

Intercultural Capital and Social Integration of Refugees

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Abstract

Migration is linked over time to the features that constitute a process of civilization. In order to meet subsistence needs in the host country, migrant populations seek employment opportunities and improved living conditions. This reality is reflected through the interaction of the host society with newcomers at the level of social inclusion, which may be hampered by limited cultural capacities and resources. At the local level, limited cooperation between local authorities, intercultural tensions lack of equal access to selected cultural goods, lack of structural approaches and the reluctance of some organisations to the wider cultural spectrum to maintain participation in common social life are factors influencing social inclusion prospects. However, where cultural diversity thrives, diversity is protected by critical actors in local communities and intercultural capital is strengthened, as social cohesion is promoted and possible tensions arising from different perceptions and attitudes towards value models are addressed and cultural goods. The aim of the article is to record and study the range of cultural differences that arise and affect the process of social integration of refugees. *This contribution was made in the framework of Action 1.6 “[eAegean_DIG REFUGE] Refugee Crisis Knowledge and Action Platform”, as it is part of the Research e-Infrastructure “[e-Aegean R & D Network] R & D Network in Aegean Archipelagos. Supporting Regional Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Excellence” {Code Number MIS 5046494} which is implemented within the framework of the “Regional Excellence” Action of the Operational Program “Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation”. The action was co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Greek State [Partnership Agreement 2014-2020].*

Keywords

Civilization, Culture, Interculturality, Integration, Refugees, Immigrants

1. The Concepts of Civilization, Culture and Cultural Identity

Many scientists such as sociologists, anthropologists, historians have attempted to attribute the concept of culture with various definitions. Civilization according to (Gefou-Madianou, 2011) seems to be broad and comprehensive, and at the same time vague. Tylor (1920/1871) argues that the concept of civilization is not neutral but is founded on historical and ideological factors.

Culture in the work “Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom” by anthropologist (Tylor, 1920) as taken in its broad ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. In the above definition, factors are not attributed to nature and biological heredity but incorporate and evolve elements in the whole of human expression.

According to C. Kluckhohn and A. Kroeber (1952) culture characterizes a complex society and is determined by the dependence of societies on agriculture, long-distance trade, the state form of government, urban specialization and class stratification. Along with these basic elements, culture is often characterized by a combination of several secondary elements, including a developed system of transportation, writing, measurement standards, official legal arrangements, recognized art style, monumental architecture, sophisticated mathematical thinking and astronomy. More generally, culture, in one of its historical manifestations, reflects a Renaissance attitude that transmits refined ways, urbanization and progress.

Toynbee (1947) considered that the formation of a culture is based on the transition from a static state to a dynamic activity that is also the basic model for the formation of forms of cultural expression. One of the main problems of discontinuity of culture arises from the loss of elasticity that makes rigid structures and demarcations of behavior to the point that society is not able to adapt to changing situations. Moreover, societies can no longer follow a creative framework in their development, which makes their course stereotypical and rigid, while suffering from a general interruption of coordination between their various elements, which inevitably leads to social disintegration.

Civilization is the sum of all the progress that man has made in every field of action in every way, insofar as progress helps the spiritual perfection of individuals. Schweitzer uses as a synonym the term civilization which first appears in France derived from “civilite” (“social worldliness”) defined by the virtues of discretion, of sincerity and kindness as well as religious beliefs, aesthetics, fashion, and regulation of thymic and speech. However, “culture” in this sense as etiquette differs from the German rendering of “Kultur” (culture) which has a broad meaning and involves the development of man to a higher moral standard. Schweitzer therefore refuses to accept a superficial conception of culture by referring primarily to scientific, technical and artistic achievements, and with little or no attention to moral content.

(Norbert Elias, 2000) as analysed in *The Civilizing Process* did not limit his explanation to the changing social bonds within separate societies but examined the interaction between the rise of state power monopolies, increasing levels of economic interconnection between people and the pressure to coordinate with others at greater distances, which led to advances in identification with other people in the same society, regardless of social background.

Culture is reduced to values and conceptual contents, through which the human being is formed as a character and personality and is defined as a system consisting of a set of beliefs, processes, knowledge and behaviors that are formed and shared in a specific group. In this context, the culture that each person forms has a strong and significant influence on his behavior and denotes a group of characteristics that distinguish each society from others, including arts, music, religion, customs, traditions, values and others. For his part, Taylor sees culture as an integrated system that includes knowledge, art, law, customs, traditions, manners, worldviews, philosophical systems, values and mental contents that man acquires as a member of society. He argued that the advancement of culture was a slow replacement of thought with the power of reason.

“Culture” (Levitin, 1973) as defined in this way, is a construct, that is, a product of our imagination about the way in which the culture develops in a society. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) found that there are strong pressures to become accustomed to action and interaction with repetitive activities in patterns that are reproduced in with little decision-making effort. We have defined it to exist. A construct is not directly accessible to observation but is inferred from oral statements giving special weight to internality and emotional depth. Metaphorically, the term “culture” is used to train or refine the mind while it has gained wider metaphorical meaning in the way of acting, thinking and feeling and refers to the prediction of other observable and measurable verbal and non-verbal behaviors.

According to (Schein, 1985, 1996), the culture of a particular group or organization is divided into three levels: 1) observable objects, 2) values, and 3) basic underlying assumptions. When one enters an organization, one observes and feels its artifacts. This category includes, from the physical layout, the dress code, the way people address each other, the sense of space, its emotional intensity and other phenomena. Underlying assumptions are usually unconscious but in fact determine how group members perceive, think, and feel. Such assumptions are the same learned reactions that arose as proclaimed values.

American sociologists (Hofstede, 2011) have proposed that all human action is determined by five model variables, between pairs of alternatives:

- 1) Emotionality (satisfaction of needs) versus emotional neutrality (restraint of impulses),
- 2) Self-orientation versus collectivity,
- 3) Universality (application of general standards) vis-à-vis specialization (taking particular relationships),
- 4) Acceptance (judging others by who they are) versus achievement (judging

them by what they do),

5) Specialization (limitation of relationships with others in specific areas) versus diffusion (without restrictions on the nature of relationships).

In this context, cultural identity is formed as a system of values and perceptions which characterizes a society according to its historical and cultural peculiarities, while each human people belong to a culture different from others, as an entity constantly evolving and influenced by other cultures. Cultural identity is an integral part of a person's self and can influence social and individual functioning of others. Cultural identity is based on the specificity of a given community, which includes certain common features, religion, attitude towards the family, leisure activities, rituals, food and language. Racial, cultural and ethnic identities are part of an identity that is experiencing many changes and transformations at the individual and social levels with influences from migration. The Cultural identities interact and contact takes place not only with individuals of majority culture but also with newcomer immigrant populations of both similar and different cultures. In general, these contacts can generate feelings strong in terms of belonging or, conversely, feelings of insecurity, alienation and anguish.

In cultural pluralism environments, the traditional lifestyles of culturally diverse groups often face radical transformations and multiple challenges in a process that is called upon on the one hand to preserve their cultural identity and on the other to internalize the basic value orientations of indigenous cultural traditions.

2. Cultural Difference and Intercultural Values

The cultural and value elements of modern societies that are highly diverse are found in the sociological reading of culture, which can be seen: on the one hand as the structure of all aspects of sociability and on the other hand through the connection of cultural events with the wider social context (Nagopoulos, 2022). In contemporary sociological theories in particular, culture appears as a complex of systems of meaning and symbolic intersubjective relationships through which actors see their reality, contribute to the production of collective meaning and allow their actions in the form of systems of knowledge by imposing relative constraints (Reckwitz, 2000). By extension, culture emerges as the sense and meaning of social phenomena while the object of cultural sociology as an analysis of the social meaning emitted by collective actors as the phenomena and events that arise are those produced by the actors themselves (Geertz, 1964) in the interaction relationships they develop in symbolic classes, contracts, rituals. Memories and other beliefs about the past become intersubjective, e.g., culture recommends sites of collective memory as factors that create intersubjective memory uniformities and other beliefs about the past.

The sociologist P. Bourdieu tried to synthesize the subjective experience of the micro-level with the objective (macro-level) existence of structures. Under-

standing the importance of the hermeneutic tradition he sought to penetrate cultural complexity by creating a theory of meaning structures within the field of social stratification, to link meaning to structure in a reflexive sociological approach and to show that meaning is structured in an organic way. The necessity of these couplings demonstrates that culture maintains a relative autonomy from social structure. The concept of habitus occupies an emblematic position. Habitus produces practices, forms a “way of life” within social classes, reproducing through cultural capital the social divisions and inequalities that comprise the dominant order of things (Bourdieu, 1999).

Sociologist Arlie Hochschild in an interview stated that the constitution of “we” and “others” is a field of cultural significance in terms of values, sources of legitimacy, rhetoric, image and above all emotion (Wilson & Lande, 2005). Within this structure, the rhetoric about the incompatibility between cultural autonomy and intercultural values of solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion is strongly promoted. The term interculturality transcends in its conceptual outputs the culturally entrenched groups living in parallel value-based and monoculturally expressed community spheres, highlighting citizenship itself as a democratic ideal within symbiotic social environments. It refers mainly to the strengthening of the conditions of coexistence at a post-level of cultivation of a strong intercultural culture, which perceives contemporary culturality as a common connecting link of a process that is identified with the social and democratically political terms that strengthen and consolidate as a common value mutual knowledge and citizenship against discrimination, inequalities and forms of discrete treatment.

Interculturality appears as a kind of bridge between different cultures. (Pöllmann, 2021) in a discussion of intercultural capital points out that there is no one-dimensional static relationship between two-essentialist perception-cultural entities but flexible multidirectional bridges that reinforce and are capable of reshaping cultural diversity at the levels of incarnation, objectification and institutionalization. Expanding on the concepts of P. Bourdieu for cultural capital, considers as empirical indicators of the embodied intercultural capital the bilingual ability, the multilingual repertoires, the experiences of migration, etc. Empirical indicators of the institutionalized intercultural capital are published laws, guidelines, books, etc. As he characteristically points out, the embodied intercultural capital depends on the processes of objectification and institutionalization of the “framework of implementation”.

3. The Political Culture and Social Integration of Refugees

The concept of political culture does not refer to attitudes but denotes the way in which people view the political system as a whole and their belief in its legitimacy. Lucian Pye (1968) defined political culture as the synthesis of basic values, emotions and knowledge that form the basis of the political process. The elements of political culture are the beliefs, opinions and feelings of citizens to-

wards their form of government. Pye considered that, if the concept of political culture is to be used effectively, it must be supplemented with structural analysis, but the difficulty is that political structures can be seen on the one hand as products that reflect political culture, while on the other hand they are also “data” that shape political culture. In this sense democracy proves to be more stable in societies where subjective and local behaviors provide essentially participatory culture thus settling possible tensions within democracy between popular control and effective governance (Almond & Verba, 1963).

Putnam (1971) argued that the community of citizens, based on high levels of political interest, social equality, interpersonal trust and voluntary association, leads to higher chances of effective governance and democracy. Political culture is defined as a set of stable values related to the citizens’ view of power, which is largely responsible for the degree of legitimacy of the existing system. Political culture includes the details of the identity of the individual and the group. In this decisive context, many studies and researches confirm the modular link between political culture and democracy, because democracy is not only an expression of a structural and institutional reality, but is also a set of values, attitudes and emotions that encourages effective democratic practice on the part of rulers and those in power. Democracy, as a political system requires a culture with a specific content, expressed in the name of democratic political culture, fundamental to understanding the functioning of political systems. The study of political culture presupposes that attitudes matter because, as (Greenstein, 1967) argued, behavior is a function of both the environmental situations in which the actors find themselves as well as the psychological predispositions that these conditions create.

It should be noted that political and economic liberalism in Europe is based on the competitiveness that gives the mark of Europeanism under the hegemony of powerful forces that identify the values and the evolution of the freedom of the liberal economy. In modern European societies, the concept of Democracy is not limited to egalitarianism and respect for individual rights, but promotes social solidarity in the face of different culturally populations or socially vulnerable groups in maximum social good. Cultural traditions need to be constituted into specific morals, and attitudes of life, in order to be gradually transformed into rational value systems, regardless of the cultural background of different cultural groups.

The political practice of the above is expressed through the European Council text, which was adopted on 28 June 2017 (24th parliamentary session). Document 14329, the report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, with Resolution 2137 (2016) on the impact of European population dynamics on migration policies and with reference to Resolution 2175 (2017) on ensuring the successful integration of refugees, urges politicians to recognize that refugees are protected by international and EU law and to convince their citizens that it is in the interest of the host country to integrate effectively into society, to Refugee integration is a long and complex process that requires

long-term commitment from both refugees and authorities, as well as the continued engagement of civil society. If policy no longer promotes integration and the public mood towards refugees is one of mistrust and hostility, they risk becoming increasingly isolated, alienated and at risk of radicalisation.

4. The Culture of the Migrant/Refugee

The migrant/refugee as an individual is still a carrier of the culture of the society in which he was brought up. The characteristics of this culture remain present and cannot be directly identified with the cultural elements of a new society. A crucial issue is the perspectives set by the migrants/refugees themselves regarding the conscientious conditions that recommend the choices and finally decisions on temporary or permanent establishment in the host country (Helen Taylor, 2013).

Therefore, one of the most debated issues in the integration process is the nature of the migrant/refugee's interaction with the new society. Interaction is not easily achieved. Several immigrant/refugee groups adopt the doctrine of authenticity by exclusively maintaining the customs and traditions of their country of origin and origin. In this case, social isolation and social segregation create conditions of exclusion that are reproduced in subsequent generations and perpetuate marginalisation. On the other side, there are also groups that are highly adapted to the new situation without necessarily being fully assimilated, but claiming participation in social and political life in the host country and, in addition, a conquest of real conditions that allow the achievement of goals, the stability and well-being of their family members.

Creative adaptation to the new data seems to favor the idea of the coexistence of different cultures within a society, without necessarily idealizing their fusion into a monocultural model. On the other hand, the enclosure in separate cultural entities leaves no room for effective communication, weakening a common public identity at the political institutional level that can crystallize common intercultural characteristics. The relationship or interaction between different cultures and their mutual influence in the form of acquisition, mixing and overlapping are constantly relativised and redesigned. According to the concept of interculturality, while the ability to communicate between different cultures remains at the level of personal communication, the emphasis here is on the expression and understanding of emotions and values (e.g., physical distance, intonation, facial gestures and expressions, gestures of politeness). At the collective level, communication within and between different cultures is referred to. It is often associated with the goal of overcoming prejudice and ethnocentrism and achieving meaningful mediation for innovation and critique.

According to (Recupero et al., 2018) refugees/migrants use four strategies that interact with the culture of the host country and constitute the prerequisites for renegotiating identity when moving to a different cultural environment:

- Assimilation, where the individual prefers not to preserve his cultural herit-

age and seeks constant interactions with the culture of the host country.

- Segregation, where the individual tries to maintain attachment to the culture of origin and avoid contact with the culture of the host country.
- Integration, where the individual tries to engage in both cultures.
- Marginalization or distancing from both cultures.

Regardless of the negotiation context, migrants often experience a feeling of isolation and alienation, associated with the difficulty of creating strong social bonds in the new environment, resulting in the manifestation of negative emotions and pressures related to adapting to the new culture.

Culture plays an important role in guiding the integration of migrants/refugees through the means at its disposal such as the inclusion of libraries, cultural centers, cultural associations, the availability of electronic or printed maps. As a result, the participation of members of refugee/migrant groups as ambassadors or mediators, who have the ability to disseminate information on cultural opportunities, to adapt to needs and lifestyles and facilitate cultural participation. Ensuring job opportunities and financial rewards combined with supporting social organizations active in cultural life, including people representing or working with migrants and refugees, create conditions for smooth integration. In addition, the links between culture and the integration of refugees/ migrants, as well as the strengthening of participatory consultation mechanisms on political representation, the design and creation of groups that enhance interaction with common strategies and other cooperation arrangements between different services, should be based on an intercultural approach (McGregor & Nora Ragab, 2016).

The dilemma faced by refugees/migrants is to maintain their national identity while at the same time needing adaptation to the cultural, social and political norms of the host country. In many countries, refugee/migrant cultures and indigenous communities do not intersect, creating separate entities that coexist. In this case, the state institutional and legal intervention, of these countries, can meet the challenge by assessing and formulating any gaps in immigration laws.

In democratic societies, such as EU countries, where institutionally and constitutionally guaranteed values prevail, understanding between cultures and policy-making are legally binding, reflecting communication strategies between people. The influx of people migrating to Europe is an important factor influencing economically and culturally the development goals of its Member States and in this context, there is an urgent need to develop policy measures and programs for the integration of these people.

The migration of people to different regions of the world, has historically played an important role in the development and evolution of cultures, especially since the emergence of nation states. Weiner (1978) describes the distinctive feature of the various migratory waves over the centuries and the way in which changed the social structures and especially the ethnic composition of each, the emergence of new cultural norms that in many cases create dynamic tendencies and admixtures in the culture of the host countries, which confirms the view that immigrants create states and states create immigrants.

There are many links between immigration and multiculturalism, and everyone has a different understanding of cultural pluralism in the sense that immigration transforms future host societies into multicultural societies. In this case, multiculturalism is understood as a sign of reality and understanding of cultural diversity is often ethnic and religious. Cultural identity is part of social identity reflecting self-perception and self-confidence as a member of a cultural group. That is, a group of people who share a common cultural heritage and their cultural identity is related to the connections of each individual in a particular ethnic group.

5. Conclusion

The recognition of cultural heterogeneity as a basic and non-negotiable democratic principle is the cornerstone of social inclusion policies. It is in the spirit of this recognition that policies relating to social protection and common social rights for citizens, immigrants and non-migrants alike, should be built. And in this respect, interesting qualitative research approaches with strong elements of cultural specificity should also highlight the scope for intercultural culture, which ultimately crystallises into a level of common acceptance of social rights that can and are enjoyed by culturally heterogeneous populations living in a single social and political environment. Otherwise, there is a clear risk of cultural entrenchment and the impossibility of articulating social rights in common with other cultural communities. This danger ultimately also arises from the general predominance of cultural identity at the expense of social intercultural expression and negotiation.

In this sense, the term interculturalism that transcends in its meaning-making outputs the culturally entrenched groups living in parallel value and monoculturally expressed community spheres, highlighting the very status of citizenship as a democratic ideal within symbiotic social environments. It refers mainly to the strengthening of the conditions of coexistence at a meta-level of cultivating a strong intercultural culture, which perceives contemporary culturality as a common link in a process that identifies with the social and democratic political conditions that reinforce and consolidate as a common value mutual knowledge and citizenship against discrimination, inequalities and forms of discriminatory treatment.

It also becomes clear that cultural pluralism is not simply expressed through the intercultural idea as a mere interaction and mutual recognition between members of different cultures, nor as a mere juxtaposition of cultures tolerated by the dominant one, but it shapes the intercultural society that highlights citizenship as the greatest intercultural good. In this context, the conceptual content of interculturality and its practical application are linked to the basic principles of a rule of law that addresses cultural diversity through socialization processes and policies of social integration and recognition of difference on the axis of constitutional rights, which are the cornerstone of an open democratic society.

This evolution is dynamic, processual and participatory, as it concerns the field of

activities that delimits the public space of intervention, starting from the process of revision and possible exit from the closedness of a cultural monoculture and restrictive self-awareness, with the dominant basis of self-definition and self-recognition being the status of citizenship, beyond the cultural differences, which are socially recognized but do not affect it. In this direction, social inclusion constitutes on the one hand an approach to the institutionally established structures of society and on the other hand the emergence of inclusiveness as a critical variable in the structures and forms of society as it reflects a new cultural identity through the cooperation and the blending of characteristics from different cultures and a broader horizon characterized by the perspective of tolerance, timelessness and universalism.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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