Challenges and opportunities of migrants’ integration in the light of recent flows

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1. Introduction and overview

- State of the art of the study of processes of integration.

- The study of (integration) policies: Aim, Frame, Content, Target Groups, Actors

- What lessons can be drawn from our knowledge of integration processes

- What lessons from our understanding of the workings of policies

- Conclusions
2. Building scientific knowledge of migration and integration

Research on processes of (international) migration and of integration should have its **own specific scientific concepts, definitions and analytical models** (= independent from political and policy definitions).

It works towards an understanding of these phenomena that is based on **theories** that ideally would be able to predict the future courses of migration and integration.

As long as (interdisciplinary and multi-level) theory formation is weak, scientists work with **heuristic models** that are most adequate for the **empirical study and analysis** of processes of migration and integration:

Hereafter a **heuristic model to study integration** is presented to outline the state of the art of the study of processes of integration.
2.1. An analytical definition of the process of integration

- “Integration is the process of becoming an accepted part of society”

- A two-way interaction between immigrants and the receiving society.
  - But receiving society is the dominant party

- Three dimensions of becoming an accepted part of society
  - The legal/political dimension
  - The socio-economic dimension
  - The cultural/religious dimension.
2.2. A heuristic model to study the process of integration
2.3. An analytical definition of the process of integration (continued)

• The process of integration takes place at three levels simultaneously:
  – The individual level
  – The organisational (collective) level of groups
  – The institutional level (including specific integration policies)

• The process takes place (and is best measurable) mainly at the local level
  “in what local context are migrants becoming an accepted part of local society?"
• But also at other levels (often institutionally): regional, national, EU-level.

• Time plays an important role in processes of integration:
  – On the individual level, time has a different impact on cognitive, esthetic and normative dimension
  – On the group level integration processes differ for generations.
3.1. What is a policy?

- Policies *intend to steer processes* in society.

- They are *normative* in nature: problem definition => policy action => desired solution.

- Policies are *defined politically by (majorities of) in society*. Migration and integration policies *represent therefore expectations and demands of this society* rather than of immigrants.

- *Politicisation* reinforces interests of the (native) majority and increases demands on immigrants.

- Concepts get ‘contaminated’ in politicised policy use: gastarbeiter, minorities, allochtonous, integration .....

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3.2. How to study policies? What to measure?

- The **perception** of immigrants and their integration (**framing**)

- **Content and orientation** of policies (in legal-political, socio-economic and cultural-religious dimension)

- Who is defined to be in need of policy action: **target groups**?
  And who are the actors? Governmental vs NGOs

- How do policies at different (local, national and EU-levels) relate to each other?
4. What lessons from integration research?

4.1. The importance of each of the dimensions and their interrelations:

- weak legal/political position ("temporary guests", denizens, foreigners) hinders socio-economic integration through less rights and access and cultural/religious integration by emphasising their non-belonging.

- low socio-economic status combined with unequal chances and access leads to / confirms low class position and negative perception/evaluation thereof. And vice versa, f.e. Japanese

- perceiving oneself and being perceived as different culturally and in world view and valuing such differences negatively leads to (self-)exclusion/discrimination, pressure on assimilation as condition for becoming accepted.
2.2. A heuristic model to study the process of integration
4.2. Different mechanisms behind workings of dimensions:

- **legal/political position** is determined by
  - 1) initial establishment of **legal status** to individuals (TCN vs privileged foreigners (EU-citizens, former colonies, descendants of emigrants etc.) vs nationals (incl. `repatriates’));
  - 2) allocation of **entry title** (as refugee, labour migrant, family members) and (concomitant) **residence status**: temporary/conditional/uncertain vs permanent/unconditional/certain
  - 3) rules, regulations and practices related to **gaining/giving access to full citizen rights**, individually: (conditions for) making the residence and legal position stronger and ultimately access to naturalisation, and on group level: **recognition of immigrant organisations**, etc..
  - All three elements are strongly national-institutional determined; influence of immigrant/refugee on outcomes subordinate/ small.
4.3. **Different mechanisms** behind workings of dimensions: Socio-economic position is determined by

- **Access** of migrant to domains of labour/income, housing, education and health; (strong) legal status that secures access is crucial;
- **Equal rights’**, equal opportunities’ and equal outcome policies are promoting “becoming an accepted part”; anti-discrimination policies are the negative corollary;
- In practice additional **efforts to match supply and demand characteristics** is important to promote integration: language and information, recognition of foreign education and experience, migration-related factors, culture and religion. Need for flexible institutions and services and diversity policies.
4.4. **Different mechanisms behind workings of dimensions:**

**Cultural/religious position** is determined by

- **Perceptions and valuing of difference and reciprocal reactions to difference and diversity of immigrants and receiving society;**
- **On the individual level** this may express itself in stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory attitude and behaviour;
- **On the collective level** in organisations that represent/defend such attitudes and actions (increasing nationalist movements that are also anti-immigrant);
- **On the institutional level** it may express itself in policies that treat cultural and religious groups differently. National policies in Europe used to subscribe to different positions on the axis of
  - a) plural societies,
  - b) multicultural societies, and
  - c) cultural homogenous societies (nations).
5.1. What lessons from national (integration) policy?

- The European frame of not being immigration countries: integration (guest workers) endangers their return.. (1960 - ??)

- **Swedish and Dutch integration policies** (1975-1990s): strong legal position, socio-economic equality, liberal cultural policy: prevent ethnic underclass, promote emancipation.

- In 1990s and 2000s: increased politicization, integration focuses on the cultural dimension (diversity) as a problem: mandatory civic integration courses, assimilative. Strong legal position and naturalisation to be deserved by cultural adaptation/assimilation and socio-economic successful integration. Integration as a instrument for selective immigration. Plural societies are seen as a threat (parallel societies), a rejection of multiculturalism, pressure for assimilation.

- In new immigration countries (IT, SP, GR, IRL) less regulation/ policy.
5.2. What lessons from local integration policy research?
Cities (have to) bet on different (aspects of the three) dimensions than national or EU-integration policies: **three types**

- **1) Mainstream equality cities**: focusing on the socioeconomic domain using equality and anti-discrimination as strategies and mainstreaming as their governance policy;

- **2) Intercultural cities** focus strongly on the cultural dimension of integration, using diversity as a strength and diversity management and intercultural relations as a strategy.

- **3) Participative cities** stress the participation dimension of integration, looking at accessibility and opportunity structures on the one hand and stimulating active (local) citizenship and social cohesion on the other: “We, Amsterdammers…” “We, Copenhageners”, etc.
6.1. Conclusions relevant for present asylum inflows

Many suggestions from analysis of integration processes:

- **Need for quick decisions** on asylum: avoid limbo and hospitalisation;

- **Need for strong/certain legal position**: a condition for integration and for adverse effects of conditional/temporary statuses; better integrated are the best and most frequent returnees (if possible);

- **Count on permanency of stay as basis for policy** as best solution for all concerned; full access to all facilities in four socioeconomic domains;

- **Enable refugees to participate**: provide a toolkit of language and knowledge of society (not necessarily value based courses);

- **Avoid in early reception and settlement residential and social segregation of refugees** – **create individual and organisational bonds** between newcomers and settled to enhance integration;
6.2. Conclusions relevant for present asylum inflows

Most acute come from analysis of **policymaking processes**:

- The present “asylum crisis” had at least two predecessors (1992-1994 and 1998-2000) during which numbers in NW European countries were comparable or higher. **What is different now? Why is this crisis deeper?**

- Increased **politicisation and culturalisation** of migration and integration, resurging **nationalism** (own people first) going hand in hand with **Euroscepticism** (blaming the European Union for all problems) have brought a new frame battle in which **political support for asylum** (and unasked for migrants in general) has become **questioned**.

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The battle is now on the **framing of the issue**, in negative direction:
- The **principle of asylum itself** is put on the line in some cases;
- In other cases **certain groups/categories** (like Muslims) are excluded;
- Often times asylum is made dependent on `public support` and/or made dependent on availability of **resources**;
- More and more asylum seekers are without any investigation discarded as fortune-hunters or economic migrants (battle on perceptions).

On the other hand, the asylum crisis has also **mobilised frames and people in support of asylum**. Sometimes politicians, like Angela Merkel, but certainly much more mobilisation took place in NGO’s and among volunteer groups (who seem to attract less media attention than the anti-asylum protesters).

If **polarisation** is the right diagnosis, we need (political) **leadership** in the battle for:
- the basic frame of accepting asylum as a duty for civilised nations, and
- a solidarity-based cooperation in the implementation of asylum policies.

Thank you