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Policy Analysis and Social Cohesion

Résumés

Silver, Hilary. 1998. "**Policies to Reinforce Social Cohesion in Europe.**" In de Haan, A., and J. Burle Figueiredo (eds.), "**Social Exclusion: An ILO Perspective.**" Geneva: International Labour Organization.

<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~mayer/mm/d1/silver1.htm>

This paper discusses some European policies explicitly designed to combat social exclusion and considers how to assess their effectiveness. The paper begins by looking at recently enacted French, British, and European Union social cohesion policies in order to identify their defining characteristics. Social cohesion policies address the multidimensional and dynamic nature of contemporary social exclusion, overcoming isolation, passivity, and powerlessness by actively engaging the excluded in their own integration. As Silver suggests, what sets social cohesion policies apart from earlier and simpler anti-poverty or employment policies is that they address multiple problems simultaneously and in new institutional contexts. Social cohesion policies are hybrids, crossing conventional sectoral boundaries between policy domains to address economic and social concerns all at once. Such policies are comprehensive, "transversal" and entail multiple interventions.

After having identified the key attributes of social cohesion policies, the second part of the paper looks at how well they work. Just because these policies are called "anti-exclusion" laws does not mean that they effectively fight exclusion or promote its opposite: integration, solidarity, or cohesion. So far, uses of the term "exclusion" have been more political than social scientific, embedded in ideological, often nationally specific, paradigms. The ambiguity and vagueness of the notion have reduced its usefulness for analysis. Designing an assessment of program effects on employment is hard enough, but evaluating policies for an impact on "exclusion" per se poses even more difficult definitional and operational challenges. Indeed, the very multidimensionality of the term allows it to crop up in a large number of economic, social, urban, and citizenship policies but with different meanings in different settings. Therefore, it is important to measure exclusion in its many senses and dimensions, and at many levels of analysis. Since it is a dynamic process, it is useful to have a series of benchmark indicators measuring the extent of social exclusion at a given moment as well as the types of social integration that these policies

are designed to promote over time. Finally, the extent to which integration policies are active, allowing for participation and interaction among a wide variety of actors, should be considered.

Although these criteria are difficult to meet, one should not yet conclude that the concept of exclusion is too amorphous and encompassing to reduce to summary indices. Just as the measurement of poverty keeps evolving, so too indicators of social exclusion will be refined over time. Although evaluations of European social cohesion policies are just beginning, they need to become more methodologically rigorous. Many of the existing studies focus on a single aspect of social exclusion like the employment of long-term unemployed groups. They often lack control groups of non-participants in the program, and neglect to follow up on long-term program effects. So far, the record of social cohesion policies that have been evaluated is not particularly encouraging. Most policies to help the long-term unemployed, such as training, subsidized work contracts, and insertion in the social economy, have had only modest effects on re-employment, while offering employers windfalls. Positive outcomes are sometimes counter-balanced by perverse policy effects that contribute to new exclusions. However, with more rigorous assessment, it will hopefully become possible to improve upon current efforts to fight social exclusion and promote integration.

Townson, Monica. 1997. "**Women and the Economy: Long-Term Policy Research Issues.**" Status of Women Canada. <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/publish/wae1-e.html>

Consultations held by Status of Women Canada in early 1996 identified 10 key policy issues for possible future research. Among these, social cohesion emerged as a "hot policy issue" to which feminist policy analysts need to pay greater attention. As the document argues, social cohesion has recently "come into fashion as a new policy preoccupation." But what exactly does this mean? Discussion of the term has sometimes described social cohesion as an ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada. The vagueness of this kind of definition may be problematic in the context of gender-based research. Are "shared values" defined to include values of gender equality, for example?

In addition, for researchers with experience in women's equality issues, the mention of "equal opportunity" may raise negative connotations. They will be aware of the extensive literature indicating that the inequality of those who start from a disadvantaged position – as women do – cannot be adequately addressed through "equal opportunity." It will not be enough to develop research on "social cohesion" where different areas to be considered simply include the effects of gender. Research in this field must ensure that gender issues are also central to the research and not merely seen as an added dimension of each topic. For example, a research question that looks at inequities among groups that can potentially lead to conflict might cover themes such as intergenerational equity, regional disparities and rural and urban gaps – each one of which might have a gender dimension. But the research should also include inequities between women and men. In other words, the continued inequality of women may, in itself, undermine "social cohesion".

European Union. 2001. "**Enlarging Solidarity, Uniting Europe.**" Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, adopted by the European Commission on January 31, 2001.

http://www.inforegio.org/wbdoc/docoffic/official/report2/contentpdf_en.htm

This is the second report on economic and social cohesion in the European Union. It represents the very first analysis of the situation in the present Member States and regions in relation to economic and social cohesion and how this can be expected to change after enlargement. So far as the data allow, each part of the report includes consideration of the situation in an enlarged Union of 27 Member States (the present 15 Member States and the 12 countries with which accession negotiations are taking place). The report develops a set of conclusions and recommendations with a view to opening up a debate on the future of cohesion policy after 2006 in an enlarged European Union.

The need for cohesion policy will not disappear with enlargement. On the contrary, given the resultant widening of social and economic disparities, there will be additional justification for EU intervention, based on the same principles and with the same ambition for both the existing and future Member States. The report identifies the European Commission's priorities to be addressed in this major discussion of solidarity and cohesion in an enlarged Union. In launching it, the Commission sets out three principles. First, that cohesion policy retains credibility with the appropriate means at its disposal for tackling the unprecedented scale of the challenges that it will face. Second, that it becomes more visible and that it brings home to citizens in the larger Union the meaning of cohesion while meeting their expectations, directly or indirectly. Third, that the policy is pursued with a clearer vision than in the past of the diversity of the different parts of Europe and their different needs.

What's New?

The International Day of Families is going to take place for the seventh time on May 15, 2001. Proclaimed by the United Nations in 1993, this annual observance day is meant to provide an opportunity to promote the awareness of issues related to families as basic units of society. The international theme of 2001 is "Families and Volunteers: Building Social Cohesion". For further information on this event:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/IntObs/IDF/InfoNote/INFONOTE2001ENG.PDF>

As Quebec city is getting ready to hold the Summit of the Americas in the next few days, the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies at York University is already preparing the discussions of its Summer Institute around the theme of: "The Americas After the Quebec Summit. Hemispheric Integration and Social Cohesion: Civil Society and Building the New Agenda." For those who wish to know more:

<http://www.focal.ca/english/robarts2.htm>

The Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association (CSAA) is going to hold a special panel on "Social Cohesion in Canada" as part of its annual meeting during the Congress for the Social Sciences and Humanities in Quebec city this Spring between May 23-30. For more information

about this event:

<http://publish.uwo.ca/~pomfret/csaa/papers2001/sessions/woodrow.html>

The Tenth Biennial Canadian Social Welfare Policy Conference will be held at the University of Calgary from June 17-20, 2001. The purpose of the conference is to bring together academics, policy-makers, practitioners, representatives from the voluntary sector, and other interested parties to examine policy, programs and services in the field of social welfare. The theme of this year's conference is "Wealth, Health and Welfare: Tensions and Passions." To know more, visit the conference Web site at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/conferences/socialpolicyconference/>