

Foreword

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Migration – population movement whereby one or more people move geographically more or less permanently – is not a new phenomenon. For thousands and thousands of years, people have moved from one country to another or changed city, region or even continent for various reasons: forced to do so by climate change, for reasons to do with the search for food, to flee wars, civil strife or persecution, to find a safer place to live or work, and so on. These days, we tend to think there are more migratory processes than before and that, as a result of globalisation, there are now many more displaced persons. History shows us, however, that there has always been migration (both of ‘who goes’ and ‘who comes’) and that, if anything, what is changing is the our conception of them. For example, during the first two decades of the 20th century, migratory movements were perceived very differently and in a more ‘natural’ or ‘justified’ way than now, given that, among other reasons, the passport – the formal and administrative requirement that accredits us as a migrant – is a post-1918 invention motivated by the enormous population movements caused by the First World War.

The conception we have of this phenomenon today, however, is substantially different and, unfortunately, much more negative. We associate migration, above all, immigration (people ‘who come’) with people trying to gain access to ‘our country’ for economic needs. Accordingly, administrative constraints, such as the passport, and legal regulations, such as the European reception regulations, seem more ‘normal’ to us, because the prevailing logic dictates that ‘there isn’t enough room for us all here’. But we forget that there are currently over 2.5 million Spanish people living abroad (more than half of whom are aged between 20 and 34) and that in 2017 alone, nearly 80,000 had to emigrate in search of a (better) future. The situation is the same but viewed from a double and contradictory standard.

In short, both public opinion and legal, national and international directives increasingly tend to blame migrants for their (bad) luck and consequently demand they demonstrate their vulnerability to assess whether they are worthy of our respect for their rights, such as freedom of movement, for example. However, satisfying this procedure is not usually enough for regularising the situation of newcomers who, in the vast majority of cases, and living badly ‘from procedure to procedure’, end up expanding the list of the most vulnerable and excluded groups in our societies. To put an end to this situation, in May 2020, various citizen initiatives were made public around Europe calling for the extraordinary regularisation of all those people in European territory who were in an irregular situation from an administrative point of view.

In the case of the Spanish State, the campaign ‘Regularisation now’ rallied up to 900 organisations and other entities of all kinds around the demand for giving work and residence permits to the nearly 600,000 people who it is estimated are living in a situation of administrative irregularity in

our country. Among other arguments, this campaign denounced the fact that, during the pandemic, a large part of the essential and necessary tasks for sustaining our society were being done by people of various origins who, paradoxically and unfairly, found themselves in a situation of extreme exclusion and vulnerability because of their administrative situation.

Despite the repeated use of slogans such as 'Let no one be left behind', the inequalities and injustices caused by the migratory control system were there to be seen from the first days of lockdown at the start of March 2020. Official registered unemployment is the problem everybody talks about but the real drama does not even appear in daily newspapers. The halt to the informal economy, the abuses to which a large part of the migrant workers working in it are subjected to and their consequent lack of legal, economic and labour rights was the first, and most dramatic symptom of the unequal impact that the new crisis has had on thousands and thousands of people. The Covid-19 pandemic and the drastic social and economic measures adopted to contain it have helped to make it more obvious than ever that there are people walking the streets who are afraid of being stopped by the police simply because of their physical appearance, who lack full health cover, who cannot benefit from a temporary lay-off or who have no right to continue receiving part of their wages in 'black' (undeclared) money, who cannot aspire to any social protection because administratively they do not exist, who cannot vote, who have not access to decent housing, and so on.

These and other problems associated with migration are clear above all in the urban environment, i.e. where the system's contradictions and their consequences materialise and take a more explicit and experiential shape. Thus, migration, and the social, economic and political context in which it takes place, have a decisive influence on the social reality of cities. In fact, they help to give shape to them and make them as they are. That is why we felt it was more than necessary to devote this issue of *Barcelona Societat* to the question of migration and to the many expressions it takes in the city framework. In other words, to think of migration and migratory processes from the city and in the city. In that regard, and given that it is a very topical and important question, we felt it was necessary first of all to approach it from a broad perspective, the so-called *refugee crisis* and the framework that the various European and Spanish regulations impose on cities when it comes to managing the arrival of refugees and migrants. The Mediterranean has become a graveyard to which European law and geostrategic balances do nothing but send more and more corpses. We also wanted to analyse how both the financial crisis and the current crisis caused by Covid-19 impact on migratory movements and residential patterns in our city which attracts many people but at the same time expels people to other places. Likewise, and looking beyond the present crisis, we also wanted to focus especially on the situation of migrant women who work in the domestic sphere, both their living conditions and the reality of their social and work situation, given that this is one of the most vulnerable groups in the city and, consequently, a good indicator for understanding the reality of immigration and how the public authorities respond to it. We also believe that it is important to ask ourselves about the situation of unaccompanied foreign minors as they are becoming the target of hate speech and one of the topics that most attracts the attention of the press and of populist forces. For that reason, it is important we analyse the phenomenon of minors in our city calmly, serenely and thoroughly. In the same vein, we did not want to forget the question of the foreign national internment centres (CIE in Spanish and Catalan) which unfortunately deprive a good number of Barcelona's inhabitants of their liberty and violate their most basic rights. We also believed it was interesting to analyse how local associations and residents in general view the phenomenon of immigration and how, through everyday use of the word and the construction of discourse, very specific collective images of immigrants and the groups they comprise are created.

In addition, we felt it relevant to study some specific cases of public policies or more concrete and specific social projects which, in one way or another, are concerned with more focused but now less important questions. First of all, we asked ourselves what legal or labour mechanisms Barcelona has at its disposal for ensuring that people in an irregular administrative situation can gain access to the world of work, the real door to full citizenship and achieving the most basic

rights. Some years ago, the city launched a number of programmes in that regard, so we need to ask ourselves how far they have got, what they have achieved and what remains to be done from now on. Given that the kinds of discrimination that lots of people suffer because of the colour of their skin or where they come from are many and complex, we want to contribute some data and information on what this phenomenon is like in Barcelona and we also wanted to analyse the work and objectives of the city's Discrimination Observatory. Very closely linked to this last point, we believed it was important to analyse the so-called 'Anti-rumours Strategy', a successful city strategy with a ten-year history that has become a national and international benchmark for combating stereotypes of migrants and their descendants. Rumours, calculated or not, are the prelude to racist discourse and attitudes, and spread easily. They are therefore a source of concern not only for the public authorities but also for all the citizens organised in this network. Lastly, we have crossed one of the city's biggest problems, housing, with the phenomenon of immigration and asked ourselves to what extent newcomers, for the mere fact of having a foreign name or surname, suffer exclusion from the city's housing market.

Due to a lack of space, it is impossible to deal with all the problems, all the phenomena and all the questions related to migration in a single issue of *Barcelona Societat*. Nevertheless, this limitation has now prevented us from tackling those we considered the most important when analysing this phenomenon: migratory policy and refugees, young people, women workers, legal-police repression, housing and many others. This issue of *Barcelona Societat* provides some important information and well-considered reflections on these issues. However, its aim is not to resolve all these problems in one go but rather to help us to understand their urban dimension and, from that starting point, contribute to finding solutions. We hope you benefit from it and enjoy reading it.