MAINSTREAMING INTEGRATION GOVERNANCE (UPSTREAM)

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Conceptualizing Mainstreaming in Integration Governance: a literature review

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UPSTREAM project

Mainstreaming immigrant integration policy has been defined as 'the future' of immigrant integration policies in Europe (see Niessen and Schiebel, 2007; Collett and Petrovic, 2014). Mainstreaming is about reorienting policies at the entire population, including vulnerable groups, such as immigrants, without targeting them specifically. Despite the growing attention for mainstreaming, little is known about how and why integration policies are mainstreamed and to what effect. Mainstreaming occurs mainly implicitly. In order to gain a better understanding of how to effectively apply mainstreaming while allowing for the best integration outcomes, further analysis of the topic is required, in which the UPSTREAM project provides.

This UPSTREAM project analyses when, how, why and to what effect governments at the EU, national and local level mainstream their migrant integration policies. Thus, it aims to promote a learning process in terms of policy coordination, policy practices and policy outcomes in the governance of migrant integration. It asks the central question 'What are the obstacles and opportunities that mainstreaming generates in terms of migration integration policies and outcomes?' The project consists of several research stages that focus on the **conceptualisation** of mainstreaming, an analysis of the **politics of mainstreaming**, and an analysis of **policy practices relevant of mainstreaming**, as well as its consequences in terms of **integration outcomes**. The project combines case-studies on a local and national level in five countries - France, Poland, Spain, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom - and at the EU level.

Literature review

In order to answer the main research question: **What exactly *is* mainstreaming, and where does the concept come from?,** we have developed a conceptualization of mainstreaming, based on the migration- and governance studies literature. Based on this literature, addressing topics such as (super-) diversity, target group policies and poly-centric governance, a

typology of mainstreaming in immigrant integration policy has been developed. The typology will then be applied to the more empirical study of mainstreaming in policies and politics in the subsequent stages of the project. This literature review should be understood as a conceptual frame to serve the comparative study of mainstreaming.

Explicit references to mainstreaming are very few

A first exploration of the discourse on mainstreaming teaches us that the concept of mainstreaming rarely appears explicitly in the realm of migration integration policies (except for the EU case). However, following our conceptualization of mainstreaming, the French, Dutch and UK cases each reveal evidence that mainstreaming has taken place; as they all move in the direction of more generic policies. Poland and Spain reveal similar processes, though coming from a totally different point of departure, driven mainly by austerity measures or 'unintended' forms of mainstreaming. In fact as these new immigration countries have much less of a heritage in terms of specific policies, mainstreaming appears to be implicitly a key part of their policy strategies toward migrants. Furthermore, a first exploration of all the cases (the new as well as the old immigration countries) suggest that the governance of mainstreaming has become less state centric; in particular the turn towards the local level is strong in all countries, though in some countries (like the UK) occurring far earlier than in others (like in France). *So, even though not always explicitly recognized as such, the variety of cases show several signs of mainstreaming, varying from a move towards generic policies to a move towards more polycentric forms of governance.*

Super-diversity

In **immigrant integration studies**, mainstreaming is often associated with the growing scale and complexity of diversity, also described as hyper-diversity or super-diversity (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). Due to long histories of immigration or diverse patterns of immigration, societies have become so diverse that this diversity has become one of the defining characteristics. Migrant groups have not only become a sizeable part of diverse societies, they have also become increasingly heterogeneous in the number of countries the migrants come from, the ethnicities and cultures they represent, the diversity between the different generations (first, second and third generations of 'immigrants'), and the different socio-economic backgrounds and needs they have. *Following the argument of super-diversity one could hypothesize that there are now so many different and heterogeneous migrant groups that singling out specific target groups for policies has become too complex and ineffective.*

Interculturalism

Existing models of integration, such as multiculturalism and assimilation have become overly rigid to describe the fluid nature of societies in Europe today. As a result, some experts have turned to a new concept – interculturalism (Wood 2009, Cantle 2012, Zapata Barrero 2013). The concept could potentially help to better understand the nature of inter-ethnic contact and the development of a shared identity within super-diverse populations, without relying on fixed concepts of minority groups or national identity. Interculturalism instead focuses on inter-ethnic contact and the development of a shared understanding within super-diverse populations. *Whether interculturalism indeed provides an answer to the challenges of a super-diverse society, and how this relates to other*

models of diversity, is topic of further research of this project.

Social construction of target groups

A second facet of mainstreaming relates to a different body of literature; **governance studies**. Here mainstreaming has been applied to a wide range of policy areas, with several key common denominators, such as disability, age or gender. A key focus of this literature is on the 'social construction of policy target groups', or how policies define, demarcate and attribute social meaning to the groups at whom the policy is to be directed. Illustrations include the labelling of 'ethnic minorities' in the Netherlands, 'racial minorities' in the UK or the French reluctance to define 'minorities' and rather differentiate between those with and those without French passport. *Defining target groups is often an inevitable and essential part of policymaking, and always has specific social and political consequences for the groups as well as for society as a whole.*

Dilemma of recognition

One of the issues imminent to the formulation of immigrant integration policies discussion whether migrant integration is best promoted by generic policies that are colour-blind, or by specific policies that target specific migrant groups? It is a dilemma between risking to sustain or reinforce inequalities in society when specific problems are not met with targeted policies (see for instance Simon & Piché 2012, Yanow & van der Haar 2013), and the risk of inadvertently strengthening ethnic and cultural boundaries in society through the mechanisms of targeted policies themselves. In efforts to cope with this 'dilemma of recognition' (De Zwart 2005), governments throughout Europe have formulated various 'replacement strategies', where group-based policies are replaced by needs- or area-based policies. For instance, many policy measures in France and the Netherlands are targeted at specific cities or urban zones rather than on groups, indirectly targeting the many migrant inhabitants in those areas. This 'exercise in social construction' (De Zwart 2005, p.141) is central to the mainstreaming of immigrant integration policies too. *When addressing mainstreamed policies at a generic or (where necessary) at a specifically targeted audience, the dilemma of recognition and its consequences should be taken into account very carefully avoiding the negative side effects and promoting the positive effects of target group constructs.*

Building a typology of main-streaming

Building on the literature of immigrant integration studies and governance studies, we developed a conceptual typology of mainstreaming in the context of different models of immigrant integration. On one axis, we distinguish between policies that have a **monist** and static conception of culture, understanding cultural groups as rigidly different and incompatible, striving for differentialism or assimilationism instead; and policies aimed at a **pluralist** society defined by diversity and the crossing and blurring of ethnic and cultural boundaries through multicultural and intercultural perspectives on society. *A key question here is whether a model sees a culture, either a minority or majority culture, as something absolute and static or as something dynamic and fluid.* On the other axis, the policy targeting dimension (the 'dilemma of recognition'), we distinguish between **generic** and **specifically targeted policies**. *The key difference here is whether a model explicitly targets specific groups or whether it targets the entire population without explicitly differentiating between groups.* Needless to say, in practice we expect most policies to blend generic and

specific measures in particular ways, and to combine elements of monism and pluralism as well; however this typology allows us to understand better how and why policy choices are made and to make comparisons across country contexts.

Figure 1 Model to situate the mainstreaming of immigrant integration policies
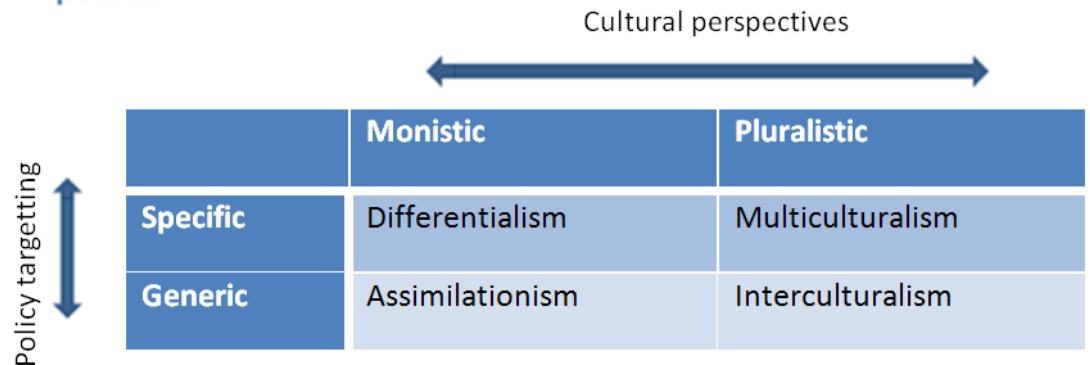
Mainstreaming as a strategy

Following these two axes, four models of immigrant integration can be defined; differentialism, multiculturalism, assimilationism and interculturalism. One of the goals of this project is to find out how and to what aims mainstreaming is adopted as a policy strategy; does mainstreaming is strategy for achieving interculturalism, assimilationism, multiculturalism or differentialism? Based on the literature review of super-diversity and interculturalism one could expect **mainstreaming to be primarily adopted as a policy strategy for achieving interculturalism.** However, in subsequent empirical stages of the project we will try to find out what policy models mainstreaming actually speaks in practice when addressing a super-diverse society. *The goal of this research is to understand the motivations leading policy-makers to adopt a more mainstreamed approach, and the 'routes' that countries take before turning to mainstreaming. For example, does mainstreaming constitute a shift from assimilationism to interculturalism, from multiculturalism to interculturalism, or any other sequence of models? Subsequently, we ask how mainstreaming can most effectively address and achieve integration for people of immigrant background and society as a whole.*

Governance of mainstreaming: Towards poly-centric governance

Besides its content, mainstreaming also has an important coordination dimension. Mainstreaming distances itself from state-centric forms of governance that have traditionally been associated with migrant integration policies, which is reflected in the use of 'national models of integration.' On the one hand one can see a slow deconcentration of policy responsibilities within national governments, from centralised policy coordination by a single government department, to a distribution of policy responsibilities across various partners, including different governmental departments and non-state actors. At the same time one can also see a decentralization of policy responsibilities, which means that the EU, regional, and local levels of government have become more involved in managing integration. *The central research question running through these developments is whether a trend towards the mainstreaming of immigrant integration policies also involves a*

trend from state-centric to multi-actor as well as multi-level governance at the level of coordination?

Risk of decoupling

When studying the governance of mainstreaming one has to be critical of the effectiveness of poly-centric developments. Collett and Petrovic (2014) highlight several studies that showed a decoupling, or *'décalage',* between national and local policies. Where both levels work according to very different logics of policymaking, they might adopt conflicting policy measures (Scholten 2013). For instance, policies adopted in cities like Barcelona and Amsterdam have shown clear discrepancies with national policies. However, studies have also revealed instances where effective poly-centric governance was achieved by a tight coordination of policies through specific venue. In short, poly-centric governance poses challenges to the coordination of this spectrum of policies. *Following the premise from the governance literature that the mainstreaming of immigrant integration policies is accompanied by a development of poly-centric governance, or more so, that poly-centric forms of governance are necessary to address diversified populations, we have to be critical on the effective coordination thereof.*

In conclusion

Despite the growing attention for mainstreaming, little is known about how and why integration policies are mainstreamed and to what effect. A first exploration in fact tells us, mainstreaming occurs mainly implicitly. In order to gain a better understanding on how to effectively apply mainstreaming while allowing for the best integration outcomes, requires further analysis.

From migration literature we have developed an understanding that, to the extent that societies become more diverse, the definition of policy target groups will become increasingly complex, as diversity becomes itself a defining characteristic for the whole society. This speaks to a broader dilemma from governance studies that the social construction of target populations has social and political consequences for the populations involved. Taken the development of super-diversity into account we expect that **mainstreaming involves a shift of policies toward pluralistic and generic policies**. Subsequent stages of this research will put the assumption that growing diversity leads to the rise of pluralistic and generic policies, to the empirical test. Furthermore, we attribute specific attention to the 'governance of mainstreaming', and how such changes in the content of policies are to be achieved and coordinated. In particular governance studies makes a clear connection between mainstreaming as a shift from state-centric to more poly-centric modes of governance. Finally we expect that **mainstreaming (in terms of policy content) also involves a shift to poly-centric governance (in terms of policy coordination).** These expectations based on migration- and governance literature will be empirically analysed and tested in the subsequent phases of our research.

Policy lessons and relevance

Mainstreaming is a distinctly under-researched concept within integration policy. Indeed, many practitioners at local and regional level are implementing mainstreaming de facto, without the aim of fulfilling integration objectives per se. The UPSTREAM seeks not only to inform EU, national and local policy-

makers as to how they might improve their own deliberately designed mainstreaming strategies, but also to demonstrate instances where mainstreaming is already taking place, and how they might more effectively work with those implementing practitioners. This literature review has provided a first step towards such a more systematic examination of mainstreaming, by conceptualizing the phenomenon under study. In subsequent stages, this will help us to show that:

- The 'concept' mainstreaming as used in practice has very different meanings in different settings
- We understand mainstreaming as a shift toward generic policies, oriented at a pluralist society and involving poly-centric forms of governance
- Based on this definition, mainstreaming is taken place already in many cases without being framed as such explicitly
- The reasons for governments to mainstream their integration policies can vary strongly, signalling that mainstreaming can be a means for achieving multiple goals
- There are very different forms and strategies of mainstreaming, from which lessons can be drawn for achieving the best integration outcomes

The full literature review on Conceptualizing Mainstreaming is available for download on the project website www.project-upstream.eu (click here).

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