



SOCIAL COHESION: CHOICE, CHALLENGE AND CHANGE

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WHAT LEADING THINKERS ARE SAYING ABOUT SOCIAL COHESION

The overriding task of the First World in the decade ahead is to square the circle of wealth creation, social cohesion and political freedom.

Ralf Dahrendorf, Economic Opportunity, Civil Society and Political Liberty

I would conclude that this is a time when we should be quite deliberately trying to build social capital to create a more resilient society.

Judith Maxwell, Social Dimensions of Economic Growth

A high level of engagement, trust and reciprocity....turns out to be crucial, at least in part, in explaining economic development, institutional performance and so on.

Robert D. Putnam, "The decline of civil society: How come? So what?" (The 1996 John Manion Lecture)

If the legitimacy of politics is in question at the end of the 1990s, it is because we do not seem able to devise policies to prevent the apparently unstoppable erosion of community, cohesion and the sense of belonging.

Michael Ignatieff, "Belonging in the past", Prospect, November 1996

SOCIAL COHESION IS NOT JUST AN ISSUE FOR CANADA

- ▶ **European Union**
- ▶ **France**
- ▶ **Germany**
- ▶ **Britain**
- ▶ **Australia**
- ▶ **United States**

PRESSURE POINTS

PROBLEMATIQUE

Globalization, increased mobility, changing demographics and economic restructuring are making Canada an increasingly diverse society with the potential to fragment or polarize along economic, social, and cultural axes.

KEY PRESSURE POINTS

- ▶ **Canadian Identity**
- ▶ **Polarization and Exclusion**
- ▶ **Rural-Urban Cleavage**
- ▶ **Social Capital**
- ▶ **Public-Elite Discontent**
- ▶ **Cultural Diversity**
- ▶ **Canadian Culture in an Information Society**

DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

“Social Cohesion” is not the same as national unity, standard of living, or quality of life.

It is often confused with related terms such as:

- **“social capital” - “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putman)**
- **“social union” - “the web of rights and obligations between Canadian citizens and governments that give effect and meaning to our shared sense of social purpose and common citizenship” (CPRN)**
- **“social and cultural programs” - income security measures and cultural programs**

WORKING DEFINITION OF SOCIAL COHESION

The Social Cohesion Research Network concluded that social cohesion was an outcome of investments in social capital, social and cultural programs and the social union.

The working definition developed by the Research Network to anchor its research framework is as follows:

Social cohesion is the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among all Canadians.

SUCCESSSES

- ▶ **Agreement on a working definition**
- ▶ **Creation of a framework for social cohesion research within the federal government**
- ▶ **Establishment of research networks both within and outside the federal government**
- ▶ **Building bridges to other Sub-committees**
- ▶ **Progress on funding (SSHRC projects)**

SOCIAL COHESION Research THEMES

THEME 1 - *Faultlines*

- ▶ **Impact of contemporary diversity on social cohesion**
- ▶ **Effects of economic polarization on social cohesion**

THEME 2 - *Axes of Community Identification*

- ▶ **Role of national symbols & institutions**
- ▶ **Emergence of the Information Society**
- ▶ **Civic education & knowledge of Canada**
- ▶ **Evolving Canadian values**
- ▶ **Civic participation & cultural consumption**

THEME 3 - *Implications of Changes in Social Cohesion*

- ▶ **Social cohesion & economic development**
- ▶ **Social cohesion & Canadian identity**
- ▶ **Roles of private & voluntary sectors**
- ▶ **Evolving government institutions & policies**

THEME I

Faultlines

- ▶ Impact of contemporary diversity on social cohesion
- ▶ Effects of economic polarization on social cohesion

THEME 2

AXES of COMMUNITY

IDENTIFICATION

- ▶ Role of national symbols & institutions
- ▶ Emergence of the Information Society
- ▶ Civic education & knowledge of Canada
- ▶ Evolving Canadian values
- ▶ Civic participation & cultural consumption

THEME 3

Implications of Changes in Social Cohesion

- ▶ Social cohesion & economic development
- ▶ Social cohesion & Canadian identity
- ▶ Roles of private & voluntary sectors
- ▶ Evolving government institutions & policies

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

- ▶ **Development of a more precise conceptual model of social cohesion**
- ▶ **Development of a set of social indicators**
- ▶ **Communications and partnering**

FUTURE AGENDA

- ▶ **Workshop on Social Spending, Social Results and the New Social Union (Havi Echenberg and Kathy O'Hara) -by invitation**
- ▶ **CPRN Study -- Mapping Social Cohesion**
- ▶ **Lars Osberg study on social cohesion and economic development**
- ▶ **SSHRC sponsorship of the Canadian Cultural Research Network Symposium on Social Cohesion at the “Learneds Societies” meetings in June/98.**
- ▶ **Exploration of partnership with SSHRCC on social cohesion research**

QUESTIONS

- ▶ **Have all key elements been addressed?**
- ▶ **What are the key research priorities in the workplan?**
- ▶ **How do we tackle the governance questions under Theme 3?**
- ▶ **What kind of report do we want to present in fall 1998?**