Hostility towards immigrants: Economic and Cultural Threat perceptions as causes in times of the economic crises and rising numbers of immigration.

Research paper proposal by Kathrin B. Busch

From an economic perspective, Western European societies need immigration: Societies are aging, and for many industrial sectors, the native supply of labor is not sufficient, anymore. Despite these developments of capitalist societies, it is unclear how ready Europeans are in general to accept and willfully integrate people from other nations and different cultural backgrounds: While numbers in immigration to many European countries have risen in the past couple of years, also populist radical right parties have gained ground in elections. Although reasons to support these parties may differ between countries, one of their shared distinctive topoi – the propagation of nativism – leads to the expectation that these parties’ increase in popularity is partly due to a grown hostility against immigrants. Also, past research has shown that perceptions of personal threat can be a cause for turning against an out-group and hence be a reason for a person’s increase in right-wing (authoritarian) attitudes (Asbrock and Frische, 2013). On the other hand, research following contact theory predicts that good contact buffers threat perceptions’ effect on hostility against immigrants (e.g., McLaren 2003). Against this background the present proposal will use data from the EVS longitudinal file and from 2019 to 1.) show how the economic and the cultural threat perceptions have developed within European societies over time, with a focus on the economic crises and increase in immigration. 2.) Multilevel analyses will be used to analyze if economic and cultural threat perceptions have led to an increase in social hostility against different groups of immigrants and what role effects of the crises have. It is expected that the increase in immigration and economic decrease only significantly increase hostility against immigrants for those individuals who share these threat perceptions.

References

Asbrock, F., Fritsche, Immo (2013): Authoritarian reactions to terrorist threat: Who is being threatened, the Me or the We? International Journal of Psychology 48, 35-49.