"Integration processes of immigrants and related policies in Europe"

Keynote for the International Conference
'Information Matters: towards positive pathways of migrant's integration'

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1. Introduction and overview

- **An analytical instrument to study and measure processes of settlement and integration.**

- **The study of (integration) policies: Aims, Frames, Content, Target Groups, Actors**

- **Three dimensions of integration processes and underlying mechanisms**

- **The workings of (local, national, EU-)policies**

- **Conclusions**

2. How to build scientific knowledge of migration and settlement/integration processes?

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).

Such research aims **to build theories** that ideally would be able to predict the future course of migration and processes of integration that follow after settlement.

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 processes** is presented.
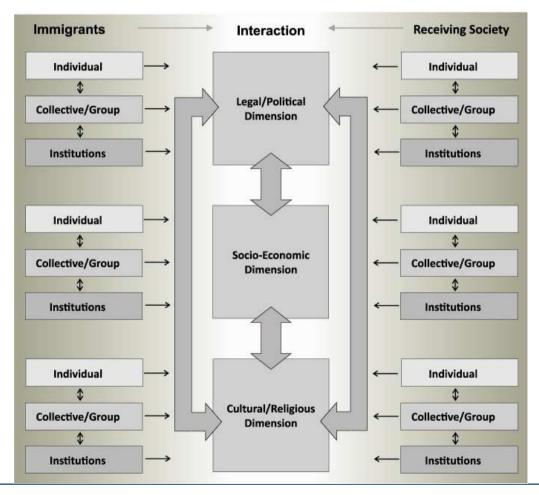
2.1. An analytical definition of <u>the process of integration</u>

- *"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 <u>the process of integration (continued)</u>

- The process of integration takes place at three <u>levels</u> 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) primarily at the <u>local</u> level (*"are migrants becoming an accepted part of the street, neighbourhood, city?"*), but also at other levels (often institutionally): <u>regional, national, EU-level</u>.

- <u>Time</u> plays an important role in processes of integration:
  - On the individual level, time has a different impact on cognitive, aesthetic and normative dimension of integration
  - On the group level integration processes differ significantly for <u>generations.</u>

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 ….. Scientific vs policy concepts!

3.2. How to study policies? What to measure?

- The <u>perception</u> of immigrants and their integration (<u>framing</u>)

- <u>Content and orientation</u> of policies (in legal-political, socio-economic and cultural-religious dimension)

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

- What different priorities do policies at different (local, national and EU-levels) relate to each other?

4. Dimensions of integration processes and their underlying mechanisms
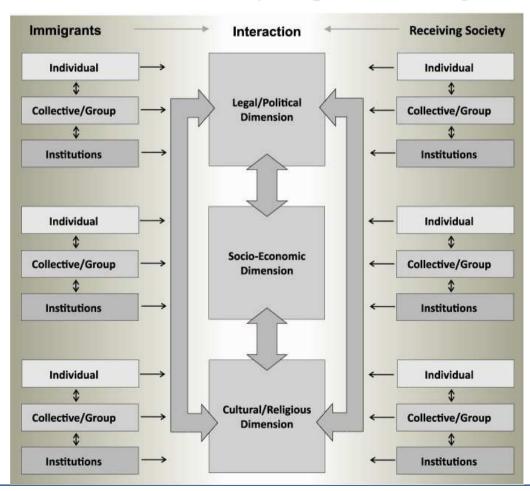
4.1. The importance of each of the <u>dimensions and their interrelations</u>:

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

- low <u>socio-economic status</u> combined with unequal chances and access leads to / confirms low class position and negative perception/evaluation thereof. And vice versa, e.g. Japanese or US immigrants..

- perceiving oneself and being perceived as <u>different culturally and in world view ànd valuing such differences negatively</u> leads to (self-)exclusion/ discrimination,
  and leads to pressure to assimilate as condition for becoming accepted.

A heuristic model to study the process of integration

4.2. Underlying mechanisms of dimensions (1):

The legal/political position is determined by

- **1) initial attribution of the legal status to individuals: TCNs as lowest 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.**

So: Policy categorisation and position allocation are dominant

4.3. Underlying mechanisms of dimensions (2):

The socio-economic position is determined by efforts and characteristics of migrants in interaction with opportunity structures and policies:

– **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 to promote equality.

4.4. Underlying mechanisms of dimensions:

The 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 attittudes 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 and unequally. 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).

4.5. What lessons from local integration policy research?

Cities (have to) bet on different (aspects of the three) dimensions than national or EU-integration policies: <u>three types</u>

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

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

- 3) <u>Participative cities</u> 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.

5.1. Conclusions: general

- **At the individual level, identity and identification as "taking position in relation to relevant others" are crucial in integration processes, at the side of immigrants but also at the side of natives. Children of immigrants may be more explicit and public than their parents. Nationalist populism reinforces processes of negative perception.**

- **Institutional (and policy) categorisations play a crucial role in allocation of distinctiveness of (ethno-cultural) groups and may easily do so in the negative sense.**

- **Group-formation is mobilising self-identifying individuals; (non)-recognition of groups as legitimate interest defenders by (individuals, groups and institutions of) the receiving society is crucial for (non)-acceptance of newcomers as a collective.**

5.2. Conclusions relevant for present asylum inflows:

- Need for <u>quick decisions</u> on asylum: avoid limbo and hospitalisation;

- Need for <u>strong/certain legal position</u>: as a positive condition for integration and for avoiding adverse effects of conditional/temporary statuses; furthermore, the better integrated are the best and most frequent returnees (if possible);

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

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

- Avoid residential and social segregation of refugees in early reception and settlement - <u>create individual and organisational bonds</u> between newcomers and settled to enhance integration.