
Update No. 13 – March 30, 2001

Governance and Social Cohesion

Résumés

Rodrik, Dany. 2000. "**Participatory Politics, Social Cooperation and Economic Stability.**" John F. Kennedy School of Government.
<http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~drodrik.academic.ksg/AEA%20paper.PDF>

This paper provides cross-national data showing that participatory political regimes are associated with significantly lower levels of aggregate economic instability. The author argues that the reason for this has to do with the propensity of democracy to moderate social conflict and induce compromise. Why is this the case? First, because democratic participation in politics can generate compromise by altering preferences. As individuals meet and deliberate, they come to understand each other's viewpoints, develop empathy, recognize the value of moderation, internalize the common interest, and de-emphasize narrow self-interest. Second, liberal democracies entail constitutional rules that curtail the power of the majority to expropriate the minority. Third, democracy can moderate social conflict even when there is no explicit constitutional rules that moderate behaviour, because repeated interaction between political groups can generate compromise, as long as the group that happens to be in power at any point in time knows that it will not remain in power forever, and is sufficiently likely to return to power once displaced. Rodrik concludes that these three perspectives suggest democracy is of economic value especially in societies where ethnic, linguistic, geographic, and other cleavages would otherwise result in excessive amounts of socially unproductive opportunistic behaviour. This, he believes, is good news for the increasing number of developing countries that are moving in the direction of participatory governance.

Pelagidis, Theodore. 1999. "**Social Cohesion as a Competitive Advantage.**" Briefing Notes in Economics No. 42 (September). Copies of this article are available at:
http://www.idis.gr/people/pelagidis_en.html#hotlist

This paper presents an alternative view to that of conservatism, that is, that public intervention should be limited to charitable works and that democracy is a secondary matter to that of individual "freedom." Pelagidis argues in favour of an economy of solidarity, which must be

based on a "new social contract" that includes the implementation of policies that secure high rates of growth and, at the same time, strengthen social rights (i.e., employment; guaranteed minimum income; dignified living standards for the unemployed and those unable to work; redistribution of income in favour of the underprivileged; establishment of a minimum wage). This would not only strengthen social cohesion - a factor indispensable for the achievement of high growth rates - but would similarly strengthen demand in low-income households, thus favouring economic recovery, a fact crucial in today's global economic turmoil. To this end, a break from the established social and economic conservatism would entail a change of economic policies in the direction of full employment, involvement of progressive forces and brakes on market forces. Such elements are already to be found in the activities of non-governmental organizations, particularly in Europe, activities that are an important part of public life and already represent a threat to the economic oligarchy that operates behind the scenes out of the sight of the citizens.

Miller, Clive. 1998. "**Managing for Social Cohesion.**" Office for Public Management, United Kingdom. <http://www.opm.co.uk/download/soc-ex1.pdf>

This paper addresses the following question: What should be the contribution of public service management to tackling social exclusion? In this article, the author examines the strategic themes that underpin different approaches to tackling social exclusion and promoting social cohesion. The paper then puts forward a model of who is, or could be, involved in implementing such approaches, the range of interventions that require support, and the role that public service management and policy making can play.

What's New?

On March 27, the Canadian Council on Social Development issued "The Progress of Canada's Children 2001," its annual magazine-style report on the well-being of children in youth in Canada. The communiqué, highlights, backgrounder and Section 1 of the report are all available online, at: <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2001/pcc2001/>

The Spring issue of Nexus' European counterpart, "Social Cohesion: Developments" is now available. "Developments" is a quarterly newsletter produced by the Council of Europe. This latest issue deals with "Children and Social Cohesion" as the Council is initiating a new program called Focus on Children and Families.
<http://www.social.coe.int/en/cohesion/strategy/Unit/bule2.pdf>

The Strategic Research and Analysis (SRA) Branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage has recently released a "Social Cohesion Reading List," which provides an overview of some of the most recent Canadian writings on social cohesion. To obtain copies of the reading list contact: sradoc_docras@pch.gc.ca