"FACILITATING MOBILITY" TO TRANSFORM THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON MIGRATION

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Migration is a complex phenomenon. Basically, it is as complex as life itself. It is estimated that there are about one billion migrants on earth: more than 250 million international migrants and more than 750 million internal migrants. Each has a unique history and a specific trajectory. The reasons for migrating, in any sense, are as diverse as individuals. People in similar circumstances will make different choices.

For a long time, migration was considered a transitory phenomenon, between two "normal" situations of sedentary life. However, it is much more accurate to consider the human species as a migratory animal species. Mobility is the norm: our species was born in Africa probably 300,000 years ago and has conquered the planet, settling only in the last 10,000 years. Sedentariness is considered a mark of civilization, but we often do not recognize that sedentariness is generational and that grandchildren rarely live in the birthplace of their four grandparents.

The complexity of migration and the difficulty of understanding a transitory phenomenon mean that we have very little precise data on migrants, and particularly on international migrants. The sociology of migratory movements is still poorly studied, unlike the sociology of the integration of new citizens. National statistical systems record little information on people who are not theoretically part of the social group. Security intelligence systems, on the other hand, have, for the past 30 years or so, been recording and exchanging a lot of very specific data on these foreigners, who are increasingly considered to be potentially dangerous.

Moreover, migration policies, unlike most public policies, are not designed to better serve the populations they primarily target. Indeed, they are generally made by non-migrants (politicians) and addressed to non-migrants (voters), without generally consulting migrants. All in all, they are made in the same way that men used to adopt policies on women, or heterosexuals adopted policies on gays and lesbians, or Caucasians adopted policies on Aboriginal people. All these policies were — and often still are — based on myths, stereotypes, fantasies and threats constructed by racist, sexist or homophobic exclusion speeches.

It was only when these "minorities," using the strength of their citizenship and vote, decided to actively participate in public debates to contradict fears and stereotypes, to explain the complexity of their situation and the diversity they represent, and to infuse a dose of realism into the political discussion, that politicians began to listen, modify their language, avoid stereotypes, in short, to court their vote. A sexist or homophobic joke is now a dark spot on a politician's career path. This is not yet the case for stereotypical anti-immigration discourse.

Migrants — and especially migrants with precarious status, such as irregular migrants or temporary single-employer

migrant workers — generally do not participate in public debates, protest little, rarely contest in court, do not join unions. The constant fear of being sent back to their country of origin leads them to silence. Many have migrated to provide a future for their families: they have many people relying on them. Many have incurred debts to finance the migration journey: these must be repaid, sometimes over several years, before sending a penny to the family. Any action that could jeopardize the migration project is unthinkable: bending your back and making yourself invisible is a survival strategy.

It is therefore not surprising that data on their condition are so rare and inaccurate. In most countries, the number of irregular migrants is not known. This is a comfortable situation for the Minister of Immigration, who cannot be blamed for the increase or decrease in this number. Indeed, if we had an accurate count, we would know the names of the millions of employers who, in all the countries of the Global North, too often exploit them illegally: attacking these employers on a massive scale would seriously undermine the competitiveness of many non-relocatable economic sectors — such as agriculture, construction, mining, hotels and restaurants, fisheries and healthcare — which have often only survived for the last thirty years thanks to the comparative advantage of reducing labour costs offered by the exploitation of cheap labour.

We will at some point have to end up considering migrants as "citizens," people who, whatever their status, live here, pay taxes, raise families, and are therefore part of society, even if they are not yet "citizens" with our nationality. Some cities have begun to do so, such as New York, which offers identity cards to "all New Yorkers." It may also be necessary to consider giving them the right to vote after one year of effective residence. "No taxation without representation," said the American revolutionaries. Migrants live here sustainably, pay taxes and contribute to society like all other citizens: they should have a say in the exercise of power and public finances.

This will require the development of migrant empowerment that allows them to speak out publicly without fear. Illegal labour markets will have to be significantly reduced by targeting exploitative employers — attacking migrants themselves drives them even deeper into hiding and increases their vulnerability to all criminal exploitation — and by instituting massive regularization programmes, so as to ensure that almost all foreigners have legal status with real legal guarantees.

Action will be needed to ensure that migrants participate in public debates without fear of losing their status. Their experience will have to infuse migration policies. These must be based on specific factual data and not on unfounded fears. Only then will we have the capacity to concurrently develop information systems on these migrants that can serve as a basis for public policy debates.

Apart from the right to vote, this is what the *Global Compact on Migration*, adopted in December 2018 in Marrakesh, invites us to do. "Facilitating mobility" over the coming decades is the central message of the Pact: through a collective effort of international cooperation, making mobility less complex, less costly, faster and less dangerous for the vast majority. Offer travel documents to all those who are looking for work and are willing to travel: offer them work permits if they find a job. Offer places for refugees. Treat them in almost every respect as citizens. Enable everyone to make real choices about their future, which is one of the essential components of dignity and implements the Kantian categorical imperative never to "treat others only as a means, but always also as an end."