

The struggle to belong

Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings

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**The orientation in the modern society:
the strong need to belong or necessary struggle to achieve it?
Resources of migrant organisations
in the German cities Bielefeld and Magdeburg.**

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SOLIDARITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY.

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May 2011.

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When we speak about the term “integration” it is very important to know since when the general public is aware of this problem. When the problem became concerning enough and was recognized as such a problem?

During the analysis of international literature in regards to the origins of the term “integration” it is possible to say, the discussion had begun to develop with the industrialisation and social growth of distinct societies in Europe. Parallel to the growth of complexity in the modern societies rose fears about how people would manage to live together when they don’t have an united ideology anymore. People became different in their faith, attitudes, morals – so the societies lost their traditional binding forces. The function of cohesion disappears and people have nothing common anymore, what quasi keep them alive.¹

So many authors like Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, Albert Schäffle, Talcott Parsons, Georg Simmel and Karl Marx started to look into lost strategies to reunite the complex and different social trends together again. The differentiation of working classes, living environments, industrialisation, the raising complexity of political movements and trends bring many scientists into the search for uniting force, which can save the community of its demise. The old social richness should not be rescued, not on any account, new developments and accordingly, new resources have to be integrated to the old environment and/ or be adapted to the existing social/ public structures.

The term “integration” is originated from the Latin verb “integrare” and means “to unite the parts to the whole”. Herbert Spencer motivated the necessity of confrontation with the term “integration” with the disappearing relation within the members of a tribe. The economy and trade developed so strong that the societies became inhomogeneous, it is not possible anymore to separate them from other social groups and tribes, because people are economically dependent from each other. These developments do question the former social binding forces and make necessary the search of a new one. Herbert Spencer suggests the better level of communication, stronger religious orientations, moral norms and rituals as a solution from this different situation.

Emile Durkheim advocates the dividing of work tasks as a collective value, which can be shared by all members of the modern society. When we don’t emphasize this value as a common social value, the society is in danger to degenerate because of moral emptiness. He is also against the cult of personality and individual dignity. The personality should be, accordingly to Durkheim, disciplined, personal freedom and

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See Sander/ Möller.

freedom to make own decisions are in this theory suppressed. His theory is very metaphorical, because he put the stability of his type of society in social models/ trends, which are inherently unstable. In other words – the different social environments cannot be the guarantee of the desired stability and the basis on what to build that stability.² In the further contents of this report I will reveal more about the possibilities to hold the present “branched out” society together. I will concentrate on the “new” and old methods of cohesion and motivate to evaluate better the concept of a strong need to belong (the essence of this demand/ challenge) or necessary struggle to achieve it (the desired endstate of this cultural approach).

Georg Simmel is in search of saving strategies as well. He suggests the force of conflicts as a possible solution to reunite the modern time again. When distinct people and social groups develop a culture of conflict, this would help them to have common values and norms. Independent from the big value of conflicts and the conflict-handling skills in its developed and organized form the big disadvantage in this considerations are of course people, who don't really like or want to have conflicts. They should be, accordingly to Simmel, integrated to the main as well as to each other conflicting social group and individuals. But Simmel agrees with the fact, the whole social harmony, which should be reached through conflicts is an utopia and is not on the search for possibilities to erase everything, what is in the way of his type of society. The social reality does provoke more conflicts than harmonic states and Simmel makes a decision to put the integrity of modern societies in the sphere of conflicts.³

Furthermore it would be unfair to disregard Karl Marx, who ideated the most famous theory about the further development of mankind in general. He also does provoke the biggest minds in the whole world to contemplative disputes and thoughtfulness's about the changing structures in modern societies. He takes into account the logic of Hegel and shows his agreement with the unavoidable inequalities of every existing type of society. He agrees with social structures, which do change all the time too. Accordingly to Marx it would not be very clever to make an attempt to stop the changing/evolving social structures. However he sees similarly to G. Simmel, that the solution for a better life is in permanent confrontations and revolutions, which should lead inconsequently to the resolution of social/ class differences. Otherwise the society is doomed to decadence and degeneration; the socialism and communism are a universal social order and will save mankind at some point in the future.⁴

What about the current discussion about the significance of the term “integration”. It should be mentioned that a big amount of modern theories speak about adaptation,

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See Durkheim.

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See Simmel.

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See Marx.

assimilation or often point, not very comprehensible, demands on people, who should be integrated. The modern theories about integration are in this way similar to the previously established approaches. Mostly they point to a main group or part of society, which functions as a pattern for integration. Other people or social groups should adapt to the attitudes from the so called integration centre. Furthermore, some theoreticians define integration in social, educational, financial, political, media or ideological terms, which is absurd in the essence, because integration means integration to the whole. By dividing the aimed whole content to its substances there is in addition the need to formulate some ideological demands, which as usual, contradict with the constitution and laws in the most developed countries.

The characteristics of modern societies like diversity and complexity, ideological, religious and social freedom, the rule of law, liberality, freedom of movement, pluralism of different social groups, global integration, and the value of individuality are recognized, but are normally valued sceptically and sometimes negatively. The developments of modern societies require disciplining measures, which would insure the cohesion within the different spheres of social life. In the indirect way the modern approaches aim also to bind the free development of individuals through the regulatory mechanisms, which claim to be absolute and generally accepted. In this connection is important to notice that almost all classical and many modern approaches recognize the features of present societies and even confess their unavoidable further growth, raising complexity and extensive development of different social spheres. Nevertheless many analysed approaches even don't philosophize, nor in minimal degree, about the didactic of the imagined theoretical solutions about the redemption of the present time.

Some approaches speak about the "lift effect" and about the quickness of social development in the last decades. U. Beck is sure, people have missed thanks to the speed of industrialisation and the necessary social and educational development, which causes such social events as total differentiation of individuals and social groups.⁵ J. Habermas believes that the new individualisation is causative for dissolution of class affiliation, confessions and family relationships. People became more free and that leads them to the resulting freedom, which functions more as a compulsion and even become obligatory. People have to be free in the modern view of this term, the free development means in this way the suppression of individuality. People must be individual, because it is a matter of course at the present time. But the freedom leads them quasi to unhappiness, because the former binding forces lose their functions. The uniqueness became pressure.⁶

The asymmetry of the current time has moved D. Goleman also to contemplative considerations about the future. He is dissatisfied because of such present events like "corporative actors" and "natural actors". The "natural actors" are nowadays replaced with "corporative actors" or "fictional" actors" - people by working in or other social roles. The private sphere is not so important anymore, people are threatened by many

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See Beck.

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See Habermas.

(new) social roles they have to apply in everyday life. Nowadays people worry more about their actions and not anymore about other people, how used to be before. The coldness between people grows and contacts became more and more impersonal. Although in contrast to his before mentioned colleagues D. Coleman don't suggests rescue strategies of the described doubtful appearances of modern societies.⁷

Doubtful in the present time is the rule/ philosophy of money. That is according to H. Freyer an important barrier for development, especially by young people. Interpersonal relationships are secondary in importance; young people are more interested in finances and not in ideological values. The individual social space became narrower, certain people think only about possible and impossible financial plans and became even more proletarian than before. They are in the opinion of H. Freyer quasi “taken”, are “lived” and more provoked as a result of less social possibilities caused by suddenly appeared bigger financial goals and attitudes.⁸

Undoubtedly is that the previously mentioned scientists try to show that every social event has its own advantages and disadvantages. In the former times people had less possibilities for freedom, nowadays they suffer because of loneliness and less retention force of interpersonal communication. The scientists, political or social actors try to find like many years before the reliable forces, which can hold the “branched out society” together. Mostly these ideas are not very successful, because we have in the present time nothing what can be defined as a typical national threat and what can be applied to **all** members of the society. Are you not sure what I am telling about? Try to find the typical national threats in any culture and think about the possibility of its implementation for all the people in this country. You will get automatically to the constitution and law. It is not possible to define other demands for integration than those, which are already defined in the constitution and law of the better or less developed countries. The desired work is so to say, unfortunately already done. Such values as free ideology, diversity, complexity, rule of law, liberty, freedom of movement and pluralism are normally accepted in the legal system of more developed nations.

Beyond it should be mentioned that a complete discussion about the integration condition is questionable, because it means integrated and not integrated persons. As a result, arise the so called “marginal men”.⁹ The famous theatre scientist Erwin Gofman even practise the opposite approach – he puts the marginal men and related social groups in the middle and start to talk about the integration process based on these groups. Taking into account the further more progressive views on the integration problem, we should remember scientists from the Chicago and Birmingham Schools of thought, who accentuate even in the nineteen-twenties of the last century the doubtful centralisation of

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See Coleman.

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See Freyer.

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See Park.

the term “integration”.¹⁰ Peter Atteslander writes that modern societies are structured multi-central. There are many orientations, but no hierarchy. Every discussion about the centre and periphery is unfounded. Every fringe group has a central function.¹¹ Howard Becker justifies in his book about outsiders that these people became the random function only if we define their abnormality. He speaks not only about the rule breakers, but also about the rule users/ operators. Interesting is that persons with defined abnormal behaviour normally keep this way their whole life and even develop more related problems in due time. In his own way, speaking about people and things he call people, who dress up their ideological attitudes in word forms, sentimental. When we avoid the exact understanding of H. Beckers way of sentimentality it is possible to affirm these persons are not rational in their understanding of the world in any case.¹²

Indeed, the discussion about integration is not pointless, because it can move people and their development, forward. Like in every social project here are such aspects as target groups, project goals, didactic objectives, right understanding of subject matter and object of research as well as the right choice of methods. Accordingly to the research for my dissertation, where I go out not from the diffuse defined cultural term of integration, but from the extensive participation perspective; as a result of the previously mentioned I can suggest the following integration forces possibly applicable for all members of democratic societies:

1. Emphasis on the constitution and rule of law as the most rational way to speak about integrated and disintegrated persons. In other cases such unwanted phenomena as:
 - a) stigmatisation, b) diffuse position of (cultural perspective of) the integration term in modern societies, c) the big meaning of random groups for the social balance, d) the impossibility to deny something, which was born within the distinct society and e) the doubtful didactic methods of integration approaches require better deliberations and possibly new legal frameworks to be comprehensible and logical in the supposed fundamental ideas.
2. The education and formation aspects as the most important forces for the future integration. When we look at the present society it is obvious that people who have an access to better education can and do take an influence on the mass media and have better participation chances if compared with people who don't have such resources. Better formation also means ,generally, a better financial situation, possibilities for better social connections and influence in the political sphere. Theoretically it is possible to imagine that people with better financial and less educational resources would have better integration possibilities, but their

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See Gofman.

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See Atteslander.

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See Becker.

participation in the higher scientific, political and mass media spheres of influence is less likely than to be able to achieve just average high positions.

When we pay attention to the present situation in the German cities of Bielefeld and Magdeburg, which were analysed in the framework of my dissertation, we will see among other things how the Russian-speaking migrants struggle with fears about the modern times as defined by classical composers and modern theoreticians. This practical ethnographic research, where I analyze the relevance of ethnic infrastructures for successful integration of migrants as well as native people was carried out in two approximately equal in size and infrastructure cities. It is interesting to know in which context such manifestations as loneliness, strangeness, anonymity and distance take place in their every day life and how they confront with the negative phenomena of modernity. I will cover the possibilities for integration of people with different types of demands possible to observe in the so called ethnic colony of Russian-speaking migrants. I will also present current trends of development in commercial and non commercial organizations of the previously mentioned target group in Bielefeld and Magdeburg.

To esteem the importance of the Russian-speaking minority in Germany and the significance of the successful integration of this group for various public organizations and political circles it should be noticed that these emigrants are the second-large group of foreigners living in Germany. This ethnic group counts approximately 3,5 million people.¹³ When we pay attention to the situation in Bielefeld – there live approximately 25,000 immigrants from the CIS-countries or 8% of the general population. In Magdeburg, formerly a part of East Germany, to this ethnic group belong circa 5,000 persons (2.5 % of the general population).

Why do emigrants build their own infrastructures? The analyse of international literature about ethnic organisations shows – there are such reasons as:

- the assimilation pressure,
- the financial distress,
- the communal politics regarding distribution of council flats,
- the need to have a personal space,
- the need for emotional support and social contacts,
- family, friendship or church mergers,
- social ignorance and/ or
- exclusion from the host society,
- bad knowledge of the language speaking in the host country and
- better possibilities to participate in the society of the host-country from the basis of ethnic organisations.¹⁴

13 See Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung, Familie und Frauen.

14 See Heckmann, Krummacher, Loch, Hagedorn, Salzbrunn, Baringhorst, Triesscheijn, Entzinger, Penninx, McKenzie, Gordon, Bös, O`Byrne, Oberndörfer.

The investigated non-commercial and commercial firms, which all have positive functions for process of integration of migrant people, can be subdivided into the following groups:

- non-governmental organizations
- parishes
- political organizations
- media outlets
- commercial firms
- sports and educational venues
- cultural centers
- consulting organizations
- leisure centers and
- health care facilities.

Presently we have in Bielefeld nearby 130 commercial firms organized by Russian-speaking emigrants, four non-governmental organizations, 17 parishes, 22 surgeries with Russian-speaking doctors, four newspapers are issued. Despite of the financial crisis the development progress during the last years is big enough. The amount of the corresponding organisations grew from 60 enterprises in 2004 to the above mentioned number. In Magdeburg there exist about 30 enterprises of Russian-speaking migrants, three NPO's, two churches, five surgeries, two newspapers are published. The first reason for the less developed economy in Magdeburg is the quantity of emigrants from the corresponding countries. On the other hand, the general economic development in the new bundeslaender is worse that in West Germany. So this fact has a big influence on a contingent of people living in the former GDR, on the general purchasing power of the population and on possibilities to do business.

According to the theoretical and practical researches, where I did interviews with Russian-speaking emigrants to discover the importance of the ethnic organisations in their life and the frequency of using of these organisations I can determine the following positive functions:

- support for migrants, recently arrived in Germany
- common and ethnic cultural socialization,
- multicultural socialization of different social classes,
- stabilization of personality,
- self-help,
- social control,
- lobbying,
- representation of distinct ethnic groups in the host society,
- work-market integration,
- pluralistic formation, consulting and leisure facilities,
- support of participation in the host society,
- enrichment of consumer market with new goods and services,
- contribution to the international connections,
- contribution to the better communication and work between ethnic NGOs and organizations of the host society,

- enrichment of communal infrastructures and
- NGOs as a balance by possible human figurations.

About the use of researched non-profit and profit organizations can be else said that the results of interviews show the better developed prominence of Russian shops for both cities. In Bielefeld the interviewed people know also discotheques, restaurants, driving schools, surgeries, parishes, financial consultants and insurance brokers, wholesale trade and NGO's. Furthermore a pharmacy, a car-shop, a newspaper and a travel-office are mentioned one time. In Magdeburg eleven interviewed people know surgeries, nine of them mentioned the Russian discotheque. The restaurant, the hair salon, the law firm, the financial consultants, the parish and the NGO are mentioned one time by each of the interviewed respondents. All respondents underline the importance of ethnic organizations in the integration process or express an indifferent relation to them.

In general the NGO's of the Russian-speaking emigrants represent a transcultural form of minimum two countries: the home- and the host-country. In the majority of cases there are also new forms of influences adopted from other countries or developed during of particular time. The picture of the society is always drawn on the ground and the changes of this picture are invariably the reason of changes in personal attitudes.¹⁵ The dialogue between countries is an interesting approach to do ethnographic researches about at least two societies and their cultures. The ethnic infrastructures are certainly not only the expression of the specific needs, but represent on their part the processes of adapting some cultural forms and reflect the processes of local globalism.

It is also important to notice that despite of considerable quantity of ethnic instances/ firms, the segregation isn't inherent for both cities. Basically all mentioned firms settle down in the city centre, their least quantity can be observed in so-called «privileged» parts of the city, where richer social strata live.

So the researched ethnic firms build maximum the social form of ethnic colony without any physical forms, what means the territorial aspect. There are no segregated territories, where emigrants live. The excluding processes are not typical as well. The ethnic colony in its open form is characteristic for the developed societies, which offer for migrant people new possibilities and new forms of support. But the emigrants from Russia and Republics of the former Soviet Union undoubtedly have on their part big resources for the integration, especially in cities with well developed and coordinated integrative work.

Considering the prognosis for the future development of ethnic profit- and non-profit organizations it is possible to suppose that these institutions will maintain their specific traits. It may be assumed that such aspects as:

- common culture,
- the self-perception as Russians or perception from other groups as Russian people,
- the on the common origin based social behaviour and

15 See Schäfers, p. 260.

– appreciation of ethnic culture as a social heritage of modern societies will determine the work profile of the mentioned profit- and non-profit organizations. This development is to be regarded in its positive issue for stable identities of emigrants and the diversity of communal life. The above mentioned organizations offer wide possibilities for identity development for Russians, ethnic Germans, Ukrainians, Russian-speaking Jews or for people from Kirgizia and Kazakhstan.

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