

Role of discourses in framing migration

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Content

- Discourses
- “migration crisis” in the Slovak political discourse

- How do you understand *discourse*?

Importance of discourses

*Discourse formulates the ways we look at things, we describe them, what meanings we ascribe them and thus how we act.
(Levitas 2005)*

- we (re)produce mental representations and meanings through discourses
 - it offers us a certain perspective how we look at things
 - it offers particular ways how we produce knowledge about things
 - it influences the way we act
- (re)production of mental models (and influencing the behaviour = integral part of discourses (political, media))

Importance of discourses II

Social exclusion/inclusion anchored in discourses (Levitas 2005)

→ different discourses will frame and tackle inclusion/ exclusion/ solidarity and related problems differently

They will differ in:

- Who defines the insiders/outside
- How they characterise/define boundaries (what is the crucial feature of the boundary)
- How is it possible to support inclusion
- How they represent relation between inclusion/exclusion and inequality

'In a political environment the advocates of reform need to employ strategies to overcome the scepticism of others and persuade them of the importance of reform. In other words, they must create a frame that changes the collective understanding of the welfare state, because doing so 'shapes the path' necessary to enact reform' (Cox, 2001: 475 in Béland 2007)

Increasing numbers of immigrants

- <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>
- [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Asylum_applications_\(non-EU\)_in_the_EU-28_Member_States,_2006%E2%80%932016_\(thousands\)_YB17.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Asylum_applications_(non-EU)_in_the_EU-28_Member_States,_2006%E2%80%932016_(thousands)_YB17.png)
- [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Number_of_\(non-EU\)_asylum_seekers_in_the_EU_and_EFTA_Member_States,_2015_and_2016_\(thousands_of_first_time_applicants\)_YB17.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Number_of_(non-EU)_asylum_seekers_in_the_EU_and_EFTA_Member_States,_2015_and_2016_(thousands_of_first_time_applicants)_YB17.png)
- <https://www.minv.sk/?statistiky-20>

Why does it matter?

- **Nation-building**

- dilemma of nation building - what kind of groups can be included so that we will still remain one nation?
- civil vs. primordial definition of a state (France, Canada vs. Central Europe)
- jus sanguinis vs. jus soli
- who can be a member of a particular society?
- citizenship as a key precondition of social inclusion

→ important in the understanding of political discourses and attitudes towards “the others”

The Slovak context

- Legislation focusing on immigration (entry, conditions, permits)
- No integration policy until 2014
- More restrictive conditions for naturalisation
- Institutional settings – primacy of control & regulation
 - significant asymmetry between control & integration

In 2015 and 2016...

- ... the Slovak government adopted the Anti-terrorist measures (in fast-track action)
- ... SMER-SD (governing party) leads the election campaign under the banner “*We protect Slovakia*”
- ... the Slovak government increased budget on police and on technological control of external border
- ... the Slovak Prime Minister openly accused Muslim immigrants of terrorism, raping the Slovak women and changing the character of the country
 - <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/islam-has-no-place-in-this-country-says-slovakian-prime-minister-weeks-before-it-takes-over-eu-a7052506.html>
 - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35718831>
- ... the Slovak Prime Minister claimed necessity to control all Muslims living in Slovakia
- ... the European Commission adopted the decision to relocate 120,000 people

Political discourse on “quota”, migrants and values

- Two dichotomies around which solidarity is discursively constructed:
 - Economic immigrant vs. political refugee (pre-quota period)
 - Christian vs. non-Christian (Muslim) refugee (post-quota period)
 - different representations invoked in political argumentation
- Missing the perspective of fundamental human rights (the case of Christian refugees in the only exception)

Some conclusions

- Social exclusion/ inclusion anchored in discourses
- Us & them and positive self- & negative other-representation strategies generates particular meanings ascribed to certain groups and invokes, or simply strengthens, existing primordial boundaries
- religion as a mobilizing tool
- one of the layers of the framing of immigrants and refugees is the preservation of Slovak national identity, equated primarily with Christianity (→ Its political representatives refer to Slovakia as a Christian-Catholic nation, thus seeking to affirm Christianity as an essential Slovak value)
- invoking nationalism through religious claims in Central and Eastern Europe (=response to wider political, economic, and cultural developments)
- Such claims legitimate restrictive policies, increase of military/police budgets, exclusionary attitudes, exclusion of particular groups from solidarity

Bibliography

Béland, Daniel. 2007. "The Social Exclusion Discourse: Ideas and Policy Change." *Policy & Politics* 35 (1):123-139.

Levitas, Ruth. 2005. "Three Discourses of Social Exclusion." Pp. 7-28 in *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour*. Second Edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.