

**THE ESF FORWARD LOOK ON
IMMIGRATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES
IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE**

Workshop 3:

**The background and prevention of psychosocial conflicts
Copenhagen, May 22-23, 2003**

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**REPORT OF THE THIRD FORWARD-LOOK WORKSHOP ON
IMMIGRATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES**

COPENHAGEN 22-23 MAY 2003

The background and prevention of psychosocial conflicts

Four workshops were planned by the European Science Foundation within the framework of the "**Forward Looks on Immigration and the construction of identities in contemporary Europe**". The first workshop was held in Wassenaar, (NIAS) in the Netherlands on December 6-7, 2002 and was centred on transnational ties in a **historical perspective**. The second workshop took place in Paris, (CERI) on March 7-8, and dealt mainly with the **religious aspects** of migration and identity. This report deals with the third workshop which took place in Copenhagen on May 23-24, 2003, and which focussed on "**the background and the prevention of psychosocial conflicts**".

Dealing with complexity in migration research

The migration experience and the ensuing cultural contacts/conflicts are mediated by factors, which exist prior to migration (socioeconomic and political situation of the home country), the characteristics of immigrants (rural/urban background, gender, education, motivation, personality variables) and the characteristics and immigration/integration policies of the receiving countries.

The problems resulting from migration must therefore be dealt with at many different levels: biological, psychological, social, cultural, political, and the global. These are fields of interacting nonlinear systems ranging from the individual to the global level which are characterized by high degrees of complexity. We are in other words not only facing complicated systems, but complex systems, which are by definition highly unpredictable. The challenge of migration research in the coming years will therefore lie, not only in the acquisition of new information, but in the meaningful interpretation and synthetisation of this knowledge in the face of the given complexity.

The human and social sciences have produced a rich and substantial volume of research in the area of migration. Different research traditions have however, had little contact with each other, different terminologies have been used for similar phenomena, and there is no concordance in the nomenclature of the different disciplines and schools. For example, psychosocial problems have been mostly studied by social psychologists under the title of "intergroup relations", whereas cross-cultural psychologists have used the term "intercultural relations", and "these two research traditions have largely tended to ignore each other", (Liebkind, 2003). Even within the restricted frame of the present Forward Look initiative, the perspectives, definitions and research methods have differed widely from workshop to workshop. Overlapping topics have been discussed, but there were very few cross-references, as indicated by the papers and the reports of the three workshops. The main topics discussed during the workshop are thematically presented below.

The receiving countries= integration policy

The question of the receiving countries= integration policies was not at the centre of the workshop but it was present in all the discussions. The receiving countries= implicit and/or explicit integration policies constitute not only the context in which transcultural interaction and acculturation takes place, it is also an essential element

in the definition and categorization of who an immigrant is.

The question was most explicitly addressed in Dominique Schnapper, Pascale Krief, and Emmanuel Peignard's paper with respect to the French, and in Berry's presentation with regard to the Canadian experience, two opposite policies. Taking the French contemporary integration policy (earlier called "assimilation policy") as an example, they discussed the implications of a policy, which allows for the expression of cultural belonging in private, but not in political life. Whether this model is "assimilationist" and geared toward erasing cultural differences, or on the contrary, whether it leads to fidelity to one's culture of origin while at the time as providing the possibility of internalizing the values of the new society, is an open question. This so-called universalistic model that has shaped French integration policy (universalist because it is thought to give each individual the possibility of transcending origins and of being the bearer of "universal values"), aims to transforming immigrants, or at least their children into French citizens, thereby providing the newcomers and their descendants with the right to become full citizens with equal obligations and equal rights. It is in other words, through individual citizenship that the French "assimilation policy" attempts to transform a population of foreign origin into Frenchmen.

This type of policy clearly does not encourage the immigrant communities to express their distinctive character, even though it is open for case-to-case, day-to-day negotiations upon departures from the universal guidelines (as for example in the case of the headscarves affair). France has often been criticised for this assimilationist policy. The reflection of Schnapper et al. to this criticism is thought-provoking for north-European and North American - especially Canadian researchers, for whom the ideal tends to be cultural pluralism. "Minority oriented policies and encouraging "communities" to express themselves publicly as such, may be normal and perhaps desirable in other European countries," say Schnapper et al., "but because of the French model and tradition of national integration, the minority-based approach might have the effect of weakening the social fabric and cohesion. All policies have their own logic due to a particular national history" (p.63). The same policies can therefore have different impact in different countries.

The contrasting view is reflected in multiculturalism that upholds pluralistic rather than unitary state policies and diversity rather than uniformity in society. Viewpoints in favour of multiculturalism were presented by John Berry, who has studied acculturation extensively, and whose work on the topic is a classic in the field. His model of intercultural strategies in immigrant groups and in the receiving society is based on the assumption that immigrant groups and their individual members have the freedom to choose how they want to engage in intercultural relations (p.227), as is the case in e.g. Canada. He recognises that this is not always the case., and presents a parallel framework for the views of those in the larger society, including public attitudes and policy. the intercultural situation is thus influenced by negotiation between these two, sometimes competing, set of views. In this framework, 'integration' requires mutual changes in the both the immigrant groups and the larger society: immigrants adopt the basic values of the society, while in turn the public institutions adapt in order to meet the needs of all groups now living together

in the society. in this way, 'assimilation' and 'separation' can be avoided, both of which have more serious social and psychological costs than 'integration'. the pluralist [or multicultural] way managing cultural diversity is not simply accepting or promoting differences in isolation, one group from another; it involves intercultural relations based on mutual respect.

Regardless of such differences, a prerequisite for sociocultural adaptation is, according to Berry, that people feel secure in their identity. "Support ethnic group development. Ethnic groups will only be tolerant if they are supported. Only then can they be tolerant of differences". Perceived discrimination is the most important single variable that impacts on acculturation. In contrast to the widespread view that psychological adaptation is a prerequisite for sociocultural adaptation, Berry maintains that it is the other way around: good social and cultural conditions lead to better psychological adjustment to the host society.

Berry's model gave rise to questions regarding cultural pluralism, and to acculturation to a dominant culture vs. integration in multi- and pluricultural societies. The application of multiculturalism in Europe, (the Canadian model) is complicated by the fact that most European countries do not adhere to a multicultural ideology, and that there are not only discrepancies, but directly conflicting values between some immigrants and the host society. Unni Wikan who has worked with oppressed women from Islamic societies illustrated the problems encountered in Norwegian courts when Islamic sexual norms clash with the northern model of gender equality.

Yilmaz Esmer and Cigdem Kagitcibasi expressed reservations, albeit for different reasons, as to the desirability of encouraging "communities" to maintain values that might be counterproductive to the next generations= development and emancipation. Kagitcibasi, referring to her paper, >Whither multiculturalism?= pointed to the danger of rendering the migrant groups even more >different= than the host society by accentuating the former=s different cultural characteristics, especially religion@. She also expressed concern regarding the unquestioning acceptance on the part of the majority culture toward religion-bound reactionary practices, which actually undermine the successful socio-cultural adaptation of minority communities.

Similarly, Esmer, the author of the recently published article: "Is Islam a civilization", presented data on the impact of secular vs. religious education, arguing against the latter, especially in the case of children issued from Turkish migration to Europe. Drawing on data from the World and European Value Surveys, Esmer presented data on a wide range of cultural values using systemic data from eight countries, including predominantly Islamic societies. According to Esmer the list of characteristics that would define the Islamic culture is very consistent: 1) Faith seems to be more important for Muslims compared to people to belong to other religions; 2) Islamic values are less supportive of gender equality and less tolerant of sexual liberalization; 3) Determination and perseverance consistently appeared as values to which Muslims did not seem to attach much importance; and 4) Political, more specifically democratic culture variables did not distinguish Islam from Protestant, Catholic,

Orthodox or Hindu worlds. These characteristics of Islam need to be understood and kept in mind in policy decisions regarding the provision of support to Islamic institutions, such as Koranic schools in the receiving countries.

Transnationalism and/or extended networks

Karen Fog Olwig focussed on the question of the differentiations between the notion of different cultures vs. the question of strategic use of networks both in the home and in the receiving countries. Relations across national borders need not involve "nations". Livelihood practices engage people in local, regional and transnational mobile networks, both for economic opportunities and in order to pursue particular types of culturally and socially desirable livelihoods. Studying such transcultural networks implies returning to ethnographical approaches, follow-up studies, life stories, in depth case studies, preferably in collaboration between groups of researchers.

Antoine Gailly's contribution centred primarily on the role of culture for psychotherapy, but took its point of departure in questions related to Fog Olwig's: Can someone belong to a group that has no territorial point of reference? What is the subjective culture of a transnational community? Do people in the diaspora, in migration, consider themselves as bound to a given territory? What is the common socio-cultural consciousness in a situation of permanent up-rootedness. Gailly suggested that a study of caravan-dweller, gypsies or nomadic people whose vision of the world is one of constantly being on the move might provide more insight into these questions.

Culture vs. Socioeconomic factors: acculturation as social mobility

Social scientists and politicians usually agree that racism and discrimination mainly stem from economic and social problems. Social distinctions seem to play a more important role than ethnic ones. According to Krief et al. the most important difficulties that immigrants or their children encounter in public life can be attributed more to social problems than to ethnicity - even if there is a mixture of "ethnic" and "social" dimensions in the expression of racism." (P.59)

A similar conclusion was reached by Phalet and Hagendoorn, who found that education was more important than ethnicity with respect to values. Education seemed by the way to play a greater role for women than for men's attitudes, thus stressing the importance of studying the gendered nature of change.

Drawing on the Ercomer Survey 2000, Phalet and Hagendoorn compared images and identities of Turkish and Moroccan migrants and Dutch natives in Rotterdam (N=1500). An interactive approach to ethnic relations implies studying the prejudices of both the dominant and the minority groups. Phalet and Hagendoorn found that a clear majority of both native and migrant youth experience conflict rather than compatibility between Muslim and European norms and values. Often differences among groups in values or behaviours are attributed to ethnic/cultural differences. Yet they may be arising out of socio-economic differences. For example several studies conducted across multicultural receiving societies showed that when social class was

held constant, inter-ethnic differences disappeared in parental childrearing values and beliefs.

Anti-Islam attitudes were partly based on "classic prejudice", and partly on perceived political threat and culture conflict. Representations of conflicting family values were more widely shared than concerns with global political tensions. Perceptions of cultural conflicts centre on a deep moral discrepancy between liberal and conservative family values. Not only did dominant group members to some extent rejected Muslim minorities, but some portions of minority groups also held negative views of the dominant society. On both sides youngsters with lower levels of education experience more difficulty in reconciling Muslim and European values and cultures than those with higher education. Based on these findings, Phalet centred the discussion on the questions of what strategies people use, i.e., individual or collective, and what is the instrumental value of moral values?

Independent vs. interdependent self, autonomy and interpersonal distance

No categories are clear-cut: Individuals in different cultures include in their cognitive systems both individualistic and collectivistic elements in different degrees, and depending on the context. The individualistic-collectivistic dimension has been studied under different names, among others independent- interdependent, referential-indexical, and idiocentrism-allocentrism. Cigdem Kagitcibasi who introduced the concept of separated and related selves, focussed in her presentation on the general assumption that there has to be an individuation or separation process in order to grow up. Can people be autonomous if they do not separate? According to Kagitcibasi there has been a culture-blind application of the psychological theories of individuation. In many cultures parents are becoming more and more accepting of autonomy, without necessarily separating. There is also a growing understanding that an obedience-orientation in education is no longer adaptive. Autonomy is required for success in school as well as in specialized urban employment in industrial society, but the goal of relatedness remains. Turkish adolescents do not want to be separated from their parents, they want to be more autonomous. The possible compatibility and coexistence of autonomy (agency which involves volitions, doing something of your own will without being coerced) and relatedness, stimulated discussion. While in conceptual terms >the autonomous-related self= was found acceptable, Wikan expressed doubts about its realization particularly for Muslim women whose autonomy is constrained by tradition and sharia.

The subjective experience of belonging

Based on comparative studies of Turks in Australia, Sweden and the UK, as well as comparative studies of minorities within Turkey (Armenians, Jews and Greeks), Icdygu presented results that supported the reciprocity between the immigrants= attitudes toward the host society and vice versa. Icdygu was interested in the subjective experience of the concepts of membership, belonging, attachment and legitimacy in migration, and pointed at discrepancies between the different levels at

which these concepts are expressed, stressing once again the difficulties in obtaining meaningful results on the basis of objective questioning alone. For example identification with the country of origin, contrary to expectations did not influence the immigrants' political behaviour and choices. Similarly, the immigrants both wished and did not wish to "become integrated", depending on the meaning of integration¹. In any case, to become integrated is not the immigrants' project, according to Icduygu, this being also reflected by the increase of conservatism and of the impact of religion after emigration. Icduygu's research highlighted the need for comparative research for the investigation of following questions:

How are the concepts of membership, belonging, attachment and legitimacy defined and how do individual immigrants experience them? What is the relationship between loyalty to the host country and trust in the new society. What is the meaning of retaining the old citizenship? Of changing citizenship? Under which circumstances is this a political/economic/ or emotional decision.

Does identification with the home country predict political choices?

From a the point of view of individual and clinical psychology, Mirdal raised the question of the validity of the concept of identity and belonging. In its most fundamental sense, wrote Mirdal, identity connotes a persistent sameness within oneself. It is one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity in time. Identity is in other words, self-knowledge, a knowledge consisting of a network of bodily, emotional, cognitive, social and cultural information about the self. This self is in turn in a constant process of assimilating new knowledge and adjusting to changing contexts. Whether this self is considered as an individual's innermost core or as the composite of various identities, is a matter of definition. Apparently the most threatened aspects of one's identity acquire primacy in consciousness under periods of crisis or in situations of emotional over-involvement. Thus religious and ethnic identity play an important role for persons belonging to minority groups, often to the point of predominating above all other aspects of identity. Although theoretical at first sight, the implications of these discussions have concrete relevance for the prevention of the development of rigid and fanatic identities, and the possible cultural conflicts to which they lead.

¹ Cf. the recently published study by Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., Liebkind, K., Horenczyk, G., & Schmitz, P. (2003). The Interactive Nature of Acculturation: Perceived Discrimination, Acculturation Attitudes and Stress Among Young Ethnic Repatriates in Finland, Israel and Germany. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 27(1), 79-97.

Intercultural conflicts

By attempting to explain potential conflicts caused by migration, the sociological migration research has considered a number of social structural conditions, which modify the integration process and the conflict potential. According to Nauck, if these shall not end in limitless inventories of determinants - a "theoryless variable sociology", the determinants as observable indicators have to be related to the nomological cores of the sociological theories. This was attempted in relation to the following two areas where empirical results and theoretical considerations were interrelated in the presentations: law and justice, and intergenerational conflicts.

Bierbrauer maintained that a harmonious identification with the values of the host society necessitates that minorities are not excluded from the scope of justice and moral concerns. His hypothesis, based on Schlesinger's classical work is that if ethnoplural societies fail to provide adequate reasons and resources for its minority members to identify voluntarily with a set of superordinate values, they will identify more strongly with their own ethnic subgroups.

Specific studies on **intercultural conflicts in court** were presented by Bierbrauer and further discussed by Wikan. Bierbrauer studied attitudes toward procedural (how things should be decided) vs. distributional justice (how goods and benefits should be distributed) in cases where immigrants are the recipients and members of the host society are the allocators.

The following questions were raised: What does it mean to have a different culture in court? What does a superordinate European identity vs. National identity mean for the perception of justice? Considering that e.g. Kurds and Lebanese prefer informal, whereas Germans prefer more formal forms for dispute resolution, can different methods be advocated for different ethnic groups? (There is additional evidence that in traditional collectivistic culture informal dispute settlement is resorted to, for example, June Starr's work in a Turkish village and recent cross-cultural work comparing Chinese with Americans, mainly in order not to disrupt group harmony.) To what degree are the receiving countries prepared to question their own legal system?

Unni Wikan presented her experiences with cases of conflict between the Norwegian view of equality and freedom and Sharia law. What is just? Is a fair distribution of justice the acceptance of the immigrants' understanding of cultural justice, even when it collides with that of the host society?

Referring to the cases of so-called "honour-murders", Wikan was interested in the processes of decision-making and the assignment of responsibility. Decisions about how conflicts should be solved in certain ethnic groups seem to be taken abroad. If it is true that "The decision to kill is taken in Turkey. In Irak.", it is important to study how power structures operate at the transnational level.

Another areas where intercultural conflicts are studied empirically is that of **psychosocial conflicts across generations**. In their paper on inter-generational conflicts and health hazards in immigrant families, Nauck and Niephaus took their

point of departure in the often raised assumption that there are serious conflicts between first generation immigrants and their offspring. Well-being is one of the most valid indicators of the subjective dimension of life quality. In this study, it was used as a measure of the intensity of inter-generational conflicts. The main result of the empirical findings is that such conflicts, compared to other stressors did not impact on health risks in the migration situation. These families were apparently not particularly stressed by conflicts between parents and their offspring.

"Intergenerative transmission" took place to a greater extent in migrant than in non-migrant families, i.e., there were higher correlations between the attitudes of parents and adolescents in Turkish migrant families than in non-migrated Turkish families. The attitudes of migrant families were more traditional and conformist than that of non-migrated families.

In immigrant families the family members "know" more about each other, are more sensitive to familial interactions and attempt to synchronise with them. "Cultural distance" between the society of origin and the receiving society has an influence on the well-being of both first and second generation and on the intensity of intergenerative conflicts. i.e. the higher the >cultural distance=, the worse the well-being; the greater the social/cultural distance between the migrant and the host society, the more the discrimination, rejection and the less the integration. These observations are relevant to the dilemmas relating to accentuating the differences with multicultural policies mentioned earlier.

Questions for further research and looking forward to future projects

On the basis of a review of the social psychological literature, Karmela Liebkind concluded in her paper entitled "Acculturation", that future social psychological research on acculturation should distinguish at least the following aspects of ethnic/cultural identity: Subjective and "objective" (or self-recognized and alter-ascribed) identity; and social and cultural/ethnic identity. Studies on the intergroup strategies used by members of minority groups should therefore, according to the same article encompass at least the following dimensions:

Power and status differentials with respect to intergroup relations; intergroup attitudes and behaviour (negative stereotypes, prejudice, hostility in both minority and majority groups); ethnic/cultural identity; attitudes toward the heritage and the dominant cultures; and degree of adoption of heritage and dominant culture.

Lars Dencik provided a templet for questions, suggestions and reflections that can appropriately conclude this report:

I: What are the important topics in the field?

In addition to the above mentioned themes, Dencik touched upon the topic of categorization and ethnic classification. The way in which people are defined (e.g. by their ethnicity, in relation to the minority status, or to the generational order, etc.) impacts on intercultural conflicts: definitions can strengthen new nationalism, neo tribalism, militancy and xenophobia according to the qualities and characteristics that they emphasize.

II. What should we do?

Much of the research discussed during the workshop focussed on the immigrants and their identities. We should focus more on the reception side of the equation and on the reactions of the dominant culture toward the immigrants. Likewise the focus should turn from ethnic tensions to specific conflicts. Quoting Frederik Barth, Dencik said: Focus on the conflict, not on the ethnic. It is the conflicts that enhance the ethnic and not the other way around.

III. Conceptual and methodological problems

The questions that were discussed throughout the workshop dealt with people who come from one country and one/many culture(s) to another, who are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders, and who have at least a double belonging, with ensuing feelings of bi-valence or ambivalence. Are our conceptual tools and the categories that we use adequate to grasp this complexity? Which theoretical advances are needed to encompass the contradictory findings as well as the concurring hypotheses that emerge from different disciplines and traditions?

More concrete methodological questions were also addressed, e.g., the identification and location of groups, the definition of subjects according to objective or subjective dimensions; culture-fairness in measurements; emic/etic approaches; questions of validity and reliability, especially in relation to surveys and the interpretation of these data.

IV. What kind of research is needed?

Examples of research that transcends the actual paradigms pointed at areas that are under-investigated, precisely because they are conceptually and methodologically difficult to study scientifically. The greatest lacunae are in the area of longitudinal studies and collaborative projects. Examples could be:

- the dynamics of ideological shifts in the host societies;
- the definition of Acultural autonomy@; its moral and ethical aspects;
- the transformations of identities; changing metaphors of identity, attachment, reciprocity, and legitimacy;
- the individual in differing contexts of acculturation vs. constraints;
- the relation of researchers to the media; the diffusion of results and the researchers responsibilities in influencing the images of cultural conflicts.
- the application of empirical findings in solving societal conflicts.