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STRUCTURE AND CULTURE IN MIGRATION RESEARCH

SUMMARY

This paper is a contribution to the ongoing debate about integration of immigrants in Western European society. In view of prevailing integrationist/assimilationist assumptions, a revision of the notion of integration in studies of immigrant situations is called for. Proposing a dynamic interpretation of integration, the author introduces the notion of the social field of migrants' life experiences; its fabric is called »migrancy« (Mayer 1962). The thesis that the community of origin and the community of immigration ought to be treated by the researcher as a »single social field« of investigation is endorsed.

It is reiterated that a profound sense of attachment to the »hinterland« is conserved by most immigrants as some kind of protection in relation to their environment. However, they also develop strategies of intergration with the intermediary zone of »the local public« in capitalist industrial society. The author's concluding remark is that through confrontation with the urban-industrial system and its various part-cultures we see a »double cultural competence« coming into being among growing segments of the immigrant population.

Introduction

Seen in the context of migration within Europe this paper is a contribution to the ongoing debate about integration of immigrants in Western European society. In most of the current debates on this issue one can still discern assimilation undercurents, even while lip service is paid to 'freedom of choice' and coexistence of different value systems (cf. Esser et al. 1979). It is acknowledged that immigrant situations produce differential forms of socio--cultural response among different groups of immigrants on account of their varying socio-cultural backgrounds and cognitive frames of reference. However, the général course of 'adaptation' is seen to go in the 'natural' direction of an ever increasing cultural assimilation of the 'aliens'.

These assimilationist assumptions run counter to the historical experience from the United States (Ålund 1985). The course of integration processes in America has caused assimilationist ideologies of 'Anglo conformity' (Crispino 1980) and the 'melting pot' (ibid.), to adjust themselves to a diverging reality. Crispino (ibid.) describes this process of adjustment in the following way, while he distinguishes between 'the three earliest perspectives of assimilation' which have succeeded one another historically as dominant ideologies in America:

>»The three earliest perspectives are a direct product of their historical surroundings and represent themes or statements which desribe how immigrant groups should behave in their host society. Anglo conformity demanded that new arrivals renounce their ethnicity and adopt preexis-

ting, supposedly superior »American« ways. The melting pot perspective was a bit more sympathetic to the ethnic's culture and social structure but still prescribed the abandonment of foreign habits and the adoption of a new, indigenous type of American value and behavioral matrix. The cultural pluralism ideology, which spoke of the maintenance of the communal life, identity and values of the immigrant group, gave public recognition to a reality that already obtained, namely, that American society was a mosaic of subcultures and subgroups« (Crispino 1980:153).

Based on the American situation, Breton (1970) argues that the notion of integration in studies of immigrant situations should be reviewed. It is important not to see....

».... the integration of the immigrant from a purely assimilationist point of view in which integration is said to have taken place when the immigrant is absorbed in the receiving society« (ibid:46).

According to Breton, there are actually three types of communities within which immigrants can be integrated: the community of their own ethnic group, the 'native' community of the dominant cultural group, and other 'ethnic' communities. Breton maintains that some of the most crucial factors determining the integration of immigrants are to be found in the social organization of these ethnic communities. In judging the capacity of an ethnic community to attract and to integrate immigrants, it is important to investigate the community's ability to develop a greater or lesser degoree of 'institutional completeness' (ibid.) which can take care of the needs of its members. Such tasks of an ethnic community toward its members are circumscribed by various informal and formal structures of organization.

In discussing current developments on the European continent, we wish to recall the historical experience from America. In reality many immigrants in Europe find themselves in a phase of integration marked by the growth of ethnic consciousness and the formation of ethnic communities. An interplay of structural and cultural factors, social class and ethnic group characteristics circumscribes the emergence of new forms of social practice and unique strategies of integration among groups with varying ethnohistorical background, and which occupy different positions in the division of labour in Western European societies.

Perspectives on Integration:
From 'Assimilation' to Pluralism

During the 1970's European research on migrants shifted its dominant focus from studies of migration movements to investigations dealing with the 'adaption' or 'integration' of immigrants in Western European society. The dominant trend in European research on immigrants is so far that 'integration' and 'assimilation' are treated as nearly identical. The well integrated migrant is the one who has assimilated himself *functionally* into ways of speaking, thinking and behaving in the 'host society'. Both 'liberal' and 'Marxist' research orientation have suffered heavily from an assimilationist bias.

Most liberal research on integration is marked by an *atomist* approach. Migrant integration is treated alongside a number of separate dimensions of adaptation representing abstract standards of culture or behaviour taken to represent the 'majority'. Theoretically, the process of integration is most often conceived through varieties of decision-making models focusing on individual rationality (Esser et al. 1979). Empirically, integration is typically investigated

in relation to separate sectors of society like linguistic competence, education, work, housing and use of social services. The results are most often conceptualized as a series of statistical averages (1).

Liberal research on immigration and integration typically excludes from its conceptual framework the power structure of the global or national society. This is the very point of departure of most modern research in the Marxist tradition. However, here the atomism and subjectivist rationalism of liberal research is supplanted by Marxist 'hyperintentionalism' (Shanin 1978). Capitalist accumulation and the relationships and conditions in the process of production are seen as the embodiment of existing global and national power (class-) relationships. The understanding of the situation of immigrants has mainly been restricted to their role as a part of the working class as derived from their position in the production process (see the critique by Horst 1983). Analyses of the relations between immigrant groups and the indigenous population tend to depart from the Marxist dogma, which asserts that the position in the production process is the determinant for consciousness and that similar positions in the process of production should lead to a common class consciousness (cf. Horst 1983). Thus, immigrants are stripped of their culture and ethno-historical heritage once they enter the threshold of Western European capitalist society.

Theodor Shanin (1978) was one of the first to point to the consequences of a too narrowly defined class concept in migration research. He objected to this as representing crude reductionism. Shanin argued that the specific socio-cultural background of migrants should be a component part of Marxist analysis, and that structural determination could be evaded through detailed studies of migrants' experiences and practice in everyday situations:

»...it is important to advance Marxist analysis by bringing the desks of those who write closer to the human experience and struggles which matter« (Shanin 1978:286).

For Shanin, the clue to a greater understanding of migrant behaviour and social consciousness lies in the peasant background of the majority of present-day immigrants in Europe. However, it is important to keep the considerations of Ernesto Laclau (1977) in mind, reflecting on the role of inherited symbols and ideologies among migrants subjected to different types of stress:

»Under these circumstances, a natural reaction would be to assert the symbols and ideological values of the society from which he has come, in order to express his antagonism towards the new society which exploits him. Superficially this would seem to be the survival of old elements, but in reality, behind this survival is concealed a transformation: these 'rural elements' are simply the raw materials which the ideological practice of the new immigrants transforms in order to express new antagonisms.«

Thus, it is not enough to be aware that migrants carry their ethnohistorical heritage with them into the immigration context. We must be able to conceptualize this 'heritage' as a dynamic and changeable force in a complex process of social transformation. To deal with this task we need a more pluralistic and less deterministic understanding of society than that usually found in Marxist research, a conceptualization of social practice which »accounts for the ongoing creativity of social actors« (Cohen 1982).

Dahlström (1982:143) points to the 'zone of the local public' as the basis for developing 'efforts from below' in contemporary capitalist society.

1. Research in the Scandinavian context following these lines has been conducted by Henriksen (1985). For a critical view on conclusions drawn on the basis of labour market statistics in Britain, see Feuchtwang (1982).

The zone of the local public is a 'zone of transition' (ibid: 144) between the 'private' zone of the household and the highly institutionalized and centralized national systems defined by the structures of the market and the public political system of the national state. Household members and the zone of the local public are integrated into the market as consumers and sellers of their labour and into the 'political public' as 'citizens'. But both private households and the intermediate zone of the local public hold a considerable degree of 'autonomous development' in relation to the national market system and the 'political public' (the state).

Different social strata and classes are the bearers of different political part-cultures. The market system and the state are increasingly centralized and associated with particular cultural part-systems defined by a narrow elite. At the local level of society, people live and act through specific local-level cultures in working collectives, residential areas and other types of local social networks (ibid: 145). These cultural part-systems differ from the cultural part-systems defined by the ruling strata.

»These local formations can be seen as deviating cultures, counter-cultures or part-cultures ... Local work, living and the family can be seen as niches for the daily life of human beings. The overarching structures created problems for people, and they seek support and defend themselves from the position of their local niches« (ibid.: 145. Our translation from Swedish).

We regard the 'zone of the local public' as the privileged arena for the active and creative development of ethnically specific immigrant part-cultures or 'counter-cultures' and as very typical for the present phase of development of political consciousness and practice among immigrants on the European continent. They have their own dynamics, which can by no means be reduced to a one-dimensional 'adaptation' to the urban-industrial culture of the 'majority' nor dealt with as simple manifestations of class consciousness.

Emerging immigrant part-cultures in Europe serve as the frameworks of socialization of the newly immigrated as well as new generations born in the context of such immigrant or ethnic minority groups. Through this process of socialization members of minority groups certainly 'adapt' to life and participate in an urban-industrial context. However, this process of adaptation more accurately reflects the development of a 'double cultural competence' (Hanners 1982) than the assimilation into the culture of the autochthonous population. People might be socialized into the general culture of the national state and in patterns of culture associated with interaction in different spheres of the zone of the local public. At the same time they could develop this competence in relation to various 'part-cultures' of the autochthonous population, with a firm basis in an ethnically specific minority culture. The 'ethnic minority culture', however, should by no means be understood as a static and peacefully rotating uterus of 'tradition'. It is a dynamic 'part-culture' or 'counter-culture', constantly developing in relation to external as well as internal tensions. Any class consciousness has an ethnic dimension.

A Dynamic Interpretation of Integration

Migrancy

We have argued that the integration of immigrants in Europe ought to be studied in a dynamic and pluralistic perspective. Integration, thus, constitutes a diverse number of original social strategies or practices of various ethnic groups.

In discussing the integration of immigrants, we shall introduce the notion of social field. To constitute a certain migratory pattern as a 'field' we presuppose the existence of common forms of sociocultural practice for the actors participating in the field. These practices can be understood as the historical product of long processes of ethnogenesis of groups of people who share a common past and exhibit similar collective predispositions when dealing with their migratory situation. Given a double and simultaneous attachment in countries of emigration and immigration at once, the total social field (Mitchell 1959) of the migrants is constituted, which is the wider framework within which we must analyze the emergence of immigrant culture.

Hence, studying the development of immigrant culture in a dynamic perspective, we should take account of the social processes which constitute and reproduce this total social field of migrants' life experiences. The fabric of these processes is 'migrancy'.

The term 'migrancy' is taken from the British social anthropologist, Philip Mayer (1962), who studied differential patterns of urbanization among two groups of Xhosa migrants in South Africa (2).

'Migrancy' connotes the continuous processual character of migration, in opposition to the conventional depicting of migration as a definite decision and act — that is the once and for all passage of the migrant from one type of social system to another. Mayer showed that the various instances usually abstracted from the migration process as a whole — emigration, immigration, integration, remigration, etc. — cannot be studied in isolation from one another. They are inseparable parts of a wider social process, each part of the same contradictory social reality.

In discussing 'migrancy', Mayer describes migration from the rural area to the town as a long range social process where the migrant might alternate residence between town and a 'rural hinterland'. This long-term oscillation between town and country might end with the final separation of the migrant from his rural hinterland and his definite integration in town; alternatively, it might result in his definite withdrawal to his rural homeland. The end result depends on the overall character of the social situation within which migration occurs and the overall cultural-historical beckground of those involved.

The content of 'migrancy' is not contained solely by the notion of oscillation between village and town. Mayer's analysis shows how migrants are continuously involved in a long term process of 'networking'. Migrants are continuously participating in the maintenance of old social networks or the construction of new ones in the homeland and in town. The long-range orientation and results of the process of migrancy will depend on the quality of the total social network bridging countryside and town and might eventually lead to differential types of social separation from the rural hinterland or to new forms of reintegration into the rural area.

2. It should be noted that Mayer did his empirical studies before Appartheid became instituted as the basis of race relations and labour market in South Africa.

Thus, the researcher is impelled to analyse the problem of integration within the wider conceptual framework of migration as a complex historical process uniting the community of immigration and the community of emigration into one frame of reference. As suggested by Mitchell (1959), this implies the extention of the empirical study of integration (or urbanization) to embrace the social reality of migrants in the community of origin as well as the community of immigration. The two communities ought to be treated as a 'single social field' of investigation.

The tradition founded among British anthropological research on migration and urbanization in Africa (3) continued in the modern social anthropological studies of integration of Commonwealth immigrants in Britain (4). In view of the character of integration processes among a dominant part of the more recent immigrants on the European continent, we find the analytical logic of these studies justified here as well.

Migrants in present-day Western Europe can be seen as being involved in a process of network building, binding in microcosms the poles of the international migratory system into a single web of overarching social relationships — one single field of social action. Migrants participate simultaneously as actors in social processes going on in the country of immigration and their country of origin. They are continously influenced by structural determinants, norm systems, values and agents of socialization of two different social systems. Through the medium of migration they become actors in this total social field.

These multiple influences are synthesized into various sociopsychological profiles, specific practices, and specific cultural compromises. Such profiles, strategies and compromises cannot be satisfactorily conceptualized unless reference is made to the migrants' total socio-cultural and material realities. From this perspective, the cultural heritage of migrants can be placed in its proper context. It is not an immutable body of norms, given once and for all, but a dynamic force linking the historical processes and present-day action; a social force which is continuously replenished, remoulded and transformed through its incorporation into practice within the complex and changing historical reality of the migration process.

The prevalent condition of simultaneous duality and socio-cultural synthesis characterizing the state of 'migrancy' reflects itself in the shape of central life dilemmas for individuals involved. Sociocultural ambivalence of the first generation is reproduced, reworked and transformed among second-generation immigrants. For the immigrant this double existential frame of reference is not a socio-psychological aspect alone, but is authentically rooted in social and material realities. Separation from social networks, groupings, material possessions and alternatives of labour and education in the countries of origin takes place only slowly. For some not at all (see also Schierup and Ålund 1983 and Schierup 1982).

However, the 'migrants' social field (5) will constantly undergo transformation, both on account of social conflicts innate to the field, and on account of 'outside' events in the social system at large (i.e. economic fluctuations, new political measures, major social upheavals etc.). This produces crises (6) which question existing forms of practice (i.e. existing patterns of migrancy)

3. Cf. Mayer (1961, 1962), Kuper (1965), Little (1965), Epstein (1958), Mitchell (1959).
4. E.g. Saifullah Kahn (1977), who discusses the processes of migrancy among Pakistani migrants to England.
5. For discussions of the notion of 'social field' and its applicability in studies of migration and integration, see further Schieurp 1984 and Schierup and Ålund 1985.
6. For a definition of the notion of 'crisis' in this sense, see Bourdieu 1982.

and force redefinitions of a number of social situations. Established practices are altered by new collective experiences accumulated through ongoing struggles.

Emerging Ethnic Strategies

It is important to emphasize that redefinitions do not take place in a vacuum, but in relation to the ethnohistorical heritage socialized into individuals from early childhood. Thus, the individual is likely to take recourse in this past in search of tools with which to define and cope with new situations. The greater the 'cultural distance' (Ålund 1978) between the immigrant and the immigration context the more important is his ethnohistorical past likely to become a resource for the production of new forms of practice. But the individual cannot do this alone. A search for new redefinitions in isolation is likely to end up in individual anomie (cf. Eitinger and Schwarz 1981). Successful redefinitions are more likely to take place in the context of collective forms of social practice, often in the form of collective ritual. A collective improvisation helps people to integrate experiences of the present with those of the past through the medium of 'traditional' cultural idioms (7). Through the expression of symbols of group integration and group-specific cultural conflicts rooted in tradition and the collective consciousness conflicts are mediated and transformed. Simultaneously, ethnic boundaries are delimitated vis-à-vis outsiders. Elsewhere we have analysed how conflicts between generations in an immigrant minority community and oppositions between this community and majority-defined social fields become articulated and reworked through a common complex ritual.

In the immigration context, 'traditional' cultural idioms represent transformed and adapted symbols. They act as a reaffirmation of group identity and as a 'shield of protection' (cf. Ålund 1985) in relation to the surrounding society. This psychological and social protection is anchored in the collective cultural identity of the group. It is a precondition for a common definition of cultural confrontations. Depending on the distance between the cultures of the ethnic group in question and the host society, as well as the concrete structural preconditions for integration, we can assume considerable variations in the strength and content of both 'traditional' value orientations and of symbols of social integration.

In speaking about the importance of 'tradition' or 'ethno-historical heritage', we wish to emphasize that no present-day practice can be understood as a direct and linear extension of a corresponding earlier practice. This is valid for the country of immigration as well as for the 'hinterland'. Forms of behaviour and ways of thinking are collectively inherited, but flexible dispositions and tools which help the migrant community cope with day-to-day conditions are not.

In this context, ethnicity becomes the combined expression of a variety of cultural predispositions, resources and strategies of adaptation tied to the immigration context. These can be aimed at communication with the social environment and short or long term integration.

Thus, 'traditional' forms of behaviour and interaction in 'traditional' social settings will often carry new messages which reflect over, and cope with situations of life which lie beyond the field of specifically ethnic relationships.

7. For a discussion and a situational analysis of the meaning of culture and 'tradition' in integration processes, see Schierup 1984.

In this way, such practices acquire important socializing functions in relation to the conditions of life of the group in the totality of the immigrant context. Members of the group might thus develop new forms of collective consciousness and new socio-political strategies in relation to common problems and shared conditions.

Although most immigrants conserve a profound sense of attachment to the hinterland, strategies of integration develop within the intermediary zone of 'the local public' in capitalist industrial society. Through the confrontation with the urban-industrial system and its various part-cultures we see a 'double cultural competence' coming into being among growing segments of the immigrant population.

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STRUKTURA I KULTURA U ISTRAŽIVANJU MIGRACIJA

SAŽETAK

Ovo je prilog raspravi o integraciji doseljenika, koja se aktualizirala u zapadno-evropskom društvu. S obzirom na to da u studijama o migrantskim situacijama prevladavaju integracionističke/asimilacionističke pretpostavke, ističe se potreba da se pojam integracije revidira. Autor predlaže dinamičnu interpretaciju integracije i uvodi pojam socijalnog polja životnih iskustava migranata, koje polje u svome tkivu sadrži »migrantstvo« (Mayer 1962). On također zagovara tezu o tome da bi se istraživači trebali baviti društvom porijekla i društvom imigracije kao »jedinstvenim socijalnim poljem« istraživanja.

Iznosi dobro poznatu misao o tome da većina doseljenika uspijeva očuvati duboku povezanost sa »zaleđem«, koja im ponekad služi kao svojevrsni zaštitni mehanizam. No oni uz to razvijaju strategiju integracije na jednom prijelaznom ili posredničkom terenu, unutar »lokalne publike« u industrijski razvijenom kapitalističkom društvu. Autorova zaključna primjedba odnosi se na pojavu »dvostruke kulturne kompetencije« sve brojnije doseljeničke populacije. Takva je kompetencija rezultat konfrontacije urbanog industrijskog sistema i njegovih različitih parcijalnih kultura.