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Immigration and Social Capital

Ethnic diversity due to immigration is inevitably increasing in all advanced countries, and that diversity in the long-run is a valuable asset. At least initially, however, fear of what is new and different means that increased immigration and diversity reduce trust, social solidarity, and social capital. Rapid immigration is always accompanied by social tensions. In the long run, successful immigrant societies overcome such fragmentation by creating new, cross-cutting forms of social solidarity, and more encompassing identities. That is the central challenge facing Europe today, not the false dichotomy of “multiculturalism” vs. “assimilation.”