Individual achievement on the basis of equal opportunity, cross-cutting membership in social groups, a great plurality of voluntary associations and a comparatively high level of civic self-organization have made up the integrative power of the American type of civil society. Talcott Parsons coined the term “societal community” in order to focus on that associational infrastructure, which helps to integrate a society. Its very nature is pluralism of memberships and individualism in the conduct of life. According to Robert K. Merton the pervasive emphasis on individual achievement as a means of social inclusion has always produced a considerable amount of relative exclusion of people who do not achieve as compared to their aspirations and to relevant reference groups. The corresponding strain can be made responsible for two typical tendencies of disintegration characterizing the American societal community: the inclination to compensate for relative exclusion from legitimate achievement with illegitimate forms of achievement and the radicalization of struggles for equal opportunity. This is the reverse side of the strong emphasis on individual achievement on the market instead of collective sharing of collectively produced wealth in a strongly organized and redistributing welfare state. A propensity for comparatively high rates of delinquency, which can only be turned down by high rates of imprisonment—and a propensity for intensive struggles for group rights are the corresponding features of disintegration. Pluralism turns to multiculturalism. Civil society disintegrates into a weakened and internally divided core of the former WASP community and a collection of diasporas. Social structure, interest organization and culture combine to turn attention away from class inequality and toward inequality in terms of race, ethnicity and gender especially. The effect of this constellation is continued marginalization and relative exclusion along class lines and across race, ethnicity and gender in
spite of intensified struggles for equality. These features of disintegration are inherent in the American model of a societal community focusing on individualized inclusion and on civic self-organization and cannot be attributed to the temporary decline of social capital only. Tackling successfully with this kind of disintegration would need a change in the direction of closer cooperation of state authorities with social entrepreneurs and voluntary associations in order to re-vitalize support and guide civic self-organization. It would also call for the re-vitalization of cross-cutting group memberships (Münch 2001: 223–249).

**Transnationalization, Multiculturalism and the Flourishing of Diasporas**

Transnationalization, multiculturalism and the flourishing of diasporas are part of a major change of social integration, away from the nation state model of social integration characterized by strong internal integration and weak external integration. Strong internal integration was based on the following features:

- territorial rule
- centralized bureaucracy
- dominant culture with dominant language
- comprehensive social security of the welfare state and de-commodification of the individual’s living standard
- making the individual’s living standard largely independent of market achievement.

This has been the legitimate nation state model constituted by the increasing establishment of a kind of world polity as coined by John Meyer and his Stanford research group (Meyer et al. 1997). A major element of this model is respecting and providing for equal civil, political and social rights in T.H. Marshall’s (1964) terms. There is an internal dynamics of expanding such rights and a dialectics of producing new problems of inclusion in granting equal rights by building institutions assumed to implement that program. In the transnational context, historically established institutions of social integration and political representation show their exclusionary effects. Most important factors are the configuration of associations making up civil society and political parties organizing political representation. They have exclusionary effects