Chapter 9

Social Capital and Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

The world is facing an uncontrollable wave of immigration at an increasingly rapid pace. So much so that even the countries where a large majority of population is immigrant have begun to deport newly arrived immigrants. Some European countries also have been building huge walls or fencing barbed wires in their borders to keep out illegal immigrants. Some European states are also considering stopping the Schengen visa application which has been in practice for a long time. But, the social capital that the OECD defines as the glue may be one of the solutions we seek. In this study, both the possible individual and social benefits of the social capital of refugees forced to leave their countries and of the immigrants with temporary protected status will be assessed.

INTRODUCTION

Migration movements that people attempt for a better life or mandatorily leave deep traces in the life of individuals and the host countries. As “Migratio Gentium-Barbarian Invasions” changed the course of history; science, cultures and social fabrics have been deeply affected by the migration movements across the world.

Today, especially those who migrate to other countries because of poverty and wars in their own countries bring various social problems and changes with them. Especially because of civil war that started in Syria in 2011, millions of Syrian refugees began to migrate to neighboring countries and then to European countries. The European States, caught unprepared in this situation, encountered various problems. The chaos encountered led the host countries to identify new strategies.

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When the host countries deal with the fundamental needs of the refugees on one hand, such as housing, nutrition and health, on the other hand, they started to take care of issues such as education, work, culture and social life that are important for the adaptation to the country. Despite these problems, the refugees who come to the country want to be a part of the society and unite with it too.

Studies in the social capital literature suggest that societies with high social capital are more cultured, more developed, safer and happier societies. Considering these benefits of social capital, the importance of high social capital reserve of refugees is increasing.

In this study, both the possible individual and social benefits of the social capital of refugees forced to leave their countries and of the immigrants with temporary protected status will be assessed.

Social Capital

Social capital, which is regarded as an important resource in interpersonal and social relations today, attracts the attention of experts from many different disciplines such as economists and social scientists. For this reason, different researchers assign a different meaning to it.

When Putnam (1993) defines social capital as “sum of social structures and relations that are established by trust, social networks and norms with coordinated and/or uncoordinated events.”

Fukuyama (1999), defines it as a set of norms establishing co-ordination, adaptation and cooperation among individuals, encouraging and maintaining their continuity and that are based on the sincerity of individuals.

And Grootaert-Van Bastelaer (2002) defines it as ” It is the sum of contributions that relationships established between individuals and institutions and values make to social and economic progress, change and development.

According to the OECD, social capital consists of networks like understandings that enable cooperation in a group or groups, shared values, and norms. On the other hand, according to the World Bank, which looks at the issue from a broader perspective, social capital refers to the norms that are shaped by the quality and quantity of social interaction of a society, relationships and institutions (National Statistics, 2001).

What makes the concept of social capital so important today and the reason of the growing researches on it, is its importance have been realized in terms of increasing the functioning of social life, and providing social cohesion. While the main axis of debates in social capital was on economic basis until the 1980s, social scientists, led by Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam and Fukuyama, brought social capital into question for different disciplines. These debates removed the concept of social
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