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***The sociological imagination about migration.***

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## Introduction

A comparison between France and the Netherlands on integration is enlightening for the analysis of migration in Europe. In spite of different policies and practices in France and the Netherlands, the positions of migrants in both countries does not differ much. It is especially interesting in the light of the present discussion. What has gone wrong with integration and why? (1)(2)

In the Netherlands the policies were and still are dominated by a communitarian multiculturalism and in France mainstream thinking is based on concepts of assimilation. But if we look at participation on the labour market, in schools, positions in institutions, level of income or the trajectories of perverse integration the differences are small. There are some differences, which can be traced to the policies of multiculturalism or assimilation, and of course there are substantial differences between the different population groups in each country.

Le commission Stasi about the head-shawls seems serious but I consider them as diversions, which do not address the real issue. The issue has more to do with the dynamics of patriarchy (3) instead of religion or culture. Patriarchy as a universal global entity is probably more persuasive and persistent to change than any other ideology. Just name me a religion in which the position of male and female is equal. It almost looks like religion is an invention of the male species. The last book of Per Olov Enquist (4) about the history of the Pentecostal movement, which started a century ago in Sweden, is a good example of this phenomenon.

How can it be, that at the end of the last century, one can detect a tendency in European democracies depicting migration as an anomaly? In some European countries extreme right-wing political parties have set the political agenda. Even in countries where the extreme right has no political power, competition between the middle parties has resulted in restrictive policies. In the Netherlands organizations and parties come up almost everyday with new plans and regulations restricting the possibilities and rights of migrants. This tendency has more to do with the fear of xenophobic or chauvinistic observants than with the factual integration of migrants.

All this has of course an influence on the day-to-day interaction in the social services, on the streets, in schools and research assignments of Universities. For our students in the social services it can be confusing. Most of our students will work in institutions subsidised by the state. Their discretionary space (5), essential in every meaningful contact between the professional and client becomes restricted day by day. Scrutiny is needed to counteract this tendency as well as the intellectual craftsmanship of sociological imagination, which enables us to grasp history and biography and the relation between the two. (6) (7)

My point is that we have to use our sociological imagination to avoid patterns of perverse integration. Tensions however can't be avoided, they are inherent when two groups meet, who contest scarce goods such as the provisions of the welfarestate or the democratic accessibility of safety (8).

## History

Migration is and always has been a general condition of the family of man. It appears in different forms, intensity and volume. To day, one out of 5 Americans, more than 55 million people are first or second generation.

Urbanisation and population growth is documented as the most important changes of the last century (9). Before 1900 human interaction essentially took place in the décor of a village. In these circumstances our habits, institutions and ideologies to which we still adhere are developed and internalised by socialisation. Life unfolds itself in a fast pace in impersonal and anonymous metropolitan settings or risk societies (10). The challenge of today are issues of political, social, moral and ecological adaptations of life in big cities for which we have no clear cut answers yet (11) (12). In 1900 between 12% and 15% of the world population lived in big cities in 2001 50%. In 1900 the world population was 1.6 milliard in 2003 it was 6 milliard. This exponential growth, a demographic revolution, has taken place in one century. It is an illusion to think that this can take place without tension or turmoil (13). We have to deal with conflicts of interest, geopolitical fragmentation, diversity or segmented assimilation. No longer do we have assimilation to one society; we can also have assimilation to different segments of it in which different lifestyles are required (14). A denial of these conflicting interests or diversity often goes hand in hand with fundamentalist ideologies. Our religious, political and economical dreams are still focused on a so-called transparent, standardized, controlled and almost Newtonian world. The non-secularised fundamentalists believe that this can be achieved in heaven the secularised fundamentalists believe this can be attained in our live time. Or as J Gray tries to make it clear in his provoking study *Al-Queda or what it means to be modern* (15). The new secular religion of the free market with its devastating conformity is a bigger or as big a threat than the experiments we have seen in the past.

During the earlier period of globalisation, from 1870 till the dawn of the First World War, free traffic went hand in hand with free migration. In Europe only Russia and Turkey asked for passports. The globalisation a century later is different. The flow of capital and traffic goes hand in hand with severe migratory restrictions. This contradictory combination (16) of the enormous free flow of capital and restricted migration caused a gigantic growth of illegal migration. In the fortress Europe integration has taken the form of exclusion or even perverse integration (17) (18).

It looks like as if the position of migrants hasn't changed a bit since Michel de Montaigne (19) wrote his famous essay 'Des Cannibales'.

*"It seems indeed that we have no other standard for truth and reason than examples, opinions and habits of the country we live in. There you find the perfect religion, state institutions and the perfect and complete use of all the things."*

The own society is the standard of things. I bet if we make now at this moment a crosscut of the major newspapers in Europe whether it be in Berlin, Amsterdam or Paris one easily can find masses of examples underlining the quote of Montaigne. One thing has changed we do not call them cannibals anymore. In the Netherlands we call them allochtonen. This is not a tribe from Tasmania but a euphemism depicting everybody who is not belonging to "us" (20).

### **Unavoidable patterns**

We have to accept that migration is a painful affair, for all the partners involved. The people confronted with the consequences of migration are mainly found in those groups where unemployment and low income are regularities instead of exceptions. As long as the tensions can be localised in specific regions and safety is still guaranteed we get the impression that, migration is manageable. But when 'the chickens come home to roost' hell breaks loose. As we can see now.

In a large number of European cities, disastrous urban policies makes it under-standable why a substantial part of the migrants reject the integration policies or ideologies whether it be assimilation or multiculturalism. If one of the principles such as equality is not practised, why integrate they ask themselves. This is even recognized by the French minister of internal affairs Michael Sarkozy.

In their famous study "The established and the outsiders", (21) Norbert Elias and John L.Scotson give a meticulous description of the processes, which take place between the two groups. Migrants in the classical sense are not involved in their study. The two groups not differ from each other in terms of income, language, ethnicity or what ever. The only distinction is "We were here earlier than you". The established treat the newcomers as outsiders; they close their ranks and stigmatise the newcomers as inferior.

The settled group proclaims that the newcomers lack superior virtues and distinguishable group charisma. These virtual differences are kept alive with gossip, scandal or, as we would call it now, urban legends. These stories, their networks and locality constituted the fabric of their community. Some say that there is a genetic predisposition in humans of craving to belong to something or some group. "Be original and smoke Marlborough". That something is often institutionalised in a 'we'. This process between the settled and outsiders is a better analytic tool to understand the impact of migration in metropolitan areas than the concept of class. The processes mostly occur when the groups or figurations are directly confronted.

Back to the study of Elias and Scotson. The behaviour the stories of the two groups, the settled and the outsiders can only be grasped by stressing their interdependence. One is not the result of the other. It is not a matter of causality; it should be understood as a system. But when a process of social exclusion blocks the official road for integration, when it becomes mainstream thinking advocated as a “new realism” (22) in the discourse of multiculturalism and institutionalised in the legal handbooks of Fortress Europe, we will put our civic attainments at stake.

Social exclusion is the process by which certain individuals and groups are systematically barred from access to positions, that would enable them to an autonomous livelihood within the social standards framed by institutions and values in a given context. Under normal circumstances in capitalism, such a position is usually associated with the possibilities of access to relatively regular, paid labour, for at least one member of a stable household (23).

If one takes the above-mentioned definition of social exclusion as a starting point, professions in the social services will have a limited impact. Or as R.Sennet makes clear in his last study *Respect* (24), solidarity has to be organized. Psychotherapists or social workers can signalise, empower their clients, and learn how to accept their condition or heal some wounds. But if they take the consequences of the policies, leading towards exclusion, on their shoulders they will lose legitimacy (25) especially towards their clientele.

A brief look at the history of social work and social services the last three decades shows us an ongoing instrumentalism. A recent study (26) of the social situation of European welfare states shows that their regimes are at stake. Whatever road we take either privatisation or a restructuring of the regime we have to rethink our position.

The democracy deficit is one the greatest challenge facing the EU, first, because the lack of democracy in the European Union effects policymaking, making it biased towards market liberalisation, thereby making it difficult to develop an European-wide social policy. The lack of a European wide social policy will only disintegrate Europe further. Member states are no longer able to sustain their individual welfare states, and Europe is not taking over this responsibility. Habermas (27) calls for supranational institutions that can take over these tasks. The European Union would be an ideal mechanism to do this, and construct and regulate social policy, but to do so, it needs more democratic structures, or the bias towards liberalisation will not cease to exist. During the European summit in Nice last year 5 essential social priorities were set. Their implementation however is structured by the so-called open co-ordination method.

We developed cross-cultural therapies, multicultural communication ethno psychiatry, good and valuable developments but things are of an other order these days. The main mechanisms of integration, employment and the

welfare state do not regulate the process of integration as they did before. The excluded have a low esteem about the delivered services and our policy makers question their effectiveness.

### **Perverse integration**

Social participation/integration was regulated since the sixties by the mechanisms of employment and the welfare state (28); these mechanisms aren't effective any more. Or to phrase it more carefully the effectiveness is reduced. This process affects everybody not only migrants and is most visible in metropolitan areas. People are invalidated or become obsolete

Again here, we have to avoid generalisations. European countries have different immigration policies. The majority of migrants have achieved a secure social position mainly by means of work, housing policies, education and welfare policies. However as I mentioned before two elementary mechanisms, employment and the social state have become less and less effective. In this context the vulnerability tends to become a status quo. The influences of restricting laws and regulation almost predict a greater chance of exclusion. Its effects can easily lead to what is called 'perverse integration'.

Social exclusion is a process, not a condition. Thus, its boundaries shift, and who is excluded and included may vary over time, depending on education, demographic characteristics, social prejudices, business practices, and public policies. Furthermore, although the lack of regular work as a source of income is ultimately the key mechanism in social exclusion, how and why individuals and groups are placed under structural difficulty/impossibility to provide for themselves follows a wide array of avenues of destitution. It is not only a matter of lacking skills or not being able to find a job. It may be that illness strikes in a society without health coverage for a substantial proportion of its members. (A possibility in Europe also. According to the latest research the European welfare states have to choose between a restructuring and a privatisation of health care and other social services.) Or else drug addiction or alcoholism can destroy humanity in a person. Or the culture of prisons and the stigma of being an ex-convict closes ways out of crime on return to freedom. Or the injuries of mental illness, or of a nervous breakdown, placing a person between the alternatives of psychiatric repression and irresponsible de-institutionalisation, paralyse the soul and cancel the will. Or more simply, functional illiteracy, illegal status, inability to pay the rent, thus inducing homelessness, or sheer bad luck with a boss or a cop, trigger a chain of events` that sends a person (and his/her family, very often) drifting toward the outer regions of society (29).

This process of social exclusion in combination with restricting social integration often leads to what Manuel Castells calls perverse integration. Perverse integration is integration in the labour process of the criminal economy. Income generating activities that are normatively declared to be crime in a given institutional context. In the theory of R.Merton, this process is

described as innovative. In this theory it is a classification depicting an 'entrepreneurial spirit'.

In the social services we are confronted with an increasing clientele who are confronted with the process of exclusion and perverse integration. Just recently we were confronted in the Netherlands with the fact that mentally disabled migrants have far bigger chance of ending up in penal institutions. This will be the case, I am sure in all European countries.

Together with the fast pace of change in western societies the challenge of adaptation/integration for the settled is almost just as big as for the outsiders/migrants. In this uncertainty and urban transition migrants are an easy prey (30).

This situation creates an uneasy unsafe feeling among the average citizens (31). An easy pray for populists who preach zero tolerance and civic vigilance. I do not see any reasons to be optimistic about our future as long as we mortgage our social capital.

### **Social capital**

In this chapter I will make an attempt to address the mentioned developments in terms, which are applicable for the professionals in the social services: or "Quelle responses des systemes de soins en Europe ? which is the title of this congress. Or let me phrase it in the words of M. Castells, how to curve the space of flow with innovations generated by social capital.

The concept social capital is prominently described by Bourdieu (32), Coleman (33) and Putnam (34). Social capital theory should not be considered a panacea. It has its positive and negative side. Social capital is the ability of individuals to mobilize means from the network to which he or she belongs. For the outsider/excluded social capital can mean an essential source to manage. There is enough evidence proving that the social services are more effective when they are mediated by means of a network of the client. Since one has to invest in a network as an individual to benefit from it social participation is necessary.

The mobilisation, the support or stimulation of networks is especially important since it reduces the effect of the one sided dependency (35). It fosters at the same time elements of reciprocity and autonomy of the participants.

Social capital of a strong bonding character, closed networks, can have negative effects especially for migrants of the second and third generation. They give material support but can also block social mobility. Integration asks for social mobility of both groups. Enough studies of excluded groups in the social sciences make perfectly clear that close bonding networks eventually block the social mobility of its members. One of the oldest studies in this respect comes from Oscar Lewis (36). He describes its effect as a culture of poverty in which he indicates that the lack of effective participation of the poor

in the major institutions of the larger society is one of the crucial characteristics of the culture of poverty. Willis showed in his study *Learning to labour* (37) that working class kids romanticise their so-called resistance towards the middle class meritocratic mores thus blocking social mobility (38). In our classless, social mobile western societies the real losers are those who can't live up to the merits. A recent study (39), a study which goes back to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, of Turkish and Greek refugees shows clearly that those groups of refugees who idolize their roots in an almost fundamentalist manner remained excluded up till now in their new environment. The groups, either Turkish or Greek who could mobilize 'bridging social capital' were able to get ahead. Or as Putnam says "bonding social capital keeps you alive and bridging social capital gets you ahead".

Bridging social capital are networks that have ties to other networks. Their investment in social capital goes beyond their own group: thus fostering reciprocity outside their network. This development is especially necessary in urban areas. The metropolitan areas in Europe can be described as archipelago of population groups. They coexist next to each other but live not together with each other. The ties of bridging social capital are weak towards other networks and strong towards the inner circle. Weak ties mean that there are loose connections towards different other networks in society. In order to keep a network alive you have to invest in it, participate in it and change it.

The social fabrics of big cities are in need of a Marshall plan promoting social capital initiatives. The social services and its professionals can play an active role in this. Let me give you some examples, family support, informal learning activities, corporate responsibility, neighbourhood theatre, combiwell school, workfare programs, etc.

## **Conclusion**

I will conclude. Europe needs a new way with migrants (40). As I said before migration is a general human condition and not something extraordinary. It is not without difficulties and creates a multitude of tensions. It is a process with inherent conflicts of interest between the settled and outsiders. One should also start thinking in terms of "refugee/migrant affected populations" and make sure that the established (the local non refugees/ migrants) are not excluded from health services or other valued provisions. That matching funds should be used to make the presence of the refugee an asset, and not, in local eyes, merely a cost. Tackling and naming these conflicts of interest, recognising the position of those groups in our society who have to deal with these conflicts day to day is a first step.

The romantic notion of multiculturalism does not deliver; assimilation with only liberty and fraternity but without equality does not work either. Closing the borders with a myriad of regulations automatically leads to illegality. Civic vigilance and zero tolerance will threaten not only the liberty of migrants but liberty of us all. Fundamentalist notions be they Christian, Islamic or the

hidden hand of the global casino are countervailing powers for any form of bridging social capital.

There is no other solution than the recognition of the inherent tensions and deliberate investment in social capital and at the same time the organisation of solidarity by supranational institutions of the European Union (41).

“ The most concrete recommendation that comes from research on the new immigration is to pay attention, first to context. If you receive people, make the contextual setting one in which they can at least swim. In many cases, people are being irresponsible admitted when they are almost certain to drown, at least economically. The second lesson is: allow likes to be with likes. Do not be too concerned if in the first generation enclaves and communities are created here. These practices are not anti European and they do not lead to back door fragmentation. Rather, that is often the first step towards successful adaptation, economically and socially” (42).

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