Integration: What makes it work?

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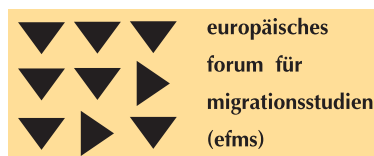
Introduction[1]

Integration is not easy, anywhere, neither in classical immigration countries nor in European societies. When populists mobilise against immigration there is often **talk of failed integration**, and with it fears and resentment are raised. And indeed, integration may fail: there may be marginalisation of migrants, ethnic stratification, reactive ethnicity, the development of parallel societies, or other cases of non-integration.

What often looks like a confirmation of the failure of integration and makes this proposition somewhat plausible, is the continuation of typical integration problems in immigration societies with continuing new immigration: language problems, housing segregation, concentration of migrants in schools, prejudice and discrimination and many other phenomena. It has to be observed, however, that integration is a function of time. As a consequence, with ongoing immigration, there will always be new cycles of integration with little and very partial integration at the beginning. This may look to the outside observer as if there is no progress and that the typical integration problems are recurring, are not solved. A **cohort analysis** is able to test whether the integration problems continue to be connected with the same individuals, or with others, i.e. recent immigrants. Only the first case would be failed integration.

Today, however, I do not want to talk about failed integration, but about the opposite of failure, about successful integration.[2] What makes it work? What are the conditions of successful integration? And: how can we recognize it?

Broadly speaking we recognise successful integration when, among other, the following phenomena are happening:

- Integration is happening when there is a positive correlation between length of stay in a country and degree and kind of integration

- Integration is happening when the second generation is better integrated than the first

- Integration is happening when differences between native people and people with a migration background in relation to certain indicators of integration are decreasing,

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[1] The following text is the keynote address for the conference „Towards a European Integration Migration Policy: Strategies for a Multilevel Governance of Integration." The conference was held at the occasion of the Italian EU Presidency, Rome, December 17-18, 2014.

[2] Evidence and sources of evidence for the main arguments in the following text can be found in Friedrich Heckmann: Integration von Migranten. Einwanderung und neue Ntationenbildung. Springer, Wiesbaden 2015.

these indicators representing structural, cultural, social and identificational integration, with the decrease due to changes in both groups.

I will proceed with an attempt of explaining successful integration and present an empirically founded model of this process. Generally speaking, integration is a function of structures, policies and individual behaviour. I want to talk about all of these, and on different levels of analysis, macro, meso and micro.

Macro-societal structures: openness and support

Openness is a very fundamental dimension of integration policy and relates, firstly, to the **openness** of society's general institutions. To secure one's life in modern societies depends primarily on participation in the general societal institutions of education and training, labour market, entrepreneurship, welfare institutions, housing market and health system. Access to these general institutions that have been created for the general population is more important for integration and integration policies than any special integration policies addressed to migrants. These special policies, however, are often necessary for creating conditions and competences for participation in the general institutions. Language and orientation courses for immigrants would be an example.

Openness not only entails access to the general institutions, but in addition refers to a lack of discrimination in these. Thus, since discrimination, though in different degrees and kind, is (in quotation marks) a "normal" phenomenon of societies, an **anti-discrimination policy** is an important element of the openness of societies.

Now about the **element of support:** Quite often, migrants come to another country with lesser competences and resources than the native population, or with competences from their country of origin that cannot be fully or not even partially be used in the immigration context. Thus, **support** for adapting to the new environment is another necessary condition for integration. Support has both material and psychological dimensions. It goes together with the expectation that the recipients of support ensure the success of the support measures through their effort and behaviour.

Openness and support cannot be seen as constants that are given and stable. They both depend on other factors. As to the material needs of openness and support they depend on the ability and readiness of the receiving society to devote material resources to integration. These in turn depend on the ability and readiness of the so called majority population to engage in learning and adaptation processes towards the challenges of new intercultural, interrelegious and interethnic relations.

A side remark to avoid a frequent misunderstanding of the term "majority population": This majority population in immigration countries, at a particular point in time, is a population that has already incorporated and been changed by past migrants and is not homogeneous.

Going back to the conditions of openness and support, they must be conceived as variables and thus – as resources - have limits, which, when surpassed, endanger success of integration. Since the demand for resources is, among other, a function of the number if immigrants, there is a dependency between success of integration and control of immigration.

One of the methodological and practical problems in this context, however, is that scientifically we cannot exactly determine or even quantify how much immigration a society can have and ensure their integration. An indirect way to **ascertain certain limits** of immigration is to look at indicators that measure tensions between migrants and natives, that is to measure problems of system integration. Drastic increases in xenophobia, nativism, hate speech and/or hate crime against immigrants on the one side, and, on the side of immigrants, tendencies of self-segregation and reactive ethnicity, can be regarded as warning indicators that openness and support and thus integration are endangered.

Integration policies happen at different levels:

- ‣ the neighbourhood level
- ‣ the local or city level
- ‣ the federal state or regional level
- ‣ the national level, and
- ‣ the EU level.

We meet here in an EU context: when looking at the role of the EU and its influence on openness and support I would generally say that the EU has strengthened both. What are the EU policies that may have had an influence on openness and support? This question leads us to the role of the EU as an actor in integration policies.

The EU as an actor in integration policies

Since the conference of Tampere in 1999 and with the follow up programs of Den Haag and Stockholm the EU has been taking a stronger role in integration policies that affect the member states. Directives that have to be transposed into national law are the strongest policy instrument that the EU has. Directives 2000/43 and 2000/78 have obliged the member states to enact laws against **discrimination, and particularly racist discrimination**.

To support its anti-discrimination policy the EU in 2008 has established the **Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna** which monitors discrimination in the member states and which advises the European Parliament. The directive 2003/109 has established a right for a **safe residence status** of third country nationals after five years of legal residence. A safe residence status is a prerequisite for integration. The directive for family reunion in the same year also supports integration.

In 2004 the EU council of ministers of justice and the interior proclaimed **11 basic principles** for the integration of immigrants in the European Union. In the following years, among other policies, the EU has founded the **EU Integration Fund** for the fiscal period 2007-2013, which supported measures, projects and research in EU countries. Support continues with the new and more comprehensive fund AMIF. Part of the money has been distributed by the EU directly, another part by the national agencies for migration and integration. In addition and for a long time before establishing the integration fund, the **EU Social Fund** has supported projects for disadvantaged groups, including migrants. Bendel (2010,43)[3] estimates that through a combination of binding directives and various methods of soft law coordination a process of convergence of integration policies in the different member states has been set in motion.

So far I talked about the macro level analysis of conditions for successful integration. I will now turn to the individual or micro level of migrant behaviour, and talk about the meso level later.

Micro level analysis: motives, competences and resources of individual migrants

The motives of migrants that are relevant for integration may be differentiated according to migration motives and to generational belonging. **Economic migrants** want to improve their lives through migration. The **strife for upper mobility** and for the improvement of living conditions explain the high achievement motivation and readiness to learn that we see in most economic migrants. Even though these motives in the beginning are often connected to an imagined return to the country of origin they support integration into the societal institutions. Integration anyway must not be conceived of as a fixed decision at one point in time – now I will integrate – but as a series of every day steps to improve one's life, like improving one's education and training, or finding a new home, or buying certain consumer

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[3] Bendel, Petra: Integrationspolitik der Europäischen Union. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, WISO Diskurs, Bonn, Oktober 2010

goods which together increase the migrants' binding to the new society and which will finally result in integration.

Political refugees and expellees have motives different from economic migrants. They want protection and want to go back to their home country, when conditions allow it. Often, however, conditions do not allow it and return is not possible. With longer stay in the protecting country bindings increase and a process of integration similar to that of economic migrants sets in. Quite often, one finds a particularly high number of qualified people among political refugees, a fact which strongly supports integration, because competences or **human capital of migrants** are extremely important conditions for successful integration. They determine the ability to participate in the institutions of the receiving society and to participate in the general societal competition for status and resources. For the first generation of economic migrants, however, migration very often entails a devaluation of their human capital which cannot or cannot completely be utilized in the new environment. Of course, there are important differences concerning different kinds of qualification.

Another important side of human capital relevant for success of integration refers to the more general social competences, which are learned in one's socialisation process: communication competences including language, the learning of symbols and their meaning, or the learning of roles or modes of cooperation, in sum learning the culture of the new country. For these processes the individual migrants have to go through a demanding new socialisation process in the new society often at an advanced age. Thus both the restructuring of the professional competences and a **new socialisation for general interaction** in the new society are challenges that have to be met by immigrants to make integration a success.

So far we have looked at conditions on the macro and micro levels of integration processes. The next step will be look at the meso level of ethnic and migrant organisations or ethnic communities and their influence on integration.

Ethnic communities and integration

Ethnic community structures on the one hand represent the **transplanting** and **recreation** of social relationships from the country of origin into the immigration context, on the other hand these institutions respond to needs of immigrants in the new environment. Kinship, migrant cultural regional associations, religious communities, political organisations, informal ethnic networks, ethnic media and an ethnic economy are core elements of such ethnic community structures.

In the first phase of an immigration process interaction with and within the ethnic colonies - as they are sometimes called - supports integration, provides the new migrant with social capital, information and advice. It is then a bridge of transition, as the Chicago school of immigrations studies has called it. In a mid and long time perspective, however, integration necessitates acquiring social capital in the majority society. If the migrant remains primarily within the ethnic community the ethnic colony turns into a mobility trap, as Wiley has called it.

Ethnic communities remain influential on the migrant under the following conditions:

▸ the size of the migrant group from a particular country; relations within a large migrant group represent an alternative to relations with the majority society

▸ continuing immigration; new migrants have needs to which the ethnic colony is a response

▸ lack of openness and support of majority society, and

▸ a diaspora strategy of the country of origin to keep and strengthen loyalty of migrants to the country of origin.

For transnational migrants who do not have a single centre for their life but relate with similar intensity to different national and local contexts things are different. But I will not go into details for these, only mention that according to my judgement transnationalism is a fascinating phenomenon, but by far does not represent the major features of immigration and integration reality. Integration is still primarily into a national context.

I will now summarise my argument in the following model:

Figure 1: The explanation of successful integration
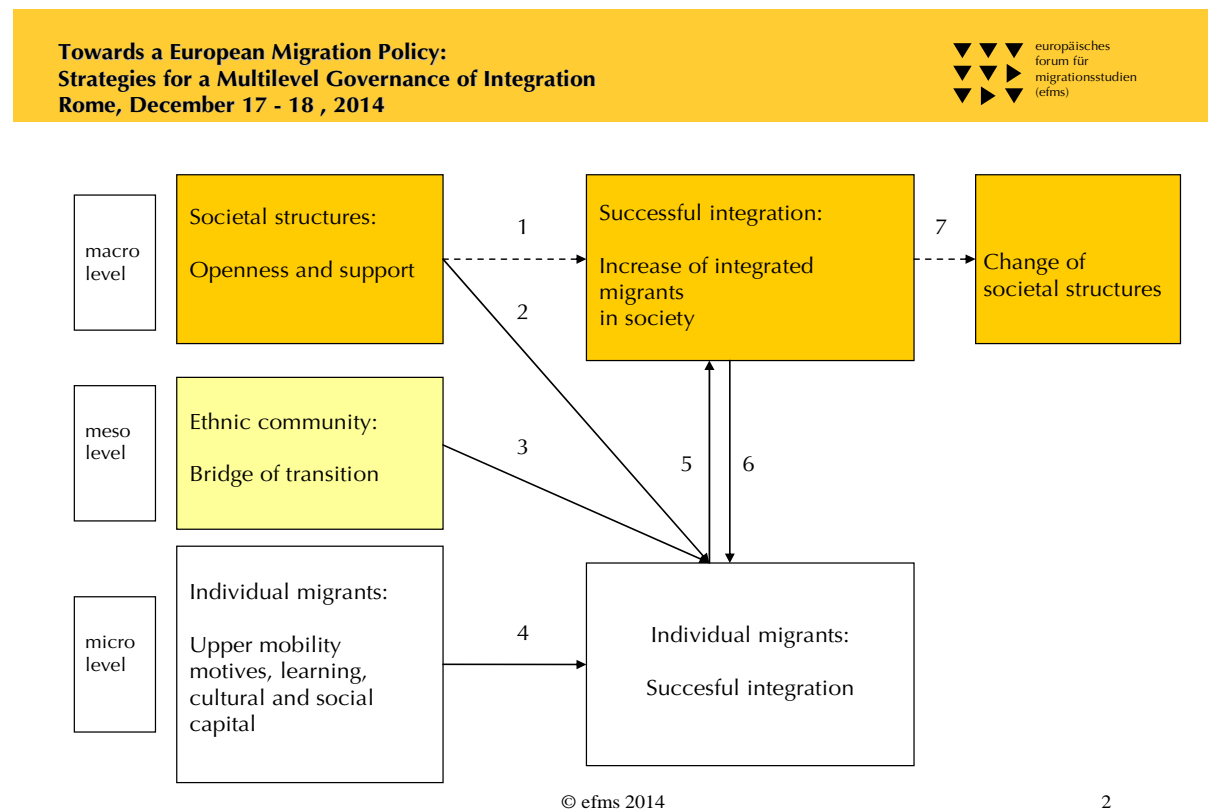
The model represents the three levels of explanation and identifies major influences on integration and their interrelationships.

Arrow 1 illustrates that openness and support are necessary conditions for successful integration as a structural and societal phenomenon at the macro level, indicating an increasing number of people with a migration background in society whose social and economic positions and participation are not determined any more by their origin.

As you can see the arrow is interrupted, because the influence does **not happen** in a direct, but in an indirect way. Structures cannot act, only individuals. So the explanation of successful integration on a macro-societal level has to be done in an indirect way, as the aggregation of many individual integration processes. Thus, one has to explain individual integration first.

Arrow 2 means that **openness and support** enable the individual to develop and apply her and his competences for participation in the major societal institutions. **Arrow 3** represents that the ethnic community structures support integration when they support the early adaptation process, but that they hinder integration when they block the development of relations beyond the ethnic community. **Arrow 4** represents the individual motives, learning abilities and competences that support integration that we have talked about.

An aggregation process is represented in **arrow 5; arrow 6** mirrors that an increase in individual integration cases develops into a self re-enforcing mechanism as it encourages other and more individual migrants to do the same.

On the macro level these processes result in a change of societal structures; the new majority society is one that has encorporated new people with diverse backgrounds, whose backgrounds do not disappear but merge with the existing structures into a new collective body (**arrow 7).**

I suggest calling this a process of **new nation building**, a process, however, which is happening in the context of globalisation and in interaction with Europeanisation. It involves a rebuilding and restructuring of what modern nations mean. In the past there was a "we and the others". Today, with successful integration, the others are becoming part of a **new we**.