

FUNDAMENTALS OF COHESION IN THE LITERATURE AND EUROPEAN STUDIES¹

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Abstract

The paper below regards the cohesion concept, as update and made concrete for the today European Union and member countries. The literature is growing complex and the concrete needs strengthen and enlarge, as described in the first part. Fundamentally, studies, including revisions do not neglect the conceptual debate, despite that the events' pressure would differently express option in context. So, besides the conceptual focus and even devolving from, we'll see cohesion micro- and macro-socially and in territorial terms. The European Social Model equally keeps a word on cohesion. Since literature is working on and more evolving approaches are expected, our below analysis isn't exhaustive either. We're all still working on this.

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Jel classification: *A10, O01, H70*

1.1 Conceptually² (i), there is basically no universally accepted definition for *cohesion* (see page 1/ Paper Abstract). McCracken (1998) here sees ,... the trait of a society basing on connections and relationships between social units'. Sociologist Emile Durkheim (Janson, 1998) sees the same as the ,future society order' that is formed by ,reinforcing social relationships and inter-conveying values of common interpretations'.

Green & Janmaat (2011), in their turn, see a four difficulties set of using this term: (1) a *normative* type using – that identifies a goal to be reached, but skips all about negative effects related to presumably enough cohesive social structures, for the sake of an ,objective' analysis; (2) the same usage for a *bunch of expected goals*: trust, tolerance, involvement in the community activities; (3) *defining* concept through its: (a) *causes*: e.g. welfare status, equality promoting, versus (b) *effects*:

¹ *This paper is a part of research theme on 2014 : "Economic and social cohesion of Romania in the Europe 2020 strategy*

² *Manole (2012) tries to base the cohesion definition, as all: (i) conceptually; (ii) micro- ; (iii) macro-socially.*

e.g. life quality, economic growth – all for outlining the area of analysis; (4) calling the *plural analysis level*, e.g. State, local community, individual and inter-individual levels (see also Hirschi, 1969).

Chan et al. (2006) intercepts two directions of analysis for the social cohesion: (a) the one originating in sociology and social psychology; (b) the same originating in the political discourse – namely, containing specific objectives.

1.2. Micro-socially (ii), Jenson (1998) sees a number of five dimensions of cohesion: belonging, participation, legitimacy, recognition and inclusion. An equal number of definitions here results: (i) values imparted and belonging to a group; (ii) the society's ability to create social equality and deconstruct marginalisation; (iii) participating to political and social decision making and its concrete forms – e.g. political parties and trade unions; (iv) the society's ability to mediate conflicts and tolerance for controversies; (v) the same against media and political diversity.

Then, O' Conner (1998) explains that cohesion covers three groups of aspects and values: (1) values, identity and culture of a community; (2) differences and divisions, e.g. inequalities, inequities, cultural diversity and geographical divisions; (3) associations, networks and their appropriate infrastructure. Chan et al. (2006), again, has another minimalist definition himself, as operational: (cohesion is) ...'a suitable form of social organizing': (i) trusted by its members; (ii) the latest impart identity and belonging to the community; (iii) the same for subjective experiences in life and behaviours. To be so underlined that this is always about both individuals and groups, as compulsory.

1.3 Macro-socially – lastly, at the macro-social level the European Commission (EC 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000) mentions the objective of cohesion within the EU and the European Council (2005) draws the 'Methodologic Guide' about social cohesion indicators and terms, e.g. cohesion versus exclusion, social capital and life quality. **Social exclusion**, as in detail, is perceived like default of four systems: I/ the democracy and law one – that supports civic integration; II/ the welfare implementing one – that supports social integration; III/ labour market; IV/ the one of family and community – that supports the inter-personal integration. On the other hand, as opposite to cohesion, *social exclusion* comes up with excessively low wage&salary incomes vis-à-vis daily needs (a state called '*wage poverty*'), discrepancies between the official wage level (e.g. by the official minimal wage) and real wage level (sometimes discrepantly high, as for correspondingly highly quoted jobs, e.g. informaticians) resulting into banning the employees' access to some social benefits, under-employment – e.g. the part-time jobs that only partly produce material insurance, lastly unemployment itself with living from social aids, as exclusively(Briciu 2009)³.

³ The author insists that all these elements (symptoms) are existent all over Romania, despite that they still need increasingly complex measuring tools. Plus, other authors

Dimensions of social exclusion, in their turn, are: *economic* – i.e. poverty and inequality, that include social transfers indicators --, *labour market related* – for employed individuals, employment, subjective indicators --, *housing related* – for the access to public utilities, overcrowding, house safety, access to housing and housing specific costs, house's endowment with long term use goods --, *education related* – participation to education, education levels accessed, individual distance to schools and education centers --, *healthcare related* – access to specific healthcare services, mortality and morbidity, life style as healthy, *individual and public safeties* – criminality incidence, perception on social security within community --, *social segregation* – no or weak participation to social networks (ibidem).

As for the *special groups* – from this view point – there are: ethnic *romany* population, people with disabilities, homeless people, educational disadvantaged people. Besides, children are more highly exposed to social exclusion, namely to poverty⁴. Special initiatives relate to defining concept of *financial exclusion*, as well.

Life quality doesn't bring new specific features in, as compared to common understanding, and *social capital* bases social coherence that in its turn bases on trust and a common set of values and rules (McCracken, 1998; Jenson, 1998; O'Conner, 1998). 'Social capital of all societies includes institutions, relationships, attitudes and values that rule human interactions and participate to social and economic development'. Namely, it cumulates institutions and their links between.

1.4 The territorial view

Let us now also have the fourth point of view on the same issue. Territory is a key item for European policies implementing: highly urbanised, versus rural areas, large metropolises versus small and medium size localities, as well as specific territories with problems and handicaps in development perspectives – e.g. nature: mountain chains, rivers, iles and/or delta – that make difficult or impossible the unicity of such policies. Moreover, regional discrepancies within national areas even enlarge. And concomitantly the largest urban areas feel segregation effects.

Another problem consists in the low correlation among sectoral policies, up to becoming non adequate. As a result, territorial cohesion proves evolving concept. Namely, the third Cohesion Report (2004) had first been undrewritten as 'equilibrium development' and/or 'territorial equilibrium' and then, this approach starts including at least: services accessing, putting territorial potential into value and sectoral policies coordination.

1.4.1 Territorial cohesion

believe that these result from several (other) defficiencies, like employment, education or healthcare.

⁴ *Authors mention, together with data sources, that the rate of the children population with special exposure to poverty risk hasn't diminished since the early two thousands, plus the March 2006 European Council's initiative to address to EU27 for special measures taken for saving children from this risk of poverty.*

There is no unanimously accepted definition for territorial cohesion either. In 2008 the EU was initiating a public debate for drawing a 'Green Book' of territorial cohesion when some consensus issues were already in place: territorial development in harmony, territorial potential basics put into value, geographic specific considered by policies drawing and implementing and public acting oriented around: (1) concentration, (2) overpassing territorial differences of density and inter-connection, (3) the same for the inter-areas distance factor, (4) the same for division amongst.

As operationally, the territorial cohesion approaches a true list of items: 1/ concentration on national policies and putting the regional potential into value; 2/ positionally improving European regions through trans-European cooperation; 3/ role of urban areas for regional development; 4/ soaring the EU's territorial impact policies' consistency – whereas this impact, in its turn, classifies as: (a) vertical – i.e. cooperation between different territorial levels, and (b) horizontal -- i.e. sectoral policies' coordination; 5/ promoting territorial cohesion as a political objective and territorial development policies as political tools in such an order; 6/ reinforcing the territorial dimension of all community policies; 7/ similar reinforcing for the strategical planning; 8/ using the policy's territorial impact evaluation; 9/ concentrating public investment on territorial key-objectives, accessing general economic interest services, territorial potential putting into value, cities ranging into city-networks, supporting functional areas etc.

1.4.2 Territorial cohesion, a priority for European policies

It is in this fragment to detail about two aspects already mentioned above, (1) the dynamic significance of the territorial cohesion and (2) current state (including immediate future) of the EU's cohesion policy. Let us have first (1) the *evolving significance* of territorial cohesion and so mention:

/ The third Report on Cohesion (2004), also called 'of balanced development' and 'of avoiding territorial imbalances', in which the Commission (EC) calls for strengthening territorial cohesion and for encouragement of inter-regions interlinks of cooperation.

/ According to the Intermediary Report on territorial cohesion (DG Regio, 2004), territorial cohesion would be: 'equitable distribution of human activities within the EU' and it ensures territorial implementing of the first degree objective, the one of sustainable and balanced development.

/ Conclusions of a Luxembourg 2005 inter-ministers informal meeting that say: 'territorial cohesion implies all national and regional development policies focusing on optimal exploiting of regional potential and territorial capital' and besides: 'a better positioning of the European regions'.

/ The primary ESPON-TIPTAP had said about: (1) territorial quality – i.e. of life and work environment; (2) equal access to services of general interest; (3) the same for knowlege.

/ The Green Card on territorial cohesion is also here included.

As for *continuing the cohesion policy* (2), the EC has a set of propositions that breaks into four large sections – i.e. the EC's proposals for the next financial exercise, published on 6 October, 2011.

I. *Integrative approach*, that includes:

- drawing a common strategical framework (CSF) that would be able to regard all EU funds, as made active – i.e. including the ones on agriculture and rural development, sea and fishing etc.;
- considering all basic areas' challenges – e.g. for rural, coast and fishing and for other specific areas;
- provisions that national partnership type contracts approach territorial needs in integrative ways.

II. EU policies orientation through results as follows:

- precise identifying of indicators for describing the FEDR's contribution to local growth and employment;
- drawing the strategical framework of an increased efficiency of financial support;
- performance stimulating, i.e. creating a fund for the ex-post performance repaying.

III. Multi-level participation and governance reinforcing mechanisms.

IV. New supporting tools:

- Integrate investments on territories that ensure financial projects coordination;
- Common joint action plans (JAP).

1.5 The European Social Model

In the chronological order, the Treaties of Rome (1957), Maastricht (1992) and Amsterdam (1997) the European Social Space (ESS) was defined. Then, the Councils of Lisbon (2000) and Nice (2000) worked on modernising the European Social Model. It is in such context that a research group of the National Institute of Scientific Research in the Labour and Social Protection areas (Stroe et al. 2012) do connect poverty to other aspects present in the EU region, identify data and draw appropriate indicators, as follows:

/ poverty rate, according to the EU-SILC employment status, named 'Statistics on Income and Living Conditions'⁵;

/ regional development – e.g. dispersion among regional and local employment rates of individuals between 15 and 64 (NUTS 2(II));

/ poverty rate, judged upon intensity of work done in households – that is one of crucial indicators proper to 'Europa 2020' Strategy monitoring;

/ rate of individual economic dependence in households – i.e. the real number of unemployed individuals.

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⁵ Which, for instance, reports poverty rates of 2003 and 2007 as high as 20% and higher in countries like Latvia, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania.

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