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OVERVIEW ON
CONTEMPORARY
MIGRATION
PROCESSES

The continued growth of international migrations is one of the fundamental challenges for worldwide social, political and economic systems today. It is well known, that more than a hundred million immigrants, refugees with asylum and immigrant workers live outside their native countries. This number is expected to grow even faster in the twenty-first century than in the twentieth. This process is mostly caused by poverty, wars, political persecutions, ecological catastrophes, and the like.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that the subject of migration is at the very centre of international discussions about our planet's future. The specific reason for this is that the main migratory directions are from third-world countries towards industrial and post-industrial societies. In other words, from a cultural perspective, from countries with more developed collectivist cultures towards countries with more developed individualist cultures. However, for some time, attention has not been paid to cultural differences between immigrant societies and migrant minorities in comparison to political and economic aspects. Cultural studies only began to receive greater attention when it became clear that intercultural differences were among the main causes of interethnic tensions that often threaten with major consequences and that intercultural tolerance is a necessary precondition for future integration processes. Nowadays, the social and cultural aspects of migration seize the same amount of attention as political and economic ones.

As a social psychologist, I will take this opportunity to say something more about this subject.

For migrants, international migrations constitute the main episode in their lives since migration implies a transfer of individuals or groups of people from one geographical location and cultural milieu to another. This shift touches all aspects of a migrant's life and according to scientific understanding, it causes changes in socioeconomic

statuses, social networks, as well as greater or less acculturation among immigrants. Migrants, in their experience are linked by different social contexts – that from which they came and the one they came to, in a way that makes the best adaptation possible.

In their encounter with a new culture, the quality of their adjustment mostly depends on personal characteristics like age, sex, the level of education gained in their origin society, and their migrant status (as immigrant worker or a refugee), and is also related to changes of socioeconomic status, social networks, sense of belonging and ethnic identity.

At national levels, there are large differences in relations towards migrants. In Europe, for instance, although there are common standards for migrants, prepared within the European Union, national policies towards migrants often differ considerably. Namely, their integration policies span from the French model of cultural assimilation on one end of the continuum towards the Swedish multicultural model on the other. Therefore, discussions lately about drawing together different models from the largest immigration and emigration countries are very developed and necessary in the context of globalization and integration processes.

A specific question that I wish to address, which is important for understanding the modern structure of migration processes and patterns, is what motivates people to migrate. According to social psychology, migration motivation is based on three groups of factors.

The first group consists of pulling/attraction factors which are related to industrial countries' needs for a labour force from underdeveloped countries. For example, this motivated five million Mexicans to emigrate to the USA and thirty million people from Southeastern Europe and North Africa to Northern Europe during the 1950s and 1960s.

The second group consists of pushing/repressing factors, which are related to better living conditions for large numbers of unemployed people from emigration countries, especially in jobs that do not require special skills and are not favoured by inhabitants of immigration countries. Therefore, immigrant workers are mostly employed in sectors of building, agriculture and tourism. However, highly educated migrant groups can also be motivated by this factor when they find themselves caught up in a process known as "brain-drain".

The third group refers to the already existing social networks of emigrated relatives and friends who help new

migrants or whole migrant families to migrate legally or illegally. Most often, this involves middle-aged persons who are inhumanely exploited due to language barriers and insufficient education in their new environments.

Concisely, the analysis of motivation factors reveals that not all migrants voluntarily change their places of living. Some have been displaced, some have escaped, and not all of them are equally accepted in receiving countries. Likewise, some migrant groups enjoy special protection in some countries, while others are not welcome and the receiving societies express prejudice and discriminate them. Let us mention some propositions from the so-called contact hypothesis in order to lessen hostilities between migrant groups and groups from receiving societies as well as between various migrant groups. This model is based on the psychological procedure according to which the communication between hostile groups should proceed. The procedure requires: 1) equal status between members of the groups that communicate together; 2) constant contact between representatives of a majority group and minority groups with high status; 3) the creation of a positive social climate for contacts; 4) friendly and rewarding rather than protocol contacts; and 5) important and functional achievements based on contacts. Let us also mention factors, which increase hostilities. These are: contacts that are competitive in nature, involuntary and unpleasant contacts, contacts that diminish the reputation and status of one or both groups, contacts that provoke frustration or look for a scapegoat, and contacts which destroy the moral and ethical standards of one or both groups.

Thus, the solution to many problems related to migration processes and their various aspects is in the shaping of various identities, processes of acculturation, drafting common standards to achieve a humane multicultural climate, and decreasing the negative influences of ethnocentrism that provokes ethnic conflicts, etc.

Croatia is a country that has survived war, displacement, exile, asylum, legal and illegal immigration, as well as emigration in the past ten years. On the other hand, Croats have emigrated from Croatia for centuries such that Croatian Diaspora is one of the largest among European countries. Particularly strong waves of emigration from Croatia were recorded in the second half of the twentieth century when hundreds of thousands Croatian citizens left their homeland. Motivated by either the pulling/attraction motives, that is to say, developed countries' demand for a labour force, or by pushing/repressing motives that implicated political exile from Yugoslavia or po-

litical disagreement with its state structure and totalitarian regime.

Nowadays, Croatia is building a modern, tolerant, democratic society and wishes to be included in all integration processes at a European and global level. For this reason, it gladly accepted to participate in this important international migration project called Metropolis. Through participation, we want to share our rich experience and knowledge connected to migration processes with others, as well as learn from others' experiences. My deep belief is that in the future, migrants should represent bridges of integration processes between their two homelands and between all the countries they inhabit, and not be a source of ethnic conflicts, which threaten with disintegration processes based on prejudices, intolerance and discrimination. I hope that this conference will be an additional contribution of Metropolis to such a migration future on our planet.