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Monographic Section

# Social Mobility: Concepts, Policies and Human Rights

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**Abstract.** Although the migration phenomenon is extremely mediated and has been analyzed in countless studies, there are still many ambiguities with regard to conceptualization, the integration of the term in the related field(s) and the development of public policies that would respond to the actual needs triggered by the phenomenon. This study aims at providing conceptual disambiguation, at establishing a historical and epistemic framework and, last but not least, at pointing to a series of anthropological aspects that have been correlated with the evolution of public policies and the respect for individual rights for the past six decades. As a starting point for our study, migration is regarded as a natural historical phenomenon that needs to be accepted and integrated in our contemporary life, as an ingrate component of globalization. Any public policy must be based on the fundamental principle according to which human life stands above anything. Moreover, we have emphasized the need to overcome two profoundly preconceived images of the immigrant that have dominated the collective imaginary for a long time: the intruder/invader and the slave.

Keywords: migration, social mobility, migration-related policies, GCM, UDHR.

# INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that migration is an ancient phenomenon and despite the diversity of the fields involved in its analysis, there are still many directions where ambiguities prevail, i.e. terminology, policies, individual and collective rights, etc. As far as terminology is concerned, the ambiguities result from the diversity of the fields involved (history, sociology, geography, economics, psychology, cultural anthropology, philosophy, ethics, political sciences) which establish meanings according to their own paradigm and the various historical phenomena representing migration (migration, refugees, deportations, colonization, invasions, expansions, and the like). Reaching a unified perspective in which the sense and meaning of this term would be coherent and completed by a detailed classification of migration is still a mere desiderate (Morrison *et alii* 2004: 493; Bilsborrow 2016: 111).

One of the main reasons behind the lack of coherence in public policies is the close connection between public image and prime time news. An effect of democracy is the influence of the impact of image upon the elaboration and implementation of public policies, including those related to migration. A close monitoring of the impact of image through the analysis of the press (e.g. King and Wood 2001; Breen *et alii* 2006; Boomgaarden and Vliegen-thart 2007; Bos *et alii* 2011; Chin 2016), public opinion (e.g. Akkerman and Bakker 2011; Aalberg *et alii* 2012) and the correlation between the two (Harteveld *et alii* 2018) represent topics prone to scientific analysis that provide significant data regarding the public perception. These topics should generate coherence in the implementation of the policies regarding migration. Yet, as it naturally happens, the topics only provide an analysis of the situation rather than strategic plans or projects. They are subject to the political environment, where "votes matter" and any attempt to escape the 'old voters vs. new voters' dilemma (Earnest 2008) is based on instinct or individual strategies. After all, how can one make the best political decisions when migration and the integration of immigrants is one of the top three political topics with a negative impact (Esser *et alii* 2017)?

However, when faced with great political challenges, where do the individual and his/her individual rights stand? This is quite a prolific topic, since 'migration' is an umbrella term that includes all types of population translocations. We should mention here the most aggressive forms of migration, namely the involuntary one, represented by deportations and refugees (e.g. Joly 1996; Sassoon 2009; Panayi and Virdee 2011; Davidson 2015; Fingerle and Wink 2020). The living conditions of those people and what a human life is worth in these circumstances are realities that no one should feel comfortable with. However, even in the case of voluntary migration, there are aspects related to human rights that should not be neglected (Boswell 2003; Odmalm 2005; Aas and Bosworth 2013).

Caught in between the economic and political effects and depending on geographical analysis, research on migration often disregards the most important element: the person. The individual should be at the very core of these analyses that must aim at identifying solutions in order to provide normal, decent living conditions, as well as at identifying the trauma and inspiring policies that could help people overcome it. Moreover, it is, to say the least, morally questionable to sacrifice one person for the well-being of thousands of other people (self-sacrifice does not make the subject of this discussion). How morally inappropriate is then to sacrifice thousands of people for the well-being of a single individual (for instance when it comes to re-electing someone)? The first step to be taken is to depoliticize (Pécoud 2015) the strategies regarding migration and to identify trans-national solutions to prioritize the human being/the person.

### THE MAJOR PREREQUISITE: MIGRATION AS HISTORICAL NORMALITY

In order to be able to analyze migration coherently we should consider it outside this extraordinary, fabulous or spectacular perspective and focus on the main prerequisite: migration is a natural, global phenomenon, associated with humankind from the very beginning. We are entitled to state, as long as terminology allows it, that "social mobility" is a human characteristic, while sedentary life represents just a relativization of movement in relation to time ("breaks" in the dynamics of the population), to space (distance is small in comparison to the possibility of movement) or number/quantity (the number of those in dynamics is apparently small). We shall support this perspective with a few examples. When the reference system is time, the perspective for analysis is a historical one. According to the hypothesis on the sole origin of the modern man, the Earth (Bellwood 2013; Fisher 2014) was populated following several migration waves that occurred throughout history. For this very reason, Bellwo-od's opening statements could be regarded as an axiom for the study of the history of migration:

[a]ll of us alive today owe our very existences to the many layers of migration undertaken by our remote ancestors, going back far into time, even beyond the rise of humanity itself to the prehuman beginnings of life on earth (2013: XIV).

This image inspired from the methodology specific to archaeology can be successfully transferred to a historical map of migration in which waves of immigrants come one after the other. In this context, the perspective in the relation space-time is shifted, as time (the when) gains priority in the detriment of location (the where). The main prerequisite is that our ancestors once immigrated in the place where we are now living. The native-immigrant dichotomy is regarded in relation to the duality 'then' and 'now', as reference points of a temporal axis that begins, depending on the area, tens or hundreds of thousands of years ago. In the case of the referential space, the relativization of the movement is made according to the man's ability to move and the average distance travelled. Throughout history the normal travel distance has been variable. For instance, whereas until the seventh decade of the last century in Europe the movement of the population from the rural to the urban area was an important issue, today it has passed into the background being dominated by cross-border or transcontinental migration. The effect of globalization that has reduced the time required for communication or travel has also led to a rethinking of migration as a planetary phenomenon (Friedman and Randeria 2004; Chin 2016). Global flows are in a continuous dynamic, varying according to multiple parameters, the most important of which are economic and identity related.

From a quantitative viewpoint, at the empirical level, one can note the close connection between the number of immigrants and the impact of the image that they provide in the public space. Romanian migration until the 1990s did not represent a phenomenon, although quite a significant number of people (thousands) had managed to 'escape' the communist camp. It becomes an important phenomenon only after the year 2000, when the number of immigrants reaches a few millions.

A second argument in favor of the normality of migration is of an anthropological-historical nature. There is a sense of permanence related to the freedom of movement and any constraint of such freedom has been regarded as a violation of one's rights, as a power of dominance and oppressing factor. A few such examples are the slaves' attachment to their masters, the serfs' attachment to the land, ghettos (medieval or modern), the cessation of free movement during the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In the same manner, forced migration represents a limitation of individual rights, restricting the right to free movement.

Starting from the considerations above, we consider that any analysis of the phenomenon must start from its normality and should be centered around the individual rather than around the martial dichotomy 'I (the local) – the other (the immigrant)'. This perspective should prevail not only in the definition, delimitation, and research of the phenomenon, but also in the development of public policies on migration.

### A CONCEPT: SOCIAL MOBILITY OR MIGRATION

The ambiguity of the term 'migration' does not result from the complexity of the phenomenon. The International Organization for Migration begins its World Migration Report 2018 with the following statements:

International migration is a complex phenomenon that touches on a multiplicity of economic, social and security aspects affecting our daily lives in an increasingly interconnected world. Migration is a term that encompasses a wide variety of movements and situations involving people of all walks of life and backgrounds. More than ever before, migration touches all States and people in an era of deepening globalization. Migration is intertwined with geopolitics, trade and cultural exchange, and provides opportunities for States, businesses and communities to benefit enormously. (IOM 2017: 1)

The degree of complexity resulting from the elements enumerated above should be multiplied by the time factor (historical), since migration has been a fundamental phenomenon from the beginning of humankind. In this context, the term as such corresponds to a great range of various realities, perceptions and interpretations. However, this is by no means a vague or abstract term. On the contrary, it is a precise, actual term, with a well-defined extension. Yet, the degree of complexity of the extension/referential is to be found in the difficulty in defining the term, reflected by definitions that are usually too wide (IOM 2017: 1) or too narrow (Bilsborrow 2016: 111). The identification of such a general stipulative definition in which the first relevant term and the specific difference would be clearly emphasized is still just a desiderate.

We shall attempt to sketch such a definition. Our main starting point is mobility, movement. Since mobility is not an attribute that defines people only, the term migration is also used with a denotative variation: e.g., chemical components or geological structures (gas, oil), plants, animals, people. In this context, the universe of the discourse should be brought back to the topic of the human being, as the referential of social mobility. To conclude, the first most relevant definition term (genus) for human migration is social mobility. The only issue left for debate is whether the two terms are equivalent (have the same sphere of meaning) or we can identify a specific difference through which the sphere of the notion of 'migration' could be restrained. Such an attempt is provided by Bilsborrow, yet, as we have already mentioned, the definition is too narrow:

[t]hus, migration is generally defined by demographers as spatial movement of a person which requires two things: (1) a change in the place of usual residence, which also involves (2) crossing a recognized political/administrative border. (2016: 111)

This definition is too narrow because, as it actually specifies, it is limited to the demographic component, eliminating thus a very important component of historical migration, where no political or administrative borders were involved. Entry (1), in different versions, is the common element for most of the definitions (Cambridge Dictionary; Longman Exams Dictionary; Merriam-Webster Dictionary). However, in this case the definition would be too wide, as it would encompass in its extension some realities that do not actually overlap with the idea of migration, such as changing one's housing in the same locality or short-term vacations. This is the reason for which the explanation is completed with other elements: entry (2) in the above definition, "usually in large numbers" (Cambridge Dictionary), "from one country, place, or locality to another" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary), "when large number of people go to live in another area or country, especially in order to find work" (Longman Exams Dictionary), and "to a new country or area in order to find work or better living conditions" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). All these definitions point to certain characteristics of migration, yet none is completely adequate, as most of them are too narrow.

Starting from the observations detailed above, we shall attempt to construct an adequate definition. To this end we shall start from the three elements mentioned in the previous chapter: time (historical), space (distance) and the number of people. There are many other elements that can be correlated with migration, but which are specific to a certain type of migration alone. To conclude, we can define human migration as a historical phenomenon occurring from the very beginning of mankind, represented by the mobility on a significant distance (hundreds or thousands of kilometers, sufficient for creating a rupture from the initial place of emigration) of a group of people, either compact or disparate, who establish a new residence for a medium or long period of time (starting from a few months).

Even if this stipulative definition is adequate, in order to provide clarifications, it ought to be completed with examples that should become elements of an ostensive definition. For this purpose, the best solution would be a broad classification that would include, as much as possible, all categories and types of migration. Of the many classifications and definitions of various types of migration, the most extensive one we were able to identify was the scholastic classification provided by Fabio Baggio (2016). We have used it to draft the following table, completing or emphasizing certain categories or typologies, wherever we felt it was necessary. For these additions and clarifications we have used either complementary documents or punctual definitions (Bilsborrow 2016: 111; Triandafyllidou 2013: 12).

Criterion	Class	Type/description
Geographical	Internal	rural-urban, interurban, urban-rural, interrural, nomadism, transhumance, intermunicipal, interprovincial, interregional.
	International	transoceanic, transcontinental, border, neighbour, regional.
Relation to the country	Emigration	Refers to the people who leave the country.
	Immigration	Refers to the people who arrive in the country.
	Transit migration	Refers to the people who stay in a country for a certain period in order to reach another final destination.
	Circular/cyclic migration	Refers to the people who emigrate for a definite period of time, subsequently returning on a regular basis to the same place.
	Return or re- migrate	Refers to the people who have returned to their home country.
Chronological	Temporary	contract, seasonal, pendular.
	Permanent	Refers to the people who settle for good in a new location (country, region, locality) that adopts them.
	Undetermined	Refers to the people who do not know the period for which they will remain in the new location, motivated by an unsafe social-political or economic con- text.
Demographical	Number of people	individual, family, massive migration.
	Gender	male, female.
	Age	child, adult, elderly.
	Generational	first generation, second generation, third generation etc.
	Analysis	migration flow (number of migrants into a period of time), migration stock (number of foreigners), migrant population (number of foreigners and descendents), migrants human-power (migrants of working age).
Economical (labour)	Employment field	rural worker, industrial worker, service worker etc.
	Employment skilled	highly skilled, skilled, unskilled, brain drain, technology migration.
	Employment dependency	independent or autonomous work, dependent or subordinate work.
Political and legal	Boarder policy	free migration, managed migration, illegal.
	Rules	regular or authorized migration, irregular or unauthorized migration (ille-gal).
	Juridical Status	registered and non-registered migrants
Reason	Voluntary / Spon- taneous migration / Choose migra- tion	labour migration, health migration, study migration, long term tourism, pil- grimage, business, retired migration etc.
	Involuntary (World Economic Forum) / Forced migration	Reluctant (displaced person) / impelled / imposed, refugee, asylum, exile, deported etc.

## POLICIES REGARDING MIGRATION IN RELATION WITH PUBLIC IMAGE

The appropriate conceptual development of a phenomenon does not represent a purpose in itself. It must be supported by the development of clear-cut policies that would overcome the limitations imposed by preconceived ideas, unconscious fears or the negative exaggeration contained in public images. As far as migration is concerned, there are two profound images, deeply carved by facts throughout history and which fuel unconscious fears, dominating public image as a leitmotif: the immigrant as an invader and the immigrant as a slave. However, the most important image is missing, namely the one that should be acknowledged in a rational manner and that could solve many of the conflicting issues: the immigrant as a human being, as our equal. Even though the two profound images are apparently obsolete, from an anthropological viewpoint they are still dominant, often determining incoherent behaviors that lead to the idea of a double political standard – the protection of human rights vs. the protection of the well-being of one's own citizens, which more than often is just a superficial façade concealing the desire to win the elections. Only by becoming aware of these aspects and by overcoming these obstacles we can solve the issues of general politics.

The image of the invader immigrant, with its derived less aggressive form of the intruder immigrant, is founded on multiple historical contexts: the period of the great migrations, the Viking and the Mongolian migrations, colonization etc. It is currently manifested by attitudes involving the rejection of the immigrant and the development of a defensive system and an instinctive, gregarious lack of tolerance. Thus, as Friedman and Randeria noted, issues making the subject of public debates fully reflect this problematic image:

[t]hroughout Europe there has been an explosive increase in debates concerning the 'immigrant problem', 'fortress Europe', cultural racism, skinheads, transnational crime and the like (2004: XIII).

This image is rooted in the fact that their arrival was unwanted and, in the fears caused by potential aggressions, by the fact that they were likely to take away things (both material and immaterial) that did not belong to them and could force their own foreign traditions and culture upon the locals. These fears also trigger political attitudes according to the principles of defense against an invader by adopting centripetal defensive strategies with a first line established according to the Roman limes (e.g. the outer borders of the European Union). 'Fortress Europe' has outposts (Turkey, the Northern part of Africa), a first defensive line (the outer borders of the European Union), an intermediary area, the EU countries outside the Schengen space and the refugee camps along the borders of the Schengen space, a second defensive line in the East and South-East (the borders of the Schengen space) and inner citadels (countries that keep their national borders, either potential or de facto).

In this context, the relationship with the immigrants derives from the fact that they are unwanted. Being unwanted, the differences between them and the locals are regarded through the lens of negativity, becoming thus a reason of incompatibility. There are consequently two ways in which the immigrant can relate to the new community: marginalization and assimilation, both with negative effects. In the case of marginalization, the immigrant preserves a significant part of his/her own culture, but opposite sides are created, the differences become even more visible and result in mutual intolerance with negative effects at the social level. France provides an emblematic example in this respect (Aissaoui 2009; Bass 2014), as a significant number of immigrants coming from the former French colonies failed to be integrated, even after more than half a century after they arrived in their adoptive country, although they speak French.

On the other hand, more than often, despite being regarded as a positive phenomenon, assimilation achieved by acculturation results in important identity and cultural loss. Following this process, the immigrant is lost among the locals, in an attempt to consciously become invisible in order to avoid discrimination. Even if anatomical elements, such as the color of one's skin, specific traits, and the like, cannot be eliminated through assimilation, the assimilation of the cultural elements aims at assimilating that individual into the local masses.

The second archetypal image, namely that of the slave immigrant, has been consolidated by multiple historical sources. From the ancient times, slaves were foreigners, and the slave trade that lasted up to the beginning of the 19th century consolidated such an image. The analysis on immigrants from the perspective of the "production factors", their being offered work that was usually refused or unwanted by the locals, the fact that they were paid below the standards of the region, the seasonal workers receiving accommodation in rudimentary conditions are elements that contribute to the image of modern slavery, tolerated, or even supported by the authorities. To exemplify these aspects, we have chosen an introductory text on economic analysis belonging to Constant and Zimmermann that points to these issues still associated with the image of the slave immigrant and the invader immigrant. The key terms that emphasize the two images are underlined:

Migration as 'factor mobility' and migrants as a 'factor of production' are of paramount importance in economics. The different skills and education that are embodied in immigrants, while valuable in the production process, may not be appreciated by all members of the host country. In addition, migrants as human beings are an integral part of the human development in a society and a country. Yet, resistance to the spreading of diversity and concerns about the growth of the immigrant population from several groups make immigrants feel unwanted. The imbroglio of migration touches and raises problems in the social, economic, political, cultural and religious spheres not only domestically, but also internationally. Migration scholars, pundits and policymakers alike are deeply divided over the responsibilities and the best concepts for analyzing or solving the issue of international migration. The issue of how immigrants fare in the host country especially in terms of their labor force participation and remuneration occupies the minds of social scientists, politicians and the general public. (Constant and Zimmermann 2013: 13)

The public discourse, the elaboration of policies and, last but not least, scientific research (which should not only provide answers to these issues but should formulate these issues accurately) are dominated by the two archetypal images. Political discourse tends to exacerbate them, taking advantage of the public impact these issues produce when reactivated (Norris and Inglehart 2019). The policies adopted in the past years by the French president Sarkozy and the US president Trump, as well as the BREXIT were representative in this respect. All these electoral effects are backed up by public policies with a negative impact upon the immigrants' free movement and individual rights.

By pointing to the issue of individual rights, we came to the main issue that transpires beyond the archetypal images described above: the immigrant as a human being. Even though the issue of individual freedom has been analyzed from a philosophical perspective since Antiquity, there have always been people for whom those rights did not apply. The arguments justifying these perspectives ranged from the most ridiculous to the best supported.

Returning to our contemporary world and the issue under discussion, we should note that the 1940s raised important questions with regard to human rights, the mobility of the population included. Refugees, deportees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, and the like were people who faced incredible suffering, the numbers of lives lost in the process being impossible to quantify. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted in this context, in order to synthesize human rights at a global level and establish a coherent relationship between the state and the individual rights. Ratified after the end of The Second World War, on the 10th of December 1948 as an answer to the horrors caused by the war, the Declaration was intended as a milestone. Unfortunately, it has failed to turn into a juridical imperative and it remained just a moral recommendation, a model to follow. Even though nowadays its regulations play an important part in national legislations, there are also many relative elements when it comes to the implementation of these regulations. As far as the free movement issue is concerned, the following issues are stipulated:

Article 6. Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. Article 13. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. Article 14. (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. (UDHR)

From the very beginning we should point to the fact that, in the context of supporting national states, free movement (understood as residence) is limited to "within the borders of each state." The two paragraphs in article 13 separate free movement from one's right to choose his/her residence. Moreover, article 14, paragraph 1 differentiates between the two types of migration, namely the voluntary and the forced migration. Forced migration

continues to hold a special status. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was approved in 1951, being completed in 1967 with the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The later establishes the refugees' rights and serves as a guide for the states receiving refugees.

However, voluntary migration, which is in many cases as imperative as forced migration, has never been regulated at the UN level and thus each country has the freedom to establish its own policies regarding migration. This approach resulted in regulations that basically transformed a person in search of a better life into an 'illegal' immigrant (Bacon 2008; Dauvergne 2008). Legislation varied from one country to the other and from one political context to another, with instances of maximum pressure and abuse against the immigrants, as it happened in France with the Sarkozy law (Thomas 2013).

Only after more than 60 years from the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) was adopted in December 2018. Even though GCM aims at regulating the immigrant's status, the conflict between the protection of the nation vs. the immigrant is still an issue, since the immigrant continues to be perceived as an intruder or invader. The nation state, which in the context of globalization should address new issues related to the relationship with the foreigners, keeps its prerogatives regarding the protection against outsiders. This relationship of opposition between my nation and other nations had deep political connotations, resulting, as it has already happened so many times, in the loss of fundamental ideas related to human rights.

The main idea of GCM is for the state to surpass itself, while the human beings remain a purpose in themselves (a Kantian perspective), regardless of the decisions of each individual state, whereas in the relationship with the immigrants' human rights should by no means be disregarded. This is why, as we may note, the regulations are centered upon the person, in order to reduce abuse and aggression against the immigrants. This can only be done by giving up preconceived ideas, the abuse of power and the practices that place personal profit (either personal or of the state) above human life. Yet, the most difficult task remains the attempt to eliminate the archetypal preconceived ideas dominating the collective imaginary: the intruder/invader immigrant and the slave immigrant.

Several recommendations included in the GCM aim at eradicating these two images. As far as the intruder/ invader immigrant is concerned, the focus is on changing the public image and establishing a positive relationship with the immigrant: "Objectives: (13) Use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives; (14) Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle; (15) Provide access to basic services for migrants; (16) Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion; (17) Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration." (GCM)

The eradication of the image depicting the immigrant as a slave must be achieved by means of direct actions with outcomes in the fields of economics and social services: "Objectives: (10) Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration; (18) Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences; (19) Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries; (20) Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants" (GCM).

Despite having its imperfections, GCM represents a huge step ahead in reconsidering the position of the immigrant and acknowledging the immigrant as a human being. Even if national policies are dominant, they are currently regulated internationally, with directions to follow clearly specified. Its efficiency is to be proven in the course of time, depending on the way in which states relate at a global level.

#### INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS. VERDICT: MURDER... WHO IS THE CULPRIT?

No sensible person, when faced with the mass-media images, can avoid questions such as: How many people have died in search of a better life? Why did those people have to die? In the past hundred years we have witnessed, without a doubt, more genocides caused by forced migration (transportation in inhuman conditions, destinations

where living was hardly possible, such as Siberia etc.) Yet, in the past thirty years the general feeling was that these situations could not be repeated. However, we see hundreds of people dying and thousands living in unthinkable conditions. The crime verdict is beyond debate, yet finding the culprit is still an enigma. Furthermore, unless clear regulations are implemented with regard to the immigrants' rights, each of the factors involved becomes an accomplice to each 'crime'.

In this context, all theoretical delimitations, analyses and scientific studies must have a palpable outcome, raising these issues accurately and tracing directions to follow, with the ultimate aim of eradicating death and suffering from this natural process called migration.

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