
Update No. 1 - July 14, 2000

Social Cohesion and Social Exclusion

Résumés

Mateo Alaluf, "Demographic trends and the role of social protection: the concept of social cohesion", September 16-17, 1999, Université libre de Bruxelles.

This 44 page paper is a report of a seminar on the idea of social cohesion that the Free University of Brussels organized in September 1999 at the request of the European Commission. This paper is a well-informed, and theoretically rich, critical analysis of the concept of social cohesion. Following an analytical strategy similar to the one previously used by Jenson (1998) and Vertovec (1997), it seeks to understand why social cohesion has now become a much debated idea.

The paper argues that social cohesion is a vague concept, whose very ambiguity explains much of its current popularity and widespread use in political and policy discourses. Alaluf's approach is clearly rooted in the sociology of work. Social cohesion is seen as a focal point for issues concerning employment and social protection: it is intimately related to social citizenship, which makes a direct causal link between work and social protection. The 'social state' produces the forms of solidarity to which Alaluf associates social cohesion. Thus, insofar as the question of social cohesion is inseparable from that of the social state, the paper focuses on themes such as:

- general trends in population change
- employment and working conditions
- social minima
- education and training.

In the postwar 'work society', based on employment, unions and employers have been the principal actors in the construction of social protection systems. Today, as a result of falling rates of unionization, unemployment, and corporate restructuring these actors face serious representation problems. The absence of social cohesion is a sign of the reduced social integration ability of intermediate institutions, i.e. the employers and unions. It is in this sense that the rebuilding of collective bargaining is considered an essential aspect of social cohesion.

If you wish to access the full version of Mateo Alaluf's paper, the address is:
<http://www.ulb.ac.be/project/tef>

Ruth Levitas (1996). The Concept of Social Exclusion and the New Durkheimian Hegemony. Critical Social Policy, Vol. 16, pp.5-20.

Ruth Levitas is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Bristol. Her last book is: *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour* (MacMillan, 1998). Email Address: Ruth.levitas@bristol.ac.uk

This paper already is four years old, but it is useful because it helps to stimulate critical thinking about social cohesion by studying what it is not: social exclusion. Levitas argues that the concept of social exclusion, originally developed to describe the manifold consequences of poverty and inequality, is now crucial to thinking about social cohesion and solidarity. Social exclusion has come to mean not inclusion as one might expect, but also integration into the labour market. The paper analyses a discourse it describes as fundamentally Durkheimian by looking at recent policy documents from Britain and the European Union.

Hilary Silver, 1994. Social exclusion and social solidarity: three paradigms. International Labour Review, vol. 133, no. 5-6, pp.531-578.

Hilary Silver teaches in the Department of Sociology at Brown University.
Hilary_Silver@brown.edu

Since the mid-1970s, the economic restructuring of advanced capitalist democracies has revealed the outdated nature of universal social policies and the declining representativeness of secure life and family patterns. Terms such as 'social exclusion,' 'new poverty,' and the 'underclass' have emerged to describe such phenomena. In this classic article, after classifying the multiple connotations of these terms, Silver adopts a pluridimensional, multidisciplinary approach to distinguish the theoretical bases of three paradigms (solidarity, specialization and monopoly) to enable a better understanding of exclusion. She illustrates the paradigms with theories addressing the economic dimension of exclusion before, finally, considering its significance in politics and social policy.

Carnoy, Martin, 1999. The family, flexible work and social cohesion at risk. International Labour Review, vol. 138, no. 4, pp.411-430.

Martin Carnoy is Professor at the School of Education at Stanford University. This article is based on his forthcoming book, *Sustaining Flexibility: Work, Family and Community in the Information Age* (Harvard University Press).

Radical changes in work have significant repercussions on the family and the community, the traditional social integrators and transmitters of values. Women's entry into the labour market also plays an important part. Carnoy sees an increasingly knowledge-based and flexible labour market making greater demands on families just as they are undergoing increased stress. They are called upon to provide continuing stability, to focus on early childhood development, to help children acquire needed knowledge, and to bolster their members against unemployment and periods of retraining. Society is expected to provide childcare facilities and flexible education.

What's New?

- The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research, held a Symposium on Social Cohesion in Amsterdam on June 14, 2000. Guest speakers included senior officials from the Dutch government and academics such as Jane Jenson from Université de Montréal, who talked about "Labour, Care and Social Cohesion," and J. L. Locke from University of Cambridge whose presentation focused on the internet and social cohesion.
- In April 2000, the French government created the Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Work, Income and Social Cohesion. The Council is presided by no other than Jacques Delors, former President of the European Union Commission. The Council is attached to the Prime Minister's Office and is expected to produce reports and studies on the themes that are under its jurisdiction. Information can be obtained from the website at <http://www.premier-ministre.gouv.fr/PM/240500.HTM>
- The Interdepartmental Research Committee on Social Cohesion (IRCSC) held a two-day workshop in Ottawa in June 2000 on the development of social cohesion indicators. The IRCSC is a sub-committee of the Social Cohesion Network, Policy Research Initiative. The workshop mainly dealt with issues of definition and methodology. Deliberations were lively and challenging, as participants argued about whether it is more important to measure what social cohesion "is," over measuring what social cohesion "does" - its effects on society, polity and the economy. This is a debate to follow!
- The last issue of *Économie et Solidarités*, a journal published by CIRIEC (Centre interdisciplinaire de recherche et d'information sur les entreprises collectives) focused on globalization and social cohesion. For more information, see: <http://www.unites.uqam.ca/ciriec/revue/index.html>