

## *Original Paper*

# Understanding Immigration Today: The Importance of Religious Literacy on Immigration and Refugee Crisis

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Received: March 26, 2020

Accepted: April 8, 2020

Online Published: April 14, 2020

doi:10.22158/csm.v3n2p79

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/csm.v3n2p79>

### ***Abstract***

*This paper deals with the concept of immigrants and refugees when defining public policy. Public understanding of immigrants and refugees comes from political definitions and from secular and faith-based organizations. Most political definitions regarding immigrants and refugees are found in public policies: opening or closing borders, visa regulations, etc. These definitions include concepts regarding people who are object of the legislation under the mindset of people writing it. Sometimes the legislators don't understand the world vision of immigrants and refugees. And those who respect the law don't always know the mindset and motivations of the legislators. So a sort of common literacy is needed. This literacy is an essential part of this study. The objective of this paper is twofold. First, it aims to identify some of the general areas lacking research to adequately address the Refugee Crisis. Second, it aims to look forward for future research with representatives of key international entities helping immigrants and refugees. Its contents are organized in three parts: outlining the basic understanding of immigrants and refugees as it is found in contemporary academic literature, showing that without common concepts it is hard to reach agreements for social collaboration. making a call to action.*

### ***Keywords***

*immigrants, refugees, religious literacy, faith-based organizations, public policy*

## 1. Introduction

Social collaboration takes place when people know, like and trust others at least at a certain degree. For enhancing social collaboration it is essential to keep up mutual cooperation and mutual understanding between members in a given society.

Political authorities are responsible for enhancing social collaboration. When dealing with immigration they have a twofold challenge for integrating people from different backgrounds into the culture of their new Country. First, with regards to the newcomers it is necessary to bridge somehow two worlds: The one that mobilized people are leaving and the one they are entering into. Second, for the people in the hosting country is necessary to understand their own behaviors with respect to the immigrants and refugees finding a way to not only interact with them, but also for making them flourish. For the citizens in the hosting countries it seems reasonable that being with people who think different may help them to understand better their own ideas, behavior and life style. It is not about changing what they usually do, say and believe, it is about deepening the meaning of it for themselves. And so, the challenge is cultural, but not only.

The Center for International Development (CID) of Harvard University observes that in America there is an immigrant population of around 14 per cent of the total population. And considering only the entrepreneurial population of the United States, the percentage of immigrants raise to 20 per cent. Immigrants influence economic development. This observation is even more noticeable when focusing in specific parts of America. For instance in the Silicon Valley, 46 per cent of the workers were born outside of the United States. Moreover from all people working in that area, only 16 per cent were born in California. This state has around 40 million people, but the Silicon Valley attracts people from the whole world and benefits from that concentration of foreigners (Audrestch, Link, & Walshok, 2015, p. 65).

Public policy is needed for facing these challenges as it can foster social collaboration with immigrants and refugees. People move more easily now from one country to another, or from one region to another within the same country. Currently, people's mobility makes the need for public policies more urgent, because it creates great social concerns: unemployment, lack of housing and education, etc. This concern grows especially when regards people's movement across nations.

Public policies regulating people's mobility across national borders are often built upon economic reasoning: i.e., on the one hand increasing the number of workers might generate lower wages, but on the other hand if immigrants are unskilled workers they could represent higher expenses in social aid. Social research shows that public concern regards mostly cultural issues: immigrants have different beliefs and behaviors, they would not integrate with the local customs, etc. In a word, people's mobility becomes a challenge to "the sense of us" (Alvarez & Hernandez, 2019, p. 7).

In sum, mobility is a challenge for the common good of society. This common good is what Aristotle

already defined as the good of the individual citizen but projected to the whole of the polis. For the philosopher the good of the individual is health for the physical body and justice for the spiritual soul. In the same way society should aim for health and justice for all, reaching the good of all individuals, through public hospitals, the military and prisons. Public policies helping citizens to reach their common good should not only aim to economic goals.

Keeping in mind the holistic good of society in this paper, I will try to integrate both the widely recognized public concern regarding immigrants and refugees that is mostly economic, with the public policies addressing immigrants and refugees, in a twofold way.

First, I will argue that increased religious literacy could help citizens of hosting countries to see the newcomers as citizens like themselves. This because a society recognizing every individual having a dignity rooted in his human nature, regardless of his ethnicity or beliefs, thinks in a “more human” way. This society provides better conditions for the flourishing of its members. This is part of what religious believers try to foster: they attempt to bring people together with the divine, and with each other, without exclusion. Believing in a common Maker, could help people to understand their common nature and common call for being a community. In other words I argue that religious faith can expand our “sense of us”, making societies more socially inclusive.

And second, specifically with regards to people’s mobility, I argue that religious literacy may help citizens of “the global north” to nuance the potential negative view of foreigners moving into their Countries. The name we give others makes a difference. Most of the newcomers are economic immigrants, not refugees, they are workers not burdens, people with potential not with problems.

The conclusions I look forward are, on the one hand, 1) that economic migrants could actually foster economic development in their new nations. Especially when they are seen as someone with equal dignity to local citizens. I argue on the other hand 2) that migrants can develop cultural and human values in the hosting society, bringing in their own skills and increasing social responsibilities that are not measurable in economic terms. Legislation matters, and in this case it is built on concepts embedded in culture and religion. Most of the time we understand immigrants as competitors, or substitutes of our own economic activity. But we should see them as complements of what we already do. Immigrants—and perhaps also refugees—are like sugar and coffee: the more you have of one, the more you need of the other. The more migrants come to a nation, the more talent will bring with them. They are not substitutes of local talent, but additions to it. Religious literacy can help in the definition of immigrants and refugees as complements rather than as substitutes. I will next 1) explain the meaning of religious literacy 2) see how we use it for immigration policies and 3) compare the language of immigration policies to immigration public concern. Finally, in the discussion I aim to stress the differences between them for proposing a common language for public dialogue regarding this humanitarian crisis.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 *The Meaning of Religious Literacy*

Living in a global society is always easier to find people who believe and think in different ways. When entering in contact with religious people from India or Africa, where the sense of the sacred is deeply embedded in society, we could notice a lack of concepts for describing it, so finding a sort of religious illiteracy.

In Western society this illiteracy could lead to confuse religious with irrational behaviors, or spiritual ideals with unreal desires, promoting prejudice and bigotry. On the contrary, better understanding of religion could give people more language and tools to understand others. This understanding—related for instance to immigrants and refugees—is important to create public policies and to communicate to the general audience. Religious literacy is not only necessary for policy makers but also for religious representatives, because they are not experts in every context and might also need updating in specific fields, and because they are not indifferent to the political and economics issues of society. At the end, improving religious literacy is especially important for political authorities and likewise for religious or humanitarian leaders.

#### 2.1.1 Religious Literacy for Public Authorities

Governments need more a language for religions, than answers to religions. This language might require a fundamental optimism for human nature and the capacity to distinguish direct violence from cultural violence. The last limits some people for reaching goods and services necessary for a healthy, meaningful and safe existence. Cultural violence is translated in tacit discrimination based for instance on ethnicity, religion or family traditions. Other forms of cultural violence are discovered when looking historically to situations: The assumption that some people are different to us and that this othering is indefensible was the principle of the Nazis, the slave owners, etc. The answer to cultural violence is grounded on the consideration that embedded norms and assumptions seeming natural, right and inevitable are always constructed, although they are commonly accepted. Discovering the injustice behind this kind of social constructions allowed people to abolish slavery and to end the apartheid.

In the case of cultural violence othering is the root of the problem. And othering is transmitted through embedded norms and assumptions where religion always takes part. Some religious groups in America argued moral legitimacy for slavery by preaching from the pulpits in the United States. But at the same time, abolitionist came out from religious believers, so the influence of religion could also be very positive for society. That is why Christians affirm that “when the individual is not recognized and loved in the person’s dignity as the living image of God (cf. Gen 1:26), the human being is exposed to more humiliating and degrading forms of ‘manipulation’, that most assuredly reduce the individual to a slavery to those who are stronger” (John Paul II, 1988, p. 5).

### 2.1.2 Religious Literacy for Humanitarian Leaders

Humanitarian leaders creating cultural values likewise become a key factor for facing cultural violence. Cultures are shaped by those who could be members of organized religions and relief associations. Looking at social changes, we usually find people who in an act of courage, imagination or faith stepped out of cultural assumptions. Humanitarian leaders have the conviction that personal action matters and that social changes start small—even from a negative point of view—moving later to positions of greater influence. On the contrary, hearing that our actions won't matter is itself a form of cultural violence put in place for maintaining specific social conditions of injustice, and for keeping up with the *status quo*.

The need for a public consideration of religious affairs is usually stressed when social issues arise. For instance, when governments aim to understand terrorism born out of religious fundamentalisms. Terrorist attacks reach different publics, like the US domestic political sphere and the international community. ISIS produces ninety thousand media contents a day and, despite that the United States' Secretary of State or international humanitarian leaders do not have legitimacy in Islam theology, these media content need a public answer (Halverson, Cormann, & Goodall, 2011, p. 100). And the needed answers should avoid fulfilling the narrative of ISIS, giving credit to the terrorists. Religious leaders likewise need to keep the right concepts especially when public language is complex and when the aim is to reach subgroups within large organizations. Not every religious believer is an extremist and not every extremist is a terrorist.

In sum, there are three main reasons why every government should aim to interpret religion correctly:

- 1) In terms of social, political and economic affairs, religions are powerful and consequential. So if part of diplomacy is trying to get social agreements, then religion is part of that because any time the government is involved in religious issues there are dynamics of power in place.
- 2) Religious illiteracy can lead to great harm, because for example it should not be possible to impose democracy to societies, not mattering if people want it or not. The export of religious freedom should not be coercive.
- 3) Religious illiteracy is about educating people so that in terms of public pronouncements the government should never refer to a specific religious group as being better than others.

Religious literacy matters in social issues linked to immigration and refugee's crisis, because the terms immigration, temporal resident and refugee could be mixed and confused in public policy. And understanding what does "mobilization of people" mean for society could help to enhance social inclusion.

### 2.2 Immigration and Refugee's Mobility as a Humanitarian Crisis

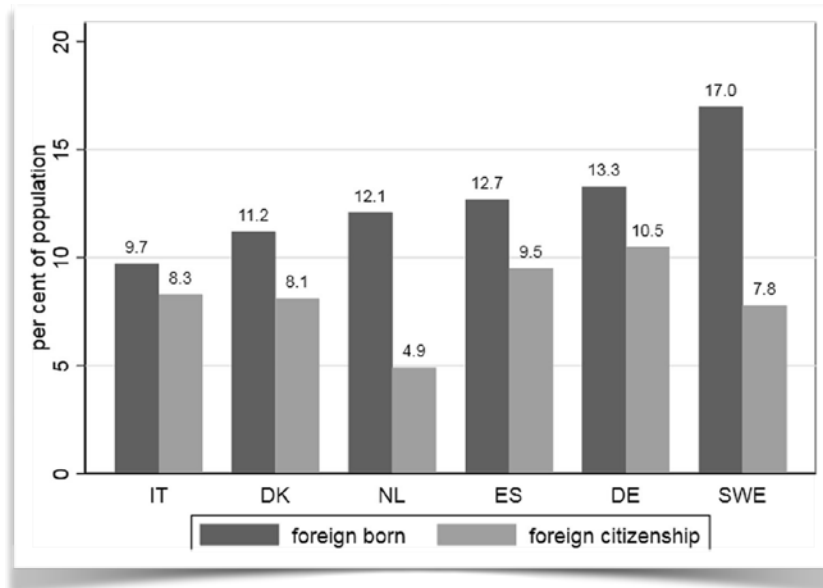
We established a basic argument regarding the importance of religious literacy for defining public policy and for reaching better cultural understanding of others. Next, we would like to make the case

for religious literacy with regards to the immigration and refugee's crisis.

### 2.2.1 Economic Solutions for the Crisis

North America is the region of the world receiving more people from abroad looking for a better life. Recent statistics show that since the year 2000, legal immigrants to the United States number approximately one million annually and 600.000 of them are just a change of status of people who were already living in America. Legal immigrants to the United States now are at their highest level ever, reaching over 37 million legal immigrants. Their arrival does not seem to be translated in economic betterment as “in Canada and the USA, the economic outcomes of immigrants have generally deteriorated over the past 40 years, while in many European countries, which have only recently begun to receive immigrants, immigrants have also had poor economic outcomes” (Warman et al., 2018, p. 54).

Europe presents a similar trend as “according to municipal registers (Padrón Continuo 2000-2016 in Spain and Anagrafe 2000-2016 in Italy), the foreign population increased from 1.12 million to 5.03 million (78% non-European Union [EU]) in Italy, and from 0.92 million to 4.72 million (60% non-EU) in Spain from 2000 to 2016. The share of foreigners (based on citizenship) in the total population rose from 1.8 to 8.3% in Italy and 2.2 to 10.1% in Spain from 2000 to 2016” (Garha & Paparusso, 2018, p. 1). North European countries have received even more immigrants than the south of Europe in the past years. The following figure shows the proportion of immigrants—in percent of the population—in Italy, Denmark, Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Sweden by 1 January 2016:



**Figure 1. Proportion of Immigrants in European Population by Country**

(IT: Italy, DK: Denmark, NL: Netherlands, ES: Spain, DE: Germany, SWE: Sweden)

Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_pop3ctb)

Like in the case of North America, the increase in number of people working in Europe does not guarantee that the new settlers reach a better life in economic terms, actually “more than a third of immigrant households live with less than 50 percent of a country’s median income” (Eugster, 2018, p. 461).

Similar patterns are observed in Asia as immigration would grow along the economic development of China and Thailand. Immigration movements are therefore based on the expectation of economic growth and they produce economic outcomes, “a mass migration into Shanghai doubled its population from 1980 to 2010, so did Manchester from 1811 to 1841: movements that undoubtedly created socioeconomic opportunities for many, and yet they also accentuated inequalities” (Hackl, 2018, p. 150).

Immigration is based on economic aspirations while refugee movement happens due to political problems. Considering the amount of immigrants not reaching social and economic inclusion and the many refugees fleeing their countries in conflict, it is common today to speak about a humanitarian crisis. In the Middle East some nations are not anymore socially sustainable, for example Lebanon has 4.5 million inhabitants and is hosting more than 1.2 million refugees; or Turkey receiving more than 3.5 million refugees keeps in one zone of the country one million refugees (UN Migration Report, 2017; UNICEF Report, 2018). These crisis may not be resolved only on political grounds, they need cultural and religious actions.

#### 2.2.2 Cultural Solutions for the Crisis

Both immigration and refugee movements are global problems to be addressed from economic, political and cultural standpoints. The solution of these crisis at their fundamental level is about reaching social inclusion and integration in the new countries. It requires though to understand human interchange with people coming from different places of the world, being part of different cultures, religions, ethnicity and ideas. And at the same time to understand that they have many valuable things to share with the citizens of the hosting nation. This understanding is not fruit of public policy, because “whilst these macro-level questions are of vital importance, they should not conceal the fact that migration is primarily experienced by individuals on a local level, or where the global factors that shape migration vary according to localized historical experiences and cultural factors” (Castles, 2010, 2012).

So the experience of the individual citizen living in the welcoming society counts a lot and “religious belief plays a key role in motivating many individuals towards social action, including the support of migrants” (Kessler & Arkush, 2008), therefore we argued for adequate concepts in public policies and in public expressions; both based on correct cultural and religious languages. Especially now that some Arabic nations—where Islam is the religion of the majority—are currently welcoming Catholic Filipino workers and now that an important part of the immigration to Europe are Muslims.

Religious literacy is important because sometimes religion could create views of mercy and compassion for mobilized people, as for instance “within the Judeo-Christian tradition, narratives of forced migration are a recurring theme in Scripture and are frequently used as reference points for discussing moral and spiritual challenges” (Artaud, 2018, p. 405). But some other times religion could also build walls and create distances with others.

### *2.3 Immigration and its Economic Outcomes: Problems and Opportunities*

Both human phenomena: economic mobilization as being the principal cause of immigration, and the political crisis leading refugees to flee from their countries has existed for a long time. However, there is something new in the current refugee and immigration crisis. The current mobilization of people is considered by the scientific literature as a new humanitarian crisis for three principal reasons: 1) the rapidity with which it happens, which does not favor social inclusion and integration; 2) the political instability and violence it creates along with prejudices against others and, finally; 3) the issue of economic inequality that it brings about.

#### *2.3.1 Characteristics of the New Crisis*

First of all, in itself immigration is not a recent human phenomenon, what is new about immigration is the volume of people leaving their countries today and the speed with which it takes place. “The combined factors of population growth, ongoing political and economic instability, and the availability of modern communication and transportation technologies have changed the scale and rapidity of human migration. The number of people currently displaced by conflict or persecution throughout the world is at its highest since the Second World War” (Esthimer, 2014, p. 22). The immigration crisis raises debates and discussions in the global north regarding national and cultural identity, where religion usually plays a role in the definition of individuals.

Second, the number of displaced people due to conflicts is also growing, making the possibility of social inclusion and integration more complex. “In general, immigrants who were selected based on their skills and labour demand might have fewer difficulties integrating into the market and society compared to those migrating for humanitarian or personal reasons, for example, refugees and family members” (Eugster, 2018, p. 457).

The third outcome of immigration that literature indicates is economic inequality and it seems to be the greatest concern for some scholars. In general, the economic development of the world is increasing at an accelerated pace. But considering specific social categories the increase benefits more the most wealthy, “since 2015, the richest 1% has owned more wealth than everyone else (Oxfam, 2017); one ninth of the world’s population suffers from hunger (FAO, IFAD, & WFP, 2015), while 65.6 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide (UNHCR, 2017)” (Bojadžijev, 2018, p. 349). Economic gain by some groups is compared to mobility gain by others, making the case that mobilization is linked to poverty.



### 2.3.2 Mobilization and Economic Inequality

The usual argument is that mobilization of people happens much faster and that it is more and more due to war conflicts or poverty, making global inequality worse. For some scholars inequality is a problem even in the global north, “Germany, where the wealthiest 10% of households own at least 63% of all wealth, exhibits the second-highest inequality levels of all Eurozone countries” (Bojadžijev, 2018, p. 349). And these authors stress that “25% of the European population is categorized as at risk of falling below the poverty line, while 50 million already have. The poorest 40% of Europeans own a paltry 1% of total wealth” (Oxfam Deutschland, 2016).

Inequality is a reality because “the world’s nation-states have per capita incomes that range from less than US\$250 per person per year to more than US\$50.000” (Kuptsch, 2015, p. 341), but not every economic inequality is fruit of social injustice. Other scholars therefore argue that the social issue to address in this crisis is not inequality but poverty. And poverty is not increased by immigration, but rather reduced.

What generates wealth is the increase of labor, capital and ideas in terms of new products. Labor and capital require respectively an increase in education and technological investment, but new ideas require specific know-how that can be provided by people from outside. “In an ideal world, migrants would bring home accumulated knowledge, transfer expertise and skills, start businesses, or invest earnings into capacity back home. In a similar vein, temporary migrants may create benefits through “brain circulation” even if they do not return permanently. Ideally, this contributes to an eventual return flow of expertise, knowledge, skills and manpower” (Battistella & Sun Liao, 2013, p. 16).

In any case, the political agenda expressed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations seems to foster a struggle against inequality. Specifically, the United Nation’s global agenda put in place some sustainable development goals correlating mobility and inequality, ignoring the poverty issue. “There is surprising synergy between the SDGs recognition of inequality and mobility’s significance on the one hand, and the evolution of mobility as a core concept of global inequality. This evolution includes the critique of three long-held assumptions about mobility: the idea that there is increasing mobility globally; that mobility is a self-evident phenomenon; and that movement generates positive change and an improvement of oneself” (Salazar & Jayaram, 2016, pp. 2-3).

### 2.3.3 Addressing Mobility Misinterpretations

1) First, some authors show that mobility is not increasing globally precisely because it is a right reserved for the more skilled or wealthy members of society. Several scholars observe that “recent immigration statistics from the EU show that economic integration and equalization mainly happens among countries with a similar Human Development Index (HDI) rather than between the extremes of inequality” (Agafitei & Ivan, 2016), so producing more inequality. “While many from the world’s poorest or conflict-ridden areas are pushed into illegal immigration, selective immigration regimes

facilitate the inclusion of those who are deemed productive” (Hackl, 2018, p. 153).

2) Second, the causes of inequality are not always related to the mobility of people. For example “in Germany, the Paritätischer Gesamtverband’s (2017) annual poverty report admits that the lower middle class has lost 8% of its income over the last 20 years, alongside the 35% of households considered poor (earning 60% of the median) and incomes entailing an hourly wage of between 7.55€ and 15.29€, and thus forced to rely on social security systems” (IAQ, Bosch, & Kalina, 2016, p. 2). What happens on the contrary is that building up the correlation helps some groups to set up public policies that privilege them.

For example with this correlation between immigration and inequality, the government could raise taxes and expand its bureaucracy. Some of these correlations are constructed with figures that regard temporal migrants and refugees who are not actual citizens. Germany’s politics of inclusion gave Angela Merkel the title of Chancellor of the modern world by Time magazine. Her government pushed for repatriation policies of Syrian refugees, arguing that they would be better if going back home. The government made explicit the cultural and social need to go back. But it is also true that each refugee meant an economic burden of 50 euro per month in Germany, but only €50 cents in Syria. In other words, scholars argue that Germany owns a mechanism to mobilize its poverty outside of the Country when it is needed.

3) And the third common assumption that is changing when understanding the correlation between immigration and inequality, is that mobility does not necessarily enhance positive changes and improvement of the self. Scholars evaluate its outcomes either in a positive or in a negative way. “Increased or reduced inequality is one possible outcome of human mobility, as the movement of people often creates or reinforces difference and inequality, as well as blending or erasing such differences” (Hackl, 2018, p. 150).

Within countries mobilization raises new urban planning problems, creating social issues. Also in domestic policy “inequality is one of the driving forces behind mobility: a lack of opportunity pushes people out of rural areas into cities, from where they often move onwards and become international migrants” (Kuptsch, 2015, p. 343). Economic considerations do not fully explain the way forward for good government on immigration and refugee’s issues.

In sum, the narrative of development is very important for establishing social solutions to certain issues. Believing that mobilized people are unskilled would not facilitate their social inclusion, while the truth is that most mobilized people today left their Countries of origin due to their skills, usually going to places where they can earn more, deciding not go back home. Those who stayed at home are usually those who most needed the social support and therefore were not able to leave their homeland in search for better conditions of life. All this creates a dynamic of inequality, because experts move to places where they earn more. While non-experts stay in their own homes where there is not development. So

the situation of the poor countries is that they do not have developers because they are undeveloped but they are undeveloped because developers left. And the situation of the rich countries is that they develop thanks to their own developers and to the developers coming from outside. While the narrative of immigration is that migrants take advantage of their new Countries, actually in many cases migrants give value to their new homelands. To face some of this social issues, it seems important to consider the need for a cultural change regarding people's mobility.

### 3. Cultural Languages for the Mobility of People

As mentioned before, a migrant is someone mobilized for economic reasons, also inside of his homeland. The reasons for mobilization in current economic development are so complex that they do not mean the same for everybody. For instance, economic dynamism in some emerging nations reduces poverty but increases inequality, for instance "the top 1% income share rose from 7% to 22% in India, and 6% to 14% in China between 1980 and 2016" (Hackl, 2018, p. 152). This economic movement leads to further consequences, for the individual and for the political sphere.

1) First of all, an immigrant is not necessarily a poor person today, "immigrants are not a homogenous group but that various forms or types of legal statuses of immigration exist" (Eugster, 2018, p. 453). Public policies look attentively at the language they use to call "an immigrant", so "Sweden does not officially use the terms "immigrants" or "descendants", while some countries do (for example Denmark) and others use terms such as "ethnic minorities" in addition to "immigrants" (UK), "allochthon" (i.e., non-autochthonous) (The Netherlands), or "migration background in Germany" (Andreß-Careja, 2018, p. 5).

Moreover, most of these terms are new as "the concept of mobility has not always been part of the development vocabulary, mostly due to the prominence of migration" (Halck, 2018, p. 152), while it can be positive or negative, inequality is always criticized because is seen as manipulation for the possession of power.

2) If an immigrant is not necessarily a poor person, then the second consideration to add is that inequality in a country should not immediately relate to social conflict and poverty. "This is not to say that people always decide to move for socio-economic reasons, considering forced exiles who have no choice, alongside those who seek freedom and a different life elsewhere without social upward mobility in mind" (Hackl, 2018, p. 151).

Moreover "most discrimination studies show that a foreign sounding name or a darker skin are enough to trigger differential treatment in labor markets no matter how integrated the person might otherwise be" (for an overview see Kahanec & Zimmermann, 2011).

My point is that immigration crisis are mitigated by cultural inclusion. And the last produces as a result economic inclusion. Cultural inclusion calls into action both faith based organizations and secular

projects that play an important role and, are more efficient when working together.

For example, in a parish church in Paris, social action is enacted in a broader framework so there “volunteers refer to their activities as ‘action’ (action), ‘work’ (travail) or ‘volunteering’ (bénévolat), but not as charity (charité). Similarly, they explain that they are committed to or motivated by the values of solidarity (solidarité) or fraternity (fraternité), but never mention charity as a motivation; the same linguistic pattern is heard on behalf of the clergy on the pulpit. Finally, the migrants who receive services are either referred to as ‘les migrants’ (the migrants) or as ‘les accueillis’ (those who are hosted), not as recipients or beneficiaries or clients” (Artaud, 2018, p. 414).

According to Artaud, when volunteers reject the language of charity, this is partly an indication that they view charity as social condescension, a vision of charity that John Paul II describes as a “mentality in which the poor—as individuals and as peoples—are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced” (John Paul II, 1991, p. 28).

The same for the public discourse in general, “speaking of mobility rather than migration integrates social mobility into the wider framework, instead of seeing it as a separate issue” (Hackl, 2018, p. 151). But the political sphere sometimes finds difficult to detach from the economic perspective, at least the United Nations language does not arrive to do it: mobility is only directly addressed by two targets of the sustainable development goals n.10: “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”, and “reduce (...) transaction costs of migrant remittances”.

The humanitarian crisis in place regarding immigration and refugees’ displacement—that results from the speed of global changes and conflicts, generating inequality—needs to get rid of political discourses that appropriate concepts and master narratives about the mobilized people.

This is a cultural change exercise because we need to stop and consider why we think in the way we do about immigrants. “If we take a quick inventory of previously used and familiar concepts that do describe and operationalize immigration societies in the public field: they have either been politically contested if not defeated (such as multiculturalism), or are considered too vague for political purposes —such as diversity—, or belong to a more academic discursive field—such as cosmopolitanism—” (Bojadžijev, 2018, p. 337). In sum, we need a new language for a more effective social inclusion.

#### **4. Discussion: Social Inclusion for Immigrants and Refugees**

Most of the authors considering the situation of immigrants and refugees in the world today, indicate that one way to solve the immigration crisis is to stress the human right to dignified mobility. “This necessarily includes people’s freedom to choose whether or not to move, alongside the establishment of fair regimes that govern mobility in inclusive ways without undermining people’s agency and freedom”

(Hackl, 2018, p. 151). These authors stress that migrants are not competitors against the citizens of their new countries but a significant element for cultural development. But in order to foster social inclusion of migrants and refugees, the authors stand for some elements that we will describe in the following points.

1) Dignified mobility means that migrants should be considered as complements to cultural growth. If immigrants are described as competitors, then the human right to immigrate would not stand in front to the rights of others and so “mobility and immobility thus have an intimate relationship, as the freedom to move for some builds on the unfreedom and immobility of others; the mobility of ‘qualified’ travelers stands vis-à-vis the mobility of ‘unqualified’ travelers” (Abram, Feldman Bianco, Khosravi, Salazar, & de Genova, 2017, p. 132).

2) For dignifying mobility there is a need of public policies using inclusive language that could grant full access to foreigners in a welcoming society. Social inclusion of immigrants can therefore start from overcoming “the post-9/11 ‘paradigm of suspicion’ that classified freedom of movement primarily as a risk” (Shamir, 2005, p. 153). That process usually takes time because “permanent residence comes along with almost unrestricted access to the labour market, education, business, social programs and civil rights, if not necessarily political rights” (Eugster, 2018, p. 456).

3) Religion plays a special role in the social inclusion of migrants and refugees. This is because it leads people to understand others in non-economic terms and builds a mentality for including refugees in society. “Hannah Arendt pointed out in ‘We Refugees’ (Arendt, 1996) that refugees not only symbolize suffering, but also reveal the close proximity in which civilization and barbarism truly find themselves. Refugees can tell stories of the risks of losing everything in an instant, of being thrown into an existence bereft of legal protection and social security. By underscoring the tight interrelations between prosperity and loss and destruction, they hold up a mirror to the still-privileged, exposing their own fatal life strategies and grand delusions” (Bojadžijev, 2018, p. 347).

4) In the case of a humanitarian crisis, poor people and refugees should not wait, they deserve the help of others. The refugee crisis has reached significant levels in Europe, as “fleeing the war in Syria and other global conflict zones, a large number of refugees arrived in Europe in the summer and fall of 2015, of which roughly 1.3 million requested asylum in the European Union and approximately 40% of them in Germany” (Eurostat, 2017). This point is in discussion.

On the one hand some scholars argue that this is not an unprecedented situation as it “hardly exceeded the post-reunification years of the early 1990s, when masses of people fleeing the Yugoslav wars, the first Iraq War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union arrived in Germany” (Bojadžijev, 2018, p. 339).

On the other hand, critics to the idea of a humanitarian crisis would observe that immigration figures represent a stable trend, “438.000 individuals applied for asylum in 1992, 442.000 did so in 2015” (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2016). It seems almost like if “some people are in charge of

mobility, while others some are effectively imprisoned by it” (Massey, 1993, p. 61). Public policy in any case ought to preserve the human right of mobility.

5) To judge about the specific human good that mobility implies it seems important to consider specific human situations. It is not possible to claim an abstract human right for mobility. That right should always depend on the specific situation of those aiming for autonomy and freedom. That because a human right is not only built upon economic growth and development considerations. This duality of mobility as freedom and imprisonment “hints at a key component of mobility equity that is not self-evident: it cannot merely be about having the opportunity to move, but must include the freedom to choose whether or not to move” (Sager, 2006, p. 465).

6) The importance and attraction of economic growth makes that refugees become more a political problem that should only interest the State. This idea puts refugees out of the debates around social mobility and inequality that are mostly built on economic approaches, hiding the dimensions of the current humanitarian crisis due to forced mobility. “65.3 million people were displaced globally at the time of writing, or one person in every 113. To overcome their economically immobile positions” (Hackl, 2018, p. 113), as Paul Collier and Alexander Betts argue, refugees must become autonomous economic agents. So refugees should not become part of a humanitarian problem but an element for development: it is “about restoring people’s autonomy through jobs and education” (Betts & Collier, 2017, p. 10).

Aiming for social inclusion with regards to refugees requires to fight against prejudice, because “the social problems experienced by citizens have existed far longer than the refugees, have nothing to do with refugees, and thus will not disappear should isolationism succeed in keeping refugees out” (Bojadžijev, 2018, p. 347).

The mobility crisis has political consequences that the private sphere faces on subsidiarity—or the international relations on solidarity—when the government does not have the capacity to fix the problem. For example, “in the Gulf States powerful brokerage systems restrict workers’ rights and pressure them into compliance” (Hertog, 2010; Khalaf, AlShehabi, & Hanieh, 2014).

In an effort to combat such disempowering regimes, “international collaboration has recently allowed improved rights and bargaining power in some cases of migrant labour. One example is the cross-border cooperation among trade unions through the Union Network International (UNI) Passport, which allows a unionized migrant to be ‘hosted’ by an UNI-affiliated union in the destination country” (Kuptsch, 2015, p. 347). The passport “offers a number of important benefits that would otherwise remain inaccessible to the migrants, such as information on working conditions and tax regulations, training courses, and legal support” (Hackel, 2018, p. 157).

The International Organization for Migration put forward one important approach that aims to connect policies across national and international levels with the help of norms. “IOM designed a Migration

Governance Index (MGI) that was taken up as part of a list of SDG indicators (UNSDSN, 2015). The MGI builds on the premise that well-governed migration brings profound benefits to receiving and sending countries, while poorly managed migration causes harm and represents missed development opportunities” (Hackel, 2018, p. 159).

7) In sum, not only at the personal level but also at the political level, the solution does not seem to be about measuring quantitatively the number of immigrants. Italy does not enforce immigrants to register creating a risk of under-coverage, but in any case “compared to the risk of under-coverage, over-coverage seems to be the larger problem because there are hardly any incentives for de-registration if individuals leave their place of residence and this risk is especially high for mobile persons such as immigrants” (Careja, 2018, p. 12).

We conclude that having more refugees and immigrants is not a problem in itself. The real issue is that people in welcoming societies do not know how to act with immigrants and refugees. There is moreover the risk of setting up public policies for migrants and refugees designed for them, but neither counting on them nor putting the policies in act through them. Public policies could become more inclusive and so cultural actors—including faith based organizations—would help to overcome marginalization. Then people arriving to the global north will become one among others despite their differences in ethnicity, education and religious backgrounds.

The question at the end is how to establish a social dialogue with others aiming not only to economic development but for resching cultural flourishing as well. According to a good part of the academia, without the active efforts of NGO’s and organized religions, the social inclusion of immigrants and refugees would not be possible in the world today.

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