

Understanding the causal role of ideas in the turn to civic integration in immigrant integration policy

Abstract:

The turn to civic integration in Europe, which has been discussed extensively in scholarly work, is characterized by increasingly heavier duties over rights to immigrants. Studies have nevertheless been limited to the study of citizenship policies and the specific mechanisms of conditionality of citizenship acquisition. This emphasis on citizenship acquisition has overlooked the cross-cutting nature of immigrant integration policy as well as the ideational processes shaping right-duty demarcations in the integration of non-citizens. I argue that after emerging in early 1990s, civic integrationist ideas have escalated in some countries to become a dominant paradigm of immigrant integration, influencing policy output in areas such as education, employment and health. I present a broad framework of the role of ideas in policy change, distinguishing between ideas as programs and as paradigms, and suggesting how an idea may escalate from a specific program to a broader paradigm. I argue that perceptions of effectiveness of a new program, shaped simultaneously by ideological affinity and calculative convenience, ultimately shape the capacity of a program – and an idea – to survive and escalate. I conclude by presenting the area of immigrant integration as fruitful for future empirically-based verification and elaboration of the framework.

Key-words: Ideas, immigrant integration, civic integration, policy change