

The Reification of Integration: The problem with integration, the role of social sciences and a theoretical sketch of an alternative research approach

by Johannes Kögel

Abstract

The problem with integration is a twofold one, a socio-theoretical and a methodological one. Socio-theoretically, the concept of integration is forced upon a heterogeneous and disintegrated society. Methodologically, by deploying the concept of integration within social sciences reifying ramifications are established. This article proposes a theoretical sketch for an alternative route for researching migration and integration, which escapes both shortcomings by modifying its theoretical presumptions on the one hand and extracting its reifying connotations on the other hand. The alternative research model, the life situation model (LSM), proposes a mixed methods approach, seeking generality of application and symmetry of approach.

Introduction

For the last two decades assimilation theories have had a significant revival (Portes and Zhou 1993; Kazal 1995; Hollinger 1995; Alba and Nee 1998, 2003; Brubaker 2001; Esser 2003; Joppke and Morawska 2003; Alba 2008). It is even spoken of a 'new assimilationism' (Rattansi 2004). While proponents of theories of multiculturalism (Glazer 1997; Kivisto 2002) and transnationalism (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Faist 2000; Portes 2001; Castles 2002; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Glick Schiller 2010) have been criticizing assimilation, they are not mutually exclusive theories (Kivisto and Faist 2010). In fact, most transnationalism and multiculturalism theories employ one or another concept of integration, inclusion, incorporation or others. While the concept of assimilation is primarily prominent within the US, science and politics in Europe primarily speak of integration. Integration has become an essential part of the national states policies and its semantics, especially the European Union which has made integration a hot topic of its agenda. Integration is mostly used without explanation, even within integration theories, whereby it remains opaque as to what integration is supposed to look like practically. Integration has been understood as a state, a process, or an idealized goal. Integration is 'used as an all-encompassing frame for a variety of other terms that pinpoint dimensions of the settlement process' (Favell 2005). As, for instance, including the integration modes of multiculturalism, transnationalism, marginalization and assimilation (Gagnon and Khoudour-Casteras 2012), of multiple inclusion, assimilation, segmentation and marginalization (Esser 2001; Schunck 2014), or other matrixes (e.g. Bauböck 1994). It refers to some stage between assimilation and social exclusion or is part of a 2x2 matrix next to assimilation, separation-segregation and marginalization (Berry 1997). For the most part, integration is simply used in the same sense as assimilation is in the US (Favell 2005), but has a 'range from near-assimilation to multiculturalism' (Council of Europe 1997, 7).¹ In the following article I will focus on integration as the process of social integration, i.e. the process of how individuals or groups of persons find their way into society.

The critique I will put forth in this article is not directed against integration or assimilation theories only, but at the very concept of integration respectively. In detail, I will argue that assimilation and integration theories are grounded on the same essentialist notion – the assumption of a homogenous in-group or a mainstream culture –, this notion is not appropriate for current society if we regard society as disintegrated and therefore has to be considered as a reifying concept which should not be used uncritically as a category of analysis within social sciences. While the first point of critique does not apply to various notions of integration which are not part of assimilation/integration theories, the second point of critique does. Finally, I will propose a new model for research, the life situation model (LSM), which does not possess the shortcomings of the essentialist assimilation/integrations theories.

The Essence of the Assimilation/Integration Model

The concepts of assimilation and integration are far from being synonymous and, as mentioned above, vary quite widely. Nevertheless, theories based on assimilation or social integration, in the following called AIM (assimilation/integration model), essentially have two basic features in common: the assumption of an inner core and its asymmetry. To exemplify these features, I will outline the famous classification model of assimilation of Milton Gordon, the influential ‘new’ assimilation theory of Richard Alba and Victor Nee, as well as the integration theories developed by Hartmut Esser, Friedrich Heckmann, and Raimund Anhut and Wilhelm Heitmeyer.

For Gordon, assimilation is about the adjustment of immigrants to the main culture, in the case of his theory the American culture. Gordon distinguishes between several ‘steps or subprocesses’ of assimilation (1964, 70). The list includes cultural/behavioural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behaviour receptional, and civic assimilation (71). The ‘core group’ or the ‘over-all American culture’ (72) into which immigrants are supposed to assimilate is the American WASP-culture, the culture of white Protestants with Anglo-Saxon origin to which Gordon adds the middle-class. Gordon states that as soon as structural assimilation, defined as the ‘[l]arge-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society, on primary group level’ (71)², has been accomplished ‘*all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow*’ (81). While Gordon stresses quite far-reaching assumptions for assimilation, including large-scale intermarriage and the absence of discrimination and prejudices towards them (70-71), the conclusion that all types of assimilation necessarily follow structural assimilation seems quite optimistic. The essential aspect for my argument, however, is that the absence of discrimination and prejudices requires the incorporation into the mainstream culture, the WASP-culture, and therefore defines assimilation as an asymmetrical process. The American culture is there to stay while the others have to adjust. The task is exclusively up to the immigrants.

Moving from this classical understanding to a more recent assimilation approach, the credit belongs to Alba and Nee to revive the concept of assimilation (1998, 2003). Their criticism of the ‘old assimilation theory’ targets the assumptions that assimilation is inevitable, that assimilation is being understood as full incorporation and that minorities should want to be assimilated (Alba and Nee 2003, 3). Further critical points are the assumption of ethnocentrism (the WASP-model as seen as the only way for incorporation), the understanding that assimilation leads to a cultural homogeneity, and the neglected ascription of any positive role to ethnic groups (4-5). Alba and Nee define assimilation ‘as the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences’ (11). They further emphasize that this definition does not imply the

disappearance of ethnicity. Consequently, they regard the American society as a 'composite culture' which is defined by a mix of cultural practices and is opposed to multiculturalism which is based on different autonomous cultural centres (10). The odd thing about it is that Alba and Nee nevertheless insist on the presence of a mainstream within this composite culture. 'The American mainstream encompasses a core set of interrelated institutional structures and organizations regulated by rules and practices that weaken, even undermine, the influence of ethnic origins per se' (12). The content of this mainstream, however, remains vague. The assumption of a mainstream culture, of course, is simply consequent, since the concept of assimilation requires something into which someone is supposed to integrate. An interesting aspect about this definition is that it does not specifically apply to immigrants only, when you take into consideration that there are different ethnicities that have been living within the United States for longer than a few immigrant generations or that some of them can be seen as more 'native' than the WASP-culture. The most important aspect, however, refers to their notion of assimilation which 'may occur through changes taking place in groups on both sides of the boundary' (11). Here they carefully introduce the idea of a mutual relation between immigrants and autochthons or ethnic groups and the mainstream respectively. Assimilation, understood as changes in groups of both ends of this process, however, is far from being a balanced process. On the one end, there is the mainstream which tolerates changes, e.g. having been once Protestant only, it now encompasses Catholicism and Judaism too (12) (- and at the same time strengthens the exclusion of Islam and other religions). On the other end, there are individuals who are 'undergoing' assimilation (11). The notion of the mainstream which sets the standard makes this concept of assimilation asymmetrical, thereby implying the notion of a 'boundary' between mainstream insiders and mainstream outsiders which reinforces the *essence* of the old assimilation theory: there is an in-group into which outsiders assimilate by adjusting themselves to the culture, norms, or order of the in-group.

Shifting to the concept of integration, David Lockwood stressed the differentiation between system and social integration: 'Whereas the problem of social integration focuses attention upon the orderly or conflictful relationships between the *actors*, the problem of system integration focuses on the orderly or conflictful relationships between the *parts*, of a social system' (1964, 245). While the latter refers to the integration of the system as a whole, the former denotes the integration of the parts, i.e. the actors, into the system (Esser 2001, 3). Hartmut Esser adopts this differentiation and argues that social integration can be divided into four different dimensions: culturalization, placement, interaction, and identification (8). Culturalization means to gain knowledge and to acquire the necessary skills for meaningful and successful acting and interacting with other persons. This basically refers to language, norms, and rules - factors which make up the lifeworld (8-9). Placement refers to holding a particular social position. This position consists of having or gaining political and socioeconomic rights. You need to place yourself on the market where you can find your position. This always depends on instrumental and non-instrumental reasons. Placement is responsible for acquiring certain kinds of capital (9-10). Interaction denotes the kind of social relations you have. These might be family bonds, partnerships, friendships, inclusion into organizations, clubs, neighbourhood, etc. (10-12). Regarding identification, Esser makes another differentiation: he distinguishes between the emphatic integration of values, public spirit, and acceptance (12-14).

Esser regards integration as a general concept, not as one apt for immigrants only. Every person, while growing up, learns to integrate into society. Integration therefore is not synonymous with assimilation. Assimilation must rather be regarded as a special case of integration (Esser 2001, 20). Integration in both the host society and the society of origin is

called multiple inclusion; failed integration in both means marginalization; integration in the society of origin only is named segmentation; integration in the host society only is referred to as assimilation (19). The same four dimensions which were outlined as versions for integration also apply for the case of assimilation (22). Esser therefore understands assimilation and social integration as analogue concepts whereby the latter has a wider range. Esser insists, however, that the integration of immigrants or ethnic groups does not mean traceless assimilation (Esser 2001, 18). Assimilation refers to the decline of systematic differences in the distribution of certain attributes amongst different groups and not to the decline of cultural or economic differences and inequalities (23). Esser also argues that assimilation must be regarded as the only successful way of social integration and therefore against the out-of-datedness of assimilation and neglects other possible alternatives (marginality, multi-inclusion, and segmentation) as viable options (23; 2003, 8). Assimilation hereby is based on the idea of an ethnic homogenous society as a political goal (2001, 18). While assimilation does not necessarily have to be a one-way process, Esser states that 'interactive' integration processes are rather rare (23). Furthermore, he stipulates the existence of mainstream institutions and mainstream culture ('Leitkultur'), even though they are not meant to be understood normatively (24).

Heckmann adopts the four dimensions from Esser and understands integration as the 'inclusion' of 'new populations' into an 'existing order'. He, furthermore, argues that a 'sense of nationhood' was a necessary condition for integration (55). As a consequence 'the inclusion into a nation that understands itself as a community of descent and culture is difficult or defined as an exception to the rule' (55).

The closest to a mutual account of integration is the one provided by Raimund Anhut and Wilhelm Heitmeyer (2000; Heitmeyer and Anhut 2008). Their 'interactive' model focuses on three different dimensions of integration: the individual-functional system integration, the communicative-interactive social integration, and the cultural-expressive social integration (Anhut and Heitmeyer 2008, 27). These dimensions lie cross to the typical differentiation between system and social integration and most importantly include forms of recognition. The individual-functional system integration is similar to Esser's structural dimension and requires recognition of the professional and social position. The communicative-interactive social integration is directed to the balancing of conflicting interests and requests moral recognition. The cultural-expressive social integration refers to the creation of emotional relations and demands emotional recognition which refers to the acceptance of personal and collective identities. I regard the forms of recognition as a pivotal part within integration, an aspect neglected by the theories mentioned above. Even though acceptance or recognition by the host society is essential, there is no moral obligation to grant this recognition. It is rather a yardstick for successful or failed integration. Moreover, recognition is something given by the majority society to the integrating minorities and therefore is as asymmetrical in essence as the other AIM theories.

These accounts provide only a limited selection of assimilation and integration theories and are far from being exhaustive. Nevertheless, they give a glimpse of the AIM which is asymmetric and relies on the notion of a certain core culture or mainstream which provides a minimal amount of homogeneity or integratedness which allows for the one-way account of migration.

Essence of the AIM:

- Assimilation/integration is based on a tacit presumption: the existence of different societies with an inner core (e.g. mainstream culture, majority society, composite culture, 'Leitkultur', etc.). Immigrant receiving countries are seen as more or less homogenous in-groups to which immigrants are outsiders.
- Assimilation/integration is an asymmetrical process: one group is supposed to integrate/assimilate into another group (i.e.: one group is supposed to change while the other does not have any obligations of that kind). This is the immigrant or outsider group which integrates/assimilates into the in-group.

These two aspects are common to assimilation and social integration theories. Specific differences between and amongst the various assimilation and integration theories are not of interest for the matters of this article. Because of this common essence of both the assimilation and integration model I will simply refer to them, as mentioned above, as AIM (assimilation/integration model).

As a matter of fact, these two essential points are not restricted to the AIM but also are inherent in the concept of integration per se. Also multicultural theories speak of integration.

Multiculturalism employs an integration concept which is about 'the creation of structures in which the incorporation of immigrants and ethnic minorities occurs fairly' which means that the difference lies in its allowance 'to retain aspects of their cultures' and at the same time 'benefits the nation' (Rattansi 2011, 8).

In that case integration is not about integration into a mainstream culture or majority society but into a multicultural society.³ The asymmetry within its concept, however, remains. The second point therefore, the very assumption of in- and outsiders, applies in general to the integration concept.

A Critique of Integration: socio-theoretical and methodological aspects

An old concept for a new world: modern society as functionally differentiated

As we have seen, integration theories are founded on the idea of an integrated or homogenous in-group. For this very reason it is not applicable to modern society.⁴ The AIM might apply to Tönnies' community ('Gemeinschaft'), Durkheim's mechanic society or villages in which everybody knows everyone through face-to-face contacts. But in imagined communities and urban, multicultural, and anonymous spaces, integration must appear as an outdated and forcefully imposed concept.

If we regard modern society as functionally differentiated, then society as an integrated in-group can be called pre-modern. Niklas Luhmann (1998) distinguishes between stratificatory and functionally differentiated societies. In stratificatory society each individual had a concrete position within society. Class and location defined everyone's place. Problems of identity and self-actualization were unknown (626-627). The rank into which you were born used to determine the range of your possibilities. The system of stratification regulated the inclusion of individuals into society (688). The modern society, due to its functional differentiation, cannot accomplish this task anymore, i.e. the inclusion of individuals into society. The inclusion becomes the responsibility of the functional sub-systems (157, 1025). Society as a whole can neither guarantee inclusion nor exclude individuals from society. Each sub-system theoretically

includes all individuals. This inclusion, however, refers to its very own operation only (765). That means that the economic system includes individuals only in terms of money or payment transactions. The legal system includes individuals only due to being legal objects. The political system only refers to the political rights of individuals, etc. This also means that the person is never integrated as a whole. In the realm of the different sub-systems persons appear in terms of their particular functions only; interactions within these functional realms are only possible when other parts of the persons are suspended. This situation has been referred to as 'generalization of strangeness' (Hahn 1994) or 'structural strangeness' (Nassehi 1995).

The differentiation in functional sub-systems also means that there is no unifying concept anymore. Society cannot represent itself as a whole; neither can any of the sub-systems claim to do so. As a consequence, society cannot be regarded as an integrated in-group and the concept of integration therefore is misplaced. According to the 'classic concept of integration', society has to be regarded as disintegrated, since it cannot agree on any internally unifying concept (Luhmann 1998, 618). A disintegrated society, however, lacks the legitimacy for integration. When integration or assimilation theorists therefore are putting forth their notions of a presumed unit, the majority, mainstream, etc., they unsurprisingly struggle with its definition in a literal sense: they are not able to draw the lines, the boundaries of that presumed entity.

Our leading analysts [...] tell us that assimilation involves absorption into a majority or a mainstream. However, it takes but a few seconds of reflection to realize that there is no such thing there. Detach the "majority" from its inherent opposition to the minoritarian outsiders and it collapses along the class, regional, religious, and ideological cleavages that keep members of the "majority" regularly at odds with one another. (Waldinger 2003a, 25)

The same question arises about culture. Not only is there no homogenous culture, culture is also ever changing and never a closed stack (30-31). When, furthermore, assimilation is defined as the inclusion of minorities in the mainstream it stresses at the same time the existence of a majority and a side stream which at the same time reproduces ethnicities (Waldinger 2003b, 255). The mainstream concept creates a twofold boundary, the one between the US and other countries and the one between Americans and foreigners residing within the US (259).⁵ The question which therefore arises is: What are outsiders or foreigners supposed to integrate into? If there is no integrated unit you can possibly blend in with or adjust to, the AIM loses its foundation. Multiculturalism and other theories which also employ the integration concept and reject the idea of an integrated or homogenous in-group at the same time face the same question from a different angle: What to integrate into, if there is no possible candidate for providing a unit of reception? The usage of the integration concept by these theories appears to be highly contradictory.

The reifying dimension of integration

The problem which is created by the application of the integration concept to a disintegrated society is the reproduction, manifestation, and reification of in- and outsider groups. Waldinger holds that 'the concept of assimilation presumes a society that would be normally integrated, were it not for the unfortunate appearance of the outsiders from abroad' (Waldinger 2003a, 25). His point is that scientific theory about assimilation bears an 'assimilationist cast' (24): 'It begins with the presence of outsiders, whose appearance on the scene requires no explanation and whose distinctiveness can be assumed without making reference to those parties that perceive difference and make it significant' (24). Assimilation therefore implies a power relation: the

native population wants to ensure its privileged account to resources and positions and hold the power of definition to label the 'outsiders', 'excluded', 'foreigners', 'aliens', etc. Stressing the case of the United States, Waldinger argues that 'white majority' are just two words for continued exclusion on the basis of descent; thus assimilation into the 'white majority' simultaneously means dissimilation, since the former necessarily links the conditions of one group's acceptance to another's rejection' (25-26). Taking the outsider for granted goes along with the taking for granted of the nation-state which adds to the out-of-datedness of the AIM: 'assimilation is a very peculiar scholarly concept, resonating with that normative vision of national life that envisions a direct relationship between the individual and the nation, unmediated by ties of an ethnic type' (26-27, see also 29). The essence of assimilation is therefore to ensure that 'the views of these particular normals count, not simply because they possess the key to acceptance and the goodies it unlocks; acculturation itself at once orients outsiders toward the standards of insiders and leads them to accept insiders' standards of judgement' (34).

Besides this rather apparent power dimension of the AIM, the reifying power of the integration concept in general affects at least the following respects:

- the insiders, natives, citizens, etc. feel themselves confirmed in their superior position: they do not have to make adjustments and it is they who have the right for privileged access to resources and positions.
- the outsider, foreigner, migrant, etc. is expected to make an effort to find recognition amongst the host country's population. It is their responsibility to make integration/assimilation work.
- by looking at migrants only – in the realm of migration/integration/assimilation research – their particular character is emphasized: as a non-citizen you have the status of being of particular interest and under scrutiny of migration and integration related science and politics.
- by looking at migrants as particular ethnic or national groups their group status gets strengthened. Since science stresses these group identities, their presumed existence (as homogenous groups) becomes an indubitable fact.
- integration is 'normal'. There is no doubt that migrants have to adopt or adjust to whatever is common for or familiar to the autochthons.

The first problem about integration, the application of an outdated concept to contemporary society, therefore leads to its second problem, its reifying ramifications of its usage by social sciences.

A Way forward

A critical understanding of integration as a category of analysis

My contention is that the dimensions outlined by Esser and Heckmann prove helpful in examining the status of migrants, as they would be for anyone else, without the contagious background or frame concept of integration. I argue therefore that these dimensions must be stripped of their essentialist notion and that the meaning of integration must be reconsidered.

Starting with the latter, I argue to handle 'integration' or 'assimilation' in the same manner as Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) handle the concepts of 'nation', 'race' and 'identity'. Brubaker and Cooper 'argue that the social sciences and humanities have surrendered

to the word 'identity' and that 'this has both intellectual and political costs' (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 1). I argue that the same is true for the word 'integration'.

Brubaker and Cooper use the differentiation between categories of practice and categories of analysis and apply them to concepts like 'race', 'nation', and 'identity' (4). It is stressed that these concepts rather obscure than explain social matters. Categories of practice denote 'categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors', while categories of analysis refer to the categories deployed by social scientists (4). Using categories of practice as categories of analysis without any critical examination leads to their reification and grants them factual existence. 'Nation' and 'race' for instance are popular concepts within the realm of categories of practice. However, if you adopt them into the realm of categories of analysis without highlighting them as, for instance, 'imagined communities' (Anderson 2006) in the case of nations, you pave the way for legitimizing reasons for nationalism. 'Race' is used even more uncritically within categories of analysis. 'Race' mostly is one of many determinant categories within quantitative research and also is a common concept within social sciences in general. This, however, lays the foundations for legitimate racism as does the uncritical use of 'nation' for nationalism.

These concepts, and Brubaker and Cooper include 'identity', do not necessarily have to be totally abandoned as categories of analysis. But the way they are used must be examined carefully. Otherwise they conflate the social and sociological meanings of the words:

The problem is that "nation" "race", and "identity" are used analytically a good deal of the time more or less as they are used in practice, in an implicitly or explicitly reifying manner, in a manner that implies or asserts that "nations", "races", and "identities" "exist" and that people "have" a "nationality", a "race", an "identity". (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 6)

I argue that 'integration', which is intertwined with concepts like 'nation', 'race', 'ethnicity' and 'identity', should be regarded in the same fashion. 'Integration' assumes that there is a process or transformation according to which individuals or groups are meant to fit into a discernible and demarcated in-group. The preconditions for the concept of integration are the differentiation between an insider group and an outsider group, whereas the former refers to the entity into which somebody is supposed to be integrated and the latter as the entity supposed to integrate, as well as the assumption that these groups factually exist. Regarding these preconditions, 'integration' can be regarded as part of (state) identity politics.

Whereas 'nation', 'race' and 'identity' are essentialist in its uncritical claim that each individual has a race, belongs to a nation and has an identity, the claim cannot simply be that each individual needs to be integrated or is naturally integrated somewhere. This view is simply a result of national politics. The essentialist aspect lies in the view that everybody is part of one particular society.⁶ This, of course, makes it necessary that you have to integrate into another society to which you must appear as a outsider at first. As a consequence, I want to argue for an abandonment of the concept of 'integration' in its meaning as an asymmetric approach to migration as a category of analysis. The same, of course, applies to 'assimilation'.

For social sciences in general not to be counterproductive or even support public beliefs, it must use its concepts carefully. Words like 'nation' or 'identity' and as I argued 'integration', which are categories of practice in the first place, can qualify as categories of analysis as long their meaning is made clear. They only can be proper scientific concepts when they are used in their deconstructed meaning. That means that 'nation' must refer to a socially constructed unit, an 'imagined community' for instance. 'Identity' must refer to a presumed essence which every individual is said to have. The construction of this essence, however, is politically motivated.

'Integration' finally must be understood as the endeavour to turn outsiders into insiders, which also must be regarded as a means of national, ethnic, cultural, or some other kind of identity politics since it is based on and reproduces, at the same time, the demarcation between in- and out-group, citizen and foreigner.

The Life Situation Model (LSM) – a theoretical sketch

Hartmut Esser and Friedrich Heckmann developed similar dimensions of integration. These are structural integration or placement, culturalization, socialization or interaction, and identification. Even though they are embedded in the classical notion of integration, they might prove helpful when they get detached from that very notion. Taking the dimensions as such without its contagious connotations, they are directed towards the situation of migrants – or anyone in general – and can provide important information. Here the idea of forms of acceptance of Anhut and Heitmeyer must be added. Individuals must feel accepted for their position within the sub-systems, accepted within social relations, organizations, networks, etc. and in their communication with others – their voice must be heard, received, and discussed –, and accepted for their personal values and identification.⁷

The dimensions of life situation (functional inclusion, social embeddedness, cultural status, identification, and acceptance), as I will refer to them, can be applied to every individual and therefore as well to migrants.

Functional inclusion, i.e. the inclusion into sub-systems, then looks at the individuals' position within certain institutional or structural areas or sub-systems:

Are they employed? Do they have a job proportionate to their education level and qualification? Do they earn the same amount as others holding the same position? What political rights do they have? Are they the same as others? Are there any obstacles to assert one's claims? What legal rights do they have and is the number of won cases or accepted claims proportionate to others? Do they have access to education facilities? Etc.

Social embeddedness looks at the bonds individuals make with other people:

Do they join sports clubs, church communities or any other non-work-related organizations? Do they get engaged with social or voluntary work? How are they embedded within their neighbourhoods and communities? What is the situation towards friendships, partnerships, marriages, work colleagues and neighbours? What social networks exist? Do they know people in important or high positions?

The **cultural status** looks at the ability to communicate successfully:

Is there a lingua franca which proves to be important for employment, business and general communication? Are they familiar with existing social conventions, behaviour patterns, mentality and norms or do they challenge their lifeworld? Can they tolerate them, adjust to them, or do they even adopt them?

Identification looks at the self-understanding of the individuals:

Do they feel comfortable, accepted at home in their community or rather the opposite? Do they have emotional bonds to their neighbours, community, network, city, region or nation? Is there any affiliation towards local sports teams, music groups, places, etc.? Are they members of clubs or organizations or part of a particular group, political party, church community, circles or

meetings? What is their opinion on their (new) fellow citizens or neighbours? What perception do they think others have of them?

It is important that identification is not limited to a national frame as it is in Esser's approach where identification refers to the emphatic embracing of a country's values or the acceptance of its constitution.

Acceptance must be seen as a pivotal aspect, as when you do not feel accepted, you feel excluded, which might lead to political apathy and isolation. The different dimensions of the life situations are not complete when there is no acceptance of the individuals' positions within the realm of the various dimensions. Acceptance or recognition must be regarded as a mutual act. There is no group who grants acceptance but does not need to gain acceptance as there is no group which needs to attain acceptance but is not entitled to equip others with it. In every social environment there will be people who accept you and some who do not for manifold reasons. Acceptance is vital for successful communication and goal attainment.

The important features of this model, which looks at the life situation in general, from now on called LSM (life situation model), differs from the AIM in two major respects:

- Generality of application
- Symmetry of approach

Generality of application: The LSM applies to residents of a particular area, town, city, region, or country in general, no matter where they were born and whether they have migrated or not. If it turns out that there is a remarkable pattern in terms of the several LSM dimensions for a particular group and this group turns out to have a national or ethnic origin in common, then and only then we may assume a particular influence of their origin regarding their life situation, while the AIM tends to look at particular national or ethnic groups in the first place and puts them under scrutiny and looks at their way of assimilation/integration. Hence, it is also free from the danger of reification.

Symmetry of approach: The LSM does not look at how minority groups adapt norms, values, habits, etc. of a presumed majority or mainstream culture or how they adjust themselves to the majority society. It rather looks at the inclusion into the functional subsystems of individuals in general, if they are successful in their communication and interaction with other persons, are able to build up networks, find acceptance, and find fix points for identification. This approach is free of stigmatization and outsider ascriptions.

The danger of reification is banned since the assumption of a core group or mainstream culture has been abandoned and the approach is not directed to groups that are singled out due to particular characteristics. The production and re-production of outsiders and foreigners is undermined since the abandonment of the notion of an in-group abandons at the same time the existence of out-groups. There is no asymmetric direction according to which outsiders have to turn towards an in-group. Everybody gets the same treatment and the same attention by social sciences' research.

The approach of the LSM practically calls for a mixed methods approach. In a first step a large population needs to be examined. A survey, covering the four dimensions of the LSM, is supposed to reveal whether or not there are group characteristics which indicate exclusion or

marginalization. In a second step, groups which possess these characteristics qualify for an in-depth study about reasons and explanations regarding their position within society and the nature of the relation between the five dimensions.

Practical implications and advantages of the LSM

The LSM as sketched out is a purely theoretical approach so far and its value in practice has yet to be tested. There are some points, however, which become obvious in terms of its practical application. To ensure a general application in the first place, the primary round of research must cover the whole population of the particular area to be researched. For this to be a feasible task, the first round needs to deploy quantitative methods. Survey studies consisting of questionnaires including the dimensions of integration have been done by Esser and Heckmann. Where the LSM survey needs to differ from these is in terms of its content as well as its application range. The content encompasses the five LSM dimensions instead of the four dimensions of integration. The sample population consists of the whole residency (of age) of a particular area instead of the migrant population only. The examination of the questionnaire will decide which groups according to certain aspects qualify for a second, qualitative round of research. The respective groups can be examined with qualitative methods of any kind, interviews (open, semi-structured, or structured), direct or participative observations, or ethnographic methods.

It also becomes clear, that this approach qualifies as a tool of research for integration, not necessarily for migration. Given that the first round of research does not point out migration groups, there is no legitimation to go ahead with a second round of research. Of course, migrants can be chosen for the matter of research as research objectives. This, however, will come along with reifying ramifications.

Besides the advantages mentioned above, socio-theoretically being applicable to contemporary society and being free of reifying ramifications, it also can be used for research within the global South. Within the literature about South-South Migration and in contrast to South-North Migration integration is a non-topic. It is furthermore stated that typical integration models of South-North Migration, namely assimilationism and multiculturalism, are of little use when it comes to the South (Gagnon and Khoudour-Casteras 2012, 6). Explanations can be seen in the political and economic, as well as the cultural and ethnic diversity of the South (Khoudour-Casteras 2011; Gagnon and Khoudour-Casteras 2012), geographical and cultural proximity (Gagnon and Khoudour-Casteras 2012), insignificant borders, inefficient border control management and less stringent formalities (Bakewell 2009; Khoudour-Casteras 2011; Campillo-Carrete 2013), a high degree of circular and cross-border migration (Bakewell 2009; Gagnon and Khoudour-Casteras 2012), the social inequality and lack of welfare within the countries (Gagnon, Khoudour-Casteras and Lefebvre 2010), the peculiar histories of nation-building (Campillo-Carrete 2013), intranational conflicts (Bakewell 2009), incoherencies and inefficiency of regional integration projects (Crush and Williams 2003), or a different understanding and practice of citizenship (Sadiq 2009). Nonetheless, voices start to demand integration policies within the South (e.g. Gagnon and Khoudour-Casteras 2012) which according to my argument would bring about rather counterproductive and potentially harmful ramifications.

Conclusion

Besides its current popularity within media and politics, the concept of integration is here to stay for as long as migration poses a political affair, which, in turn, will remain as long as nation states exist. The demise of the nation state, however, cannot be expected in the near future. Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that migration will be politicized within other geopolitical manifestations. I proposed in this article that social sciences and migration research should be cautious with its use of the integration concept as a category of analysis given their own role within the process of reifying groups (insider and outsider groups) and ideas (the normality of an integration or assimilation process with its implicit norms) through their proposition of integration and assimilation theories. I argued for their misconception in a functionally differentiated society as well as for its counterproductive consequences. Finally, I introduced the LSM (life situation model) which takes the life situations of individuals into account without deploying any reifying or essentialist connotations. This is granted due to its generality of application and its symmetry of approach. The sketch proposed is purely theoretical and calls for practical applications. I, however, hope to have put forward a legitimate claim that an alternative model to the AIM and theories employing the integration concept is in need and that its theoretical and methodological characteristics make the LSM a viable option.

Notes

1. For further definitions of integration see UNRISD 1994 or Boski 2008.
2. Gordon adapts the differentiation between primary groups and secondary groups from C. H. Cooley. The primary group is defined through personal relations and face-to-face contacts; the secondary group is based on impersonality and formal interactions (Gordon 1964, 31-32).
3. Kivisto and Faist propose that multiculturalism has the objective 'to bring heretofore-marginalized groups into the societal mainstream' (2010, 184). If so, it relies on the same fundamental assumptions as the AIM does. There are forms of multiculturalism which are not grounded on the integration concept but are characterized by, for instance, 'civil participation' (184-191) and which bear their own respective problems. Quite interestingly, Sarah Spencer (2011) offers a definition of integration as 'processes of interaction between migrants and the individuals and institutions of the receiving society that facilitate economic, social, cultural, and civic participation and an inclusive sense of belonging at the national and local level' (203) while referring to the dimensions of integration outlined by Esser and Heckmann. She tries to establish integration as an interactive and mutual endeavour which calls upon not only governmental institutions but also 'employers and trade unions, voluntary and community-sector organisations, to neighbours and migrants' families and communities' (234). She, however, feels at unease with the word 'integration', which is rather obvious as she cannot define what it is individuals are supposed to integrate into within her multicultural framework.
4. I understand society as world society (see Stichweh 2007). A functional differentiated society cannot be reduced into separated regional units. Also proponents of transnationalism argue against the misconception of society as bound to nation states and defend the concept of world society (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003).
5. Waldinger's latest solution to the assimilation dilemma was to talk about a 'transformation into nationals' rather than assimilation (2007, 343).

6. As opposed to the proposed concept of world society.
7. That means for instance: formal recognition at the work place, the feeling of acceptance by colleagues and co-workers, relationships between friends, colleagues, business partners which are deemed to be between equals, etc. It is not about acceptance granted by a particular or some kind of majority group.

References

- Alba, Richard. 2008. "Why we still need a theory of mainstream assimilation." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 48: 37-56.
- Alba, Richard, and Victor Nee. 1998. "Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration." In *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience*, edited by Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, and Josh DeWind, 137-160. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Alba, Richard, and Victor Nee. 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anhut, Reimund, and Wilhelm Heitmeyer. 2000. "Desintegration, Konflikt und Ethnisierung: Eine Problemanalyse und theoretische Rahmenkonzeption." In *Bedrohte Stadtgesellschaft*, edited by Wilhelm Heitmeyer and Reimund Anhut, 17-75. Weinheim/München: Juventa.
- Bakewell, Oliver. 2009. "South-South Migration and Human Development: Reflections on African Experiences". MPRA Paper No. 19185. http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/19185/1/MPRA_paper_19185.pdf
- Basch, Linda, Nina Glick Schiller, and Christina Szanton Blanc. 1994. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation States*. New York: Gordon and Breach.
- Bauböck, Rainer. 1994. *The Integration of Immigrants*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Berry, John W. 1997. "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaption." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 46 (1): 5-68.
- Boski, Pawel. 2008. "Five meanings of integration in acculturation research." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32 (2): 142-153.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2001. "The Return of Assimilation? Changing Perspectives on Immigration and its Sequels in France, Germany and the United States." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24 (4): 531-548.
- Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. 2000. "Beyond 'identity'." *Theory and Society* 29 (1): 1-47.
- Campillo-Carrete, Beatriz. 2013. "South-South Migration: A Review of the Literature." ISS Working Paper Series / General Series 570, 1-98. <http://hdl.handle.net/1765/50156>
- Castles, Stephen. 2002. "Migration and Community Formation under Conditions of Globalization." *International Migration Review* 36 (4):1143-1168.
- Council of Europe. 1997. *Measurement and Indicators of Integration*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Crush, Jonathan, and Vincent Williams. 2003. "Regionalizing International Migration: Lessons for SADC." SAMP, Migration Policy Briefs, No.11.

- Esser, Hartmut. 2001. "Integration und ethnische Schichtung." Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung - Working papers 40. <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/publications/wp/wp-40.pdf>
- Esser, Hartmut. 2003. "Ist das Konzept der Assimilation Überholt?" *Geographische Revue* 5 (2): 5-22.
- Faist, Thomas. 2000. *The volume and dynamics of international migration and transnational social spaces*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Favell, Adrian. 2005. "Assimilation/Integration". In *Immigration and Asylum: From 1900 to the Present*, edited by Matthew Gibney and Randall Hansen. Santa Barbara, CA: Clio. <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/favell/Clio.htm>
- Gagnon, Jason and David Khoudour-Casteras. 2012. "South-South Migration in West Africa: Addressing the Challenge of Immigrant Integration." OECD Development Centre, Working Paper No. 312. <http://www.oecd.org/dev/50251899.pdf>
- Gagnon, Jason, David Khoudour-Casteras and Victoire Lefebvre. 2010. "The Southward Shift in International Migration: Social Challenges and Policy Implications." OECD Development Centre. <http://www.oecd.org/dev/poverty/47414064.pdf>
- Glazer, Nathan. 1997. *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Glick Schiller, Nina. 2010. "A global perspective on transnational migration: Theorising migration without methodological nationalism." In *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, edited by Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist, 109-129. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Gordon, M. M. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hahn, Alois. 1994. "Die soziale Konstruktion des Fremden." In *Die Objektivität der Ordnungen und ihre kommunikative Konstruktion: Für Thomas Luckmann*, edited by W. M. Sprondel, 140-163. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Heckmann, Friedrich. 2003. "From Ethnic Nation to Universalistic Immigrant Integration." In *The Integration of Immigrants in European Societies: National Differences and Trends of Convergence*, edited by Friedrich Heckmann and Dominique Schnapper, 45-78. Stuttgart: Lucius und Lucius.
- Heitmeyer, Wilhelm, and Reimund Anhut. 2008. "Disintegration, recognition, and violence: A theoretical perspective." *New Directions for Youth Development* 119: 25-37.
- Hollinger, D. A. 1995. *Postethnic America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Joppke, Christian, and Ewa Morawska. 2003. "Integrating immigrants in liberal nation-states: Policies and practices." In *Toward assimilation and citizenship: Immigrants in liberal nation-states*, edited by Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska, 1-36. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kazal, R. A. 1995. "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History." *American Historical Review* 100 (2): 437-71.
- Khoudour-Casteras, David. 2011. "Migrant Integration in the South: What Does It Mean and How Can We Measure It?" OECD Development Centre, Ninth Coordination Meeting on International Migration. <http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/ninthcoord2011/khoudour.pdf>
- Kivisto, Peter. 2002. *Multiculturalism in a global society*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Kivisto, Peter, and Thomas Faist. 2010. *Beyond a Border: The Causes and Consequences of Contemporary Immigration*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Levitt, Peggy, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2004. "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society." *International Migration Review* 38 (3): 1002-1039.

- Lockwood, David. 1964. "Social Integration and System Integration." In *Explorations in Social Change*, edited by G. K. Zollschan and Walter Hirsch, 244-257. London: Routledge.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 1998. *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Nassehi, Armin. 1995. "Der Fremde als Vertrauter. Soziologische Betrachtungen zur Konstruktion von Identitäten und Differenzen." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 47 (3): 443-463.
- Portes, Alejandro. 2001. "Introduction: The debates and significance of immigrant transnationalism." *Global Networks* 1(3): 181-194.
- Portes, Alejandro, and Min Zhou. 1993. "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants Among Post-1965 Immigrant Youth." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 530: 74-96.
- Portes, Alejandro, L. E. Guarnizo, and Patricia Landolt. 1999. "The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (2): 217-37.
- Rattansi, Ali. 2004. "New Labour, New Assimilationism." https://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-multiculturalism/article_2141.jsp
- Rattansi, Ali. 2011. *Multiculturalism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schunck, Reinhard. 2014. *Transnational Activities and Immigrant Integration in Germany: Concurrent or Competitive Processes?* Heidelberg: Springer.
- Sadiq, Kamal. 2009. *Paper Citizens: How Illegal Immigrants Acquire Citizenship in Developing Countries*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Spencer, Sarah. 2011. *The Migration Debate*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Stichweh, Rudolf. 2007. "Evolutionary Theory and the Theory of World Society". *Soziale Systeme* 13 (1+2): 528-542.
- UNRISD (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development). 1994. "Social Integration: Approaches and Issues." Briefing Paper No.1. [http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/%28httpAuxPages%29/510920DA18B35A6880256B65004C6A7B/\\$file/bp1.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/%28httpAuxPages%29/510920DA18B35A6880256B65004C6A7B/$file/bp1.pdf)
- Waldinger, Roger. 2003a. "The Sociology of Immigration: Second Thoughts and Reconsiderations." In *Host Societies and the Reception of Immigrants*, edited by J. G. Reitz, 21-43. San Diego: Center for Comparative Immigration Research.
- Waldinger, Roger. 2003b. "Foreigners transformed: International migration and the remaking of a divided people." *Diaspora* 12 (2): 247-272.
- Waldinger, Roger. 2007. "The bounded community: Turning foreigners into Americans in twenty-first century L.A." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(3): 341-174.
- Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2003. "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology." *International Migration Review* 37 (3): 576-610.