Interethnic Contacts: 
A Dynamic Analysis of Interaction between Immigrants and Natives in Western Countries

By Dr. Borja Martinović

Abstract:

This book studies social integration of immigrants (i.e. contacts between immigrants and natives in leisure time) from a dynamic perspective. The central objective is to examine how such interethnic contacts change during the immigrants’ stay in the host country (do they increase, stagnate or decrease over time?), and to explain why some immigrants integrate socially at a faster pace than others. An additional aim is to specify the conditions under which natives are more likely to engage in contact with immigrants.

Throughout the book a theory of preferences, opportunities and third parties is used for deriving hypotheses about the determinants of interethnic contacts (e.g. education, language proficiency, age at migration). These hypotheses are then tested with data from three Western countries: the Netherlands, Germany and Canada. By applying a dynamic framework and relying on longitudinal surveys, more confident conclusions can be drawn about the causes of social integration.

The main finding is that immigrants get increasingly socially integrated during the time spent in the host country. However, the pace of integration is on average rather slow. Immigrants who migrate at a younger age, as well as those who have a higher level of education and better language proficiency, tend to acquire more native friends over time. The same holds for immigrants inhabiting ethnically mixed, as opposed to segregated, neighborhoods. Interestingly, higher educated natives tend to have less contact with immigrants. This contrasting finding underlines the relevance of studying immigrants and natives alike.