Social Cohesion: A Multidimensional Concept

Résumés

M. Sharon Jeannotte (2000). "Social Cohesion Around the World: An International Comparison of Definitions and Issues." Department of Canadian Heritage.

This study explores how the term "social cohesion" is used and defined internationally, through an extensive comparative review of the literature produced by three different organizations: the OECD, the Council of Europe, and the European Union. The paper explores how these three organizations define social cohesion. It also examines major threats to social cohesion; outlines measures undertaken to address perceived threats; and draws general conclusions about the three organizations' approach to the policy challenges posed by social cohesion. The paper notes that the OECD has the narrowest definition, focussing almost exclusively on the economic and material aspects of social cohesion. The Council of Europe has the broadest definition, whereas the European Union falls somewhere between the two others, viewing social cohesion as a key part of the "European model of society," founded on a notion of solidarity that is embodied in universal systems of social protection.

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Zenaida R. Ravanara (2000). "Family Transformation and Social Cohesion."

This paper describes the research direction of the Family Transformation and Social Cohesion project, one of the 17 "strategic" projects funded by SSHRC. Based on a review of the literature, the paper outlines the recent changes within the family, and the meaning of social cohesion. This is followed by a discussion of the links between families, communities, and society. The project will explore six areas:

1. Relationships between women and men; 2. Relationships between parents and children, with an emphasis on non-custodial and informal or step parents; 3. Transmission of family behaviour and support between generations; 4. Family time and sharing of household tasks; 5. Values

associated with family and alternate family models; and 6. The development of indicators of family changes related to social cohesion.

For more information on the work of Family Transformation and Social Cohesion Research Team, see: http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/sociology/ftsc/index.htm

Council of Europe (1999). "Strategy for Social Cohesion and Quality of Life."

In 1997, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe identified social cohesion "as one of the foremost needs of the wider Europe and essential complement to the promotion of human rights and dignity." Soon after, a new intergovernmental body - the European Committee for Social Cohesion (ECSC) - was established to develop and implement the Council's new strategy for social cohesion. The strategy designed by the ECSC focuses on the needs of the poor and marginalized members of society, and seek to strengthen those forces that help to create social solidarity and a sense of belonging. The ECSC is expected to address the following issues:

1. How to prevent the emergence of a two-speed society characterized by a prosperous majority and a marginalized minority; 2. How to take effective action to eradicate poverty and to combat exclusion; 3. How to reduce unacceptably high levels of unemployment in a globalizing economic system; 4. How to improve the standard of public services and ensure that all members of society have effective access to them; 5. How to achieve and maintain a high level of social protection at a time when many pressures make it necessary to look afresh at traditional concepts; 6. How to create a new sense of social solidarity and mutual responsibility in a society characterized by the pursuit of individual fulfillment; and 7. How to respond to changing patterns of family life and their effects on children.

To learn more about the Council's social cohesion strategy, see:
http://www.coe.fr/dase/en/cohesion/strategy.htm

What's New?

The Metropolis Project will host the Fifth International Metropolis from November 13-17, 2000 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Building on the work of the four previous conferences (Milan 1996; Copenhagen 1997; Israel 1998; and Washington 1999), the Vancouver conference will further discussions amongst policy-makers, academics and NGOs by exploring the following themes:

Building Social, Cultural and Economic Capital Creating Opportunity Managing Gateways and Managing Change, and Investing in the Future: The Changing Face of Youth.

For more information on the Metropolis Conference, see:
http://www.international.metropolis.net/events/vancouver/announcement_f.html

The Social Cohesion Network will hold the fourth workshop of its series on "What Will Hold Us Together?" The theme of this meeting focuses on Immigration, Ethnic Diversity and Social Cohesion. It will take place on November 9, 2000 from 1:30-4:00 p.m. at Boardroom 381D, Jean Edmonds South Tower, 365 Laurier, Ottawa, Ontario. If you want to participate, fax your name, address and telephone number to (613) 995-6006.

The researchers who are part of the 17 teams that received funding from SSHRC for a three-year project under the strategic theme of "Social Cohesion in the Era of Globalization" are meeting in Toronto from October 25-27, 2000 to exchange ideas, increase their knowledge of the project themes, strengthen linkages among participants, and share research strategies and methods. The Social Cohesion (SOCO) Workshop has been organized by Dr. Audrey Kobayashi, Department of Geography, Queen's University. For more information, see:
http://www.ehomebusiness.com/soco2/