

Reading List “Social Cohesion”

The Humboldt Residency Programme 2022 brought together an international and interdisciplinary group of academics, journalists, philosophers, and artists to explore the topic of social cohesion. This reading list shares their recommendations for essential reads on the topic, as well as some of their own works. It gathers perspectives on diversity, polarization, democracy, gender, and education.

Find out more about their work during the [Residency period](#) in Berlin.

For further information on the Humboldt Residency Programme visit [here](#).

Diversity

Bustikova, Lenka. *Extreme Reactions: Radical Right Mobilization in Eastern Europe*. Cambridge University Press, 2019. [Link](#).

“Bustikova examines how mobilization from the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe is fuelled by anger and resentment towards their acquisition of political power as well as demands for rights by minority groups. This comprehensive study uses a number of case studies to illustrate clearly how right-wing populists instrumentalise diversity for political gain.” - Richard Mole

Curtis, Adam. *Can't Get you Out of my Head*. TV miniseries, BBC, 2021. [Link](#).

“A must-see documentary that explores in depth the divisive moments of contemporary society - from individualism to conspiracy theories, to the modern rise of nationalism - and shows in an intriguing way the link between systems of power and the dissolution of social bonds.” - Lea Kuhar

Howard, Veena R. *Gandhi, Peace, and Cohesion*. RSIS Commentary, No. 080, 11 Aug. 2022. [Link](#).

“Howard summarizes Mahatma Gandhi’s principal of *sarvodaya* wherein he believed that social cohesion can be sustained only through three main pillars of non-violence: human dignity, religious freedom, and respect for dissenting voices.” - Mala Pandurang

Müller, Jan Werner. *What is Populism?* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. [Link](#).

“A critical analysis of the concept of populism, Müller argues that at populism's core is a rejection of pluralism. This book is a helpful introduction to populism, skilfully combining theory and empirical examples.” - Richard Mole

Noble, Safiya Umoja. *Algorithms of Oppression. How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York University Press, 2018. [Link](#).

“Noble’s book changed my understanding of how searches and recommendation systems shape what we know and how we engage with the world – under the guise of being ‘neutral’ but consistently producing racist or dehumanizing results. An essential read.” - Cynthia Miller-Idriss

Palmary, Ingrid. "Reflections on Social Cohesion in Contemporary South Africa." *Psychology in Society*, No. 49, 2015, pp. 62-69. [Link](#).

"Social cohesion has become an essential construct in South African society. In a reflection of the concept this article shows that social cohesion is treated as synonymous with nation-building." - Christa Rautenbach

Rautenbach, Christa (ed). *Introduction to Legal Pluralism in South Africa*. 6th ed., Lexis Nexis, 2022. [Link](#).

"What is legal pluralism, and how does it work in real life? This book explains the law's mechanics in a pluralistic society such as South Africa, where Western, cultural, and religious laws exist side-by-side in daily life. It thereby discusses the challenges and the beauty of diversity and gives many real-life case-law examples to explain the intricacies of legal pluralism."

Rautenbach, Christa. "South Africa's Family Laws: A Potpourri of Some Sort?" *Normativity and Diversity in Family Law: Lessons from Comparative Law*, edited by Nadjma Yassari, and Marie-Claire Foblets, Springer, 2022, pp. 147-175. [Link](#).

"Is a plurality of family laws dangerous to equality and certainty or is it necessary to achieve accommodation and social cohesion? This contribution deals with a few of the intricacies of diversity in family laws."

Saini, Angela. *Superior: The Return of Race Science*. 4th Estate, 2019. [Link](#).

"This book aims to offer a way of thinking more carefully about science, race, and racism. It examines how legacies of racism in science affect how we think about human difference even today."

Polarization

Butter, Michael, and Knight, Peter (ed). *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. Routledge, 2020. [Link](#).

"This handbook has been a remarkable achievement in analysing our current knowledge of conspiracy theories as a significant social, cultural, and political phenomenon in contemporary life. Its great value lies in its inclusivity. Not only does it allow for a genuinely interdisciplinary approach of scholars, but it also avoids being Western-centric. Conspiracy theories belong to the most discussed contemporary issues, as they have been undermining the competency of societies to lead meaningful political debates and find reconciliation. Hence, this book is a must-read for those interested in social cohesion and the potential threats to it." – Nikola Tohma (Karasová)

El Fadl, Khaled Abou. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*. HarperSanFrancisco, 2005. [Link](#).

"This book presents a defence of Islam as peaceful religion in the post-9/11 era shaped by the 'war on terrorism' and Islamophobia." – Nikola Tohma (Karasová)

Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right*. Princeton University Press, 2022. [Link](#).

"This book shows how tomorrow's far-right nationalists are being recruited in surprising places, from college campuses and mixed martial arts gyms to clothing stores, online gaming chat rooms, and YouTube cooking channels."

Mudde, Cas. *The Far Right Today*. Polity Press, 2019. [Link](#).

"A great introduction to the rise and consolidation of far-right forces across the globe and their impact on the democratic system." - Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser

Pandurang, Mala. "Unmapping Maps: Borders, Territories, and the Crisis of Identity." *Crisis, Risks and New Regionalism in Europe. Emergency Diasporas and Borderlands*, edited by Cecile Sandten, Claudia Gualtieri, and Roberto Pedretti, WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, Vol. 8, 2017, pp. 119-133. [Link](#).

"This paper explores how cartographical representations can be manipulated in social media to create a climate of fear and threat, impacting in the long-term communities that are experiencing immigration in large numbers."

Titley, Gavan. *Is Free Speech Racist?* Polity, 2020. [Link](#).

"Despite the provocative title, this is a nuanced examination of how freedom of speech is exploited by those with extremist, pseudoscientific political agendas." - Angela Saini

Democracy

Althusser, Louis. *Machiavelli and Us*. Verso, 1999. [Link](#).

"As Althusser himself writes early in the book, the problem of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, is not the prince himself, but rather it being written from the viewpoint of the people." – Alexander Stagnell

Aristophanes, William-Alan Landes. *The Knights*. Scarecrow Press. 1992. [Link](#). (Fiction)

"Old man Demos is threatened by the flattery and frank speech in Aristophanes' play *The Knights*." – Alexander Stagnell

Canovan, Margaret. *The People*. Polity Press, 2005. [Link](#).

"In this work, Canovan explains why democracy cannot be understood properly without giving attention to the notion of 'the people', a concept that at the same time can be easily appropriated by populist forces." - Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser

Hardt, Michael, and Negri, Antonio. *Commonwealth*. Harvard University Press, 2009. [Link](#).

"The concept of 'the common' is crucial when it comes to the question of social cohesion since its definition determines how we understand shared social practices and the modes of sociality that define our relationships. Hardt and Negri's book is a seminal work in the theoretical and historical study of the commons." – Lea Kuhar

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*. Penguin Classics, 2003. [Link](#).

"In this classic text for modern democracy, Rousseau grapples with the concept of 'the people' and how to understand its potential cohesion or, as he calls it, the general will." - Alexander Stagnell

Wark, McKenzie. *Capital is Dead. Is this Something Worse?* Verso, 2019. [Link](#).

"A remarkably insightful study of the new form of social relations that private big tech companies are creating by turning our everyday actions into a form of information. The struggle for ownership of one's own information is one of the most important areas of contention within the realm of social cohesion." – Lea Kuhar

Gender

Elad-Strenger, Julia, Ben-Shitrit Lihi, and Hirsch-Hoefler, Sivan. "'Pinkwashing' the Radical-Right: Gender and the Mainstreaming of Radical-Right Policies and Actions." *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol 61, Issue 1, 2022, pp. 86-110. [Link](#).

"Does women's visibility in radical-right politics, both institutionalized and non-institutionalized, affect public acceptance of radical-right agendas?"

Hark, Sabine, and Villa, Paula-Irene. *The Future of Difference. Beyond the toxic Entanglement of Racism, Sexism, and Feminism*. Verso, 2020. [Link](#).

"This book explores why there has been a worrying complicity between some feminists and those on the anti-immigration far-right." – Angela Saini

Mole, Richard., Golec de Zavala, Agnieszka, and Ardag, Mahmut Murat. "Homophobia and National Collective Narcissism in populist Poland." *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 61, Issue 1, 2021, pp. 37-70. [Link](#).

"This article shows how right-wing populists in Poland use homophobia as a political tool. It's main finding is that homophobia is more commonly exhibited by those best described as national collective narcissists, rather than nationalists more broadly."

Saini, Angela. *Inferior: How Science got Women Wrong*. Beacon Press, 2017. [Link](#).

"What science has gotten so shamefully wrong about women, and the fight, by both female and male scientists, to rewrite what we thought we knew."

Education

Morrison, Gina Zanolini, Balester, Marcia, Maieran, Andreea, and Valkenburg, Megan Boone. "Bringing Literature to Life: Strategies for Supporting Arab and American Student Success in a First-Year Foundations Course." *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, No 2(3), 2018, pp. 13-30. [Link](#).

"Useful guidelines on how the right kind of narratives can engage students in meaningful conversations which will help them transit to the diverse world of college life and recognise as well as respect diversity." - Mala Pandurang

Palfrey, John. *Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces. Diversity and Free Expression in Education*. MIT Press, 2018. [Link](#).

"The author examines how academics can support both diversity and free expression on campus by 'creating safe spaces and brave spaces' wherein students can explore ideas and express themselves without feeling marginalized." - Mala Pandurang

Sayed, Yusuf, and Badroodien, Azeem. "Teachers and Social Cohesion in the Global South: Expanding the Notion of Education Quality." *Education as Change*, No. 20(3), 2016, pp. 1-14. [Link](#).

"The book describes how educators in the Global South have adopted innovative approaches to promote peace and social acceptance in their respective contexts of social cohesion and social justice." – Mala Pandurang