of conflict
- confusion of society and community
- confusion of process and outcome
- is “integration of immigrants or of minorities” itself racist, i.e. hierarchical?

Legal terminology

- National and EU law does not define integration either as process or as goal
- Defines rights and obligations in terms such as
 - residential status
 - family reunification
 - access to employment
 - access to benefits etc.

Social cohesion

- Addresses the Hobbesian problem of how the various elements of society hold together, how they integrate with each other
- A newer name for concepts previously named “social integration”?
- WHO Europe prefers “social capital” as a measure of integration

Council of Europe

- Social cohesion is the capacity of society to assure the well-being of all its members including future generations
- in order to achieve this assurance tendencies to disparities in society are to be avoided
- strongly normative
- complement to and embellishment of human rights

CoE dimensions of well-being

1. Equity in access
2. Dignity and recognition
3. Autonomy of personal development
4. Participation, engagement, empowerment

Fifth, perhaps:

5. Sustainability

CoE: Three kinds of sources

- Four areas: public powers, private sphere, markets, civic space
- Four activities: founding actions, regulative actions, remedial actions, facilitating actions
- Five roots: trust, knowledge, bonds, values, sentiments

Xenophobia

- “An exaggerated hostility toward or fear of foreigners. See ethnocentrism”

ethnocentrism

- “the attitude of prejudice or mistrust toward outsiders that may exist within a social group;
- a way of perceiving one’s own cultural group (in-group) in relation to others (out-groups);
- a characteristic of certain personality types”

Further on ethnocentrism

- ethnocentrism “also involves an incapacity to acknowledge that cultural differentiation does not imply inferiority of those groups who are ethnically distinct from one’s own”
- at one extreme ethnocentrism boils down to egocentrism (of which nobody can be free and which must not be confused with egotism)

Social cohesion as a determinant

- Can social cohesion influence xenophobia, i.e. does better social integration reduce individual xenophobia?
- Whose social integration, that of the immigrants or that of the xenophobes?

Beyond integration?

- Inclusion (vs. exclusion)
- Minority rights
- Protection from discrimination
- Equal chances
- Equal opportunities
- Positive Action
- Positive Discrimination
- Diversity mainstreaming

Sources

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