

# **BASIC INCOME FOR IMMIGRANTS TOO.**

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## **Abstract**

Even though there are many recent studies on unconditional and universal minimum income schemes, they have not addressed the very pertinent process of international migration. The aim of this paper is to examine the normative justification of a Basic Income for immigrants as entitled members of a political community. Hence, this study explores both deontological and consequentialist arguments for a Basic Income proposal that includes immigrants within the target population. First, we briefly describe the main characteristics of international migration processes in today's societies. Second, we analyse the international legal framework with regard to immigrants' rights and discuss its inconsistencies. Finally, we synthesize and debate the main effects of extending the right of Basic Income to immigrants in the context of "globalisation". The evidence suggests that a Basic Income proposal for immigrants is not only possible but also desirable in order to resolve some of the more problematic aspects of international migration.

**Keywords:** 1) Basic Income 2) Citizenship 3) Global Justice 4) Social and Economics Rights 5) Immigrants

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the least controversial claim one could make in political theory is that we do not live in a just world. Although it is much less clear what justice on a word scale might mean. As Thomas Nagel (2005) argue, “concepts and theories of global justice are in the early stages of formation, and it is not clear what the main questions are, let alone the main possible answers”. The theoretical questions about global justice are inevitably related to the exploration of social and political institutions, many of which do not yet exist. Basic Income is seen here as one possible institutional component of any comprehensive model of global justice we can think of.

Basic Income is an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement (Van Parijs 2006). This proposal is relatively old but has gradually become the subject of an unprecedented public debate, especially in the academic arena, where its defence stresses different justifications. Some scholars see it as a crucial remedy for many social problems like unemployment or poverty. For example, Widerquist and Lewis (1997) assert that the ultimate goal of social policy is to reduce poverty to the greatest extent possible, and affirm that Basic Income is probably the most efficient method to attack it. Other authors like Erik Olin Wright (2006) argue that Basic Income can be thought of as a strategy of potentially transforming class relations within capitalism in ways that partially counteract the problem of social imbalances created by those relations.

Basic Income in Van Parijs’ *Real Freedom for All* (1995) is justified in terms of freedom as individual opportunity. Although we agree with his argument, we are mainly concerned with another conception of freedom: the republican ideal of freedom as non-domination. From this perspective, X dominates Y if and only if X enjoys a certain power over Y and, in particular, the arbitrarily-based power to interfere in Y’s affairs (Pettit 1997). But not all interferences are equally dangerous. The republican tradition has specifically been concerned with all kinds of interference that affect Y’s autonomy or self-government. Cassasas and Raventós (2006) assert that, in fact, “Y is free when his or her life does not depend on anybody else’s wishes and whims, that is to say, if he or she enjoys a guaranteed autonomous social existence”. In other words, Y is free only if he or she possesses some kind of “property” that permits him or her to

subsist without significant difficulties, without needing to ask others *for their permission to do so*.<sup>1</sup>

Our main argument in this general debate is that Basic Income can play a key role in the materialisation of republican principles in today's societies. Following Pateman's argument (2006), Basic Income can be seen as one of the most efficient political mechanism in furthering the creation of a more democratic society in which individual freedom and citizenship are equal worth for everyone. At the same time, it may promote immigrants' freedom (one of the main vulnerability groups in our societies) by challenging the long-standing link between national citizenship and rights.

The right to a Basic Income is normally included in the whole package of rights and duties associated with full citizenship. But there can be more or less inclusive conceptions of citizenship: some include only the national members, while others tend to see it in a broader sense and include all permanent residents, independently of their nationality. Can immigrants be entitled to a Basic Income? Many recent studies have addressed the unconditional and universal minimum income schemes, but they have not examined its relation with the salient processes of international migration.

The aim of this paper is to explore the normative justification of a Basic Income for immigrants as fully-entitled members of a political community. It examines both deontological and consequentialist arguments for a Basic Income proposal that includes immigrants within the target population. First, we briefly describe the main features of the contemporary migration processes. Second, we analyse the international legal framework with regard to immigrants' rights and discuss its inconsistencies. Finally, we synthesize and argue the main effects of extending the right of Basic Income to immigrants in the context of "globalisation". The evidence suggests that a Basic Income proposal for immigrants is not only possible but also desirable in order to resolve some of the more problematic aspects of international migration in today's societies.

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<sup>1</sup> See Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

## 2. THE DETERRITORIALISATION OF THE HUMAN BEING

Increased international migration is, without a doubt, one of the most significant global social processes since the end of the Cold War. Migratory processes are not isolated or random events but are part of a more inclusive and more complex phenomenon now known as globalisation. Neither migration nor globalisation can be understood as isolated events. To give one evident example, the mobility of goods and capital that characterises globalisation almost always leads to – or determines – the mobility of people (Castles and Miller 2003).

In Castles' view, there is a wide range of possible factors to explain the increase in international immigration, which has occurred since the end of the 1970s. Castles stresses such disparate variables as greater inequalities between North and South, ecological and demographic pressures, intensified ethnic conflicts, and the creation of new industrial and business enclaves. All these factors have considerably swelled the numbers of people who are willing (or forced) to leave their countries in search of better opportunities, whether this means [a more appealing style of life](#), paid work or political asylum, or as part of forced population movements. However, not all the variables listed by Castles are equally relevant. That exacerbated inequalities between countries, which determine the situation of vulnerability of the weakest groups, are the motor of the process can hardly be disputed.

About 2,800 million people, which is to say 46% of humanity, now subsist below the poverty line (World Bank 2000; Pogge 2002). In the World Bank's estimation this is less than two dollars per day. Such extreme poverty makes people especially vulnerable to otherwise insignificant changes in natural and social conditions. In particular, this situation makes them terribly dependent on the will of the more powerful, and hence they are exposed to many forms of domination and abuse. Some eighteen million people die every year from hunger, malnutrition and poverty-related causes, this figure representing a third of all human deaths (World Health Organisation 2001; Pogge 2002).

The extreme poverty in some countries coexists with the extraordinary prosperity in others. In the Annual Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP

2005) it is stated that the 500 richest people in the world represent more wealth than the 416 million poorest citizens. To specify further, 40% of the world's population represents 5% of total wealth, while the richest 10% represents 54%. If only one percent of the total wealth of the rich countries of the world were transferred to the poor countries, poverty would be eliminated on the world scale (Pogge 2002).

However, the transfer of the world's wealth is going in the opposite direction. The inequalities not only keep growing but at an accelerated pace. The standard of living of approximately 460 million people from eighteen countries has deteriorated since the beginning of the 1990s (Milanovic 2002). Without any short-term expectation of a more equitable distribution, millions of the world's most vulnerable people have no choice but to try their luck in the richer nations. When Dick Whittington went to seek gold in the streets of the capital, even the bells of London welcomed him as the future Lord Mayor.

One of the difficulties that confronts social researchers working on migratory processes is the absence of reliable data on the real numbers of people who have left their birthplace in the attempt to improve their living conditions in the so-called northern hemisphere. Most data come from the United Nations but some of the main countries concerned lack dependable statistical data on their populations. The key issue of the real number of immigrants is, then, still an unknown factor. Yet, despite this information deficit, the magnitude of the migratory phenomenon is not in doubt, hence the apocalyptic terms that are often applied to it, "waves", "human avalanche" and "immigration explosion", for example.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM 2000) estimates that if in 1910 some thirty-three million people lived outside their own countries, by two thousand the number had increased to 175 million. Some might seek explanation in the general increase of the world's population. This is at best spurious. The fact is that, by the end of the period, the global population was three times as high while migration figures had been multiplied by six. According to present IOM (2000) data, between five and ten million people become immigrants every year.

From the geopolitical point of view, migration is a phenomenon that is in constant evolution and subject to criteria that are not always perceptible to our first intuitions. If during the first half of the twentieth century regions like the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Argentina were regarded as “classical cases of labour immigration”, in recent times migration has extended to the countries of the north and west of Europe. Hence, during the 1980s, countries like Greece, Italy and Spain, which were migrant-producing countries for decades, have now become destinations for immigrants. At present, some regions of Central and Eastern Europe – particularly Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic – are also becoming new destinations. Complex migratory movements are also affecting some Arab countries, particularly in the Middle East. Countries like Turkey, Jordan and Morocco, for example, are points of reference for labour migration. Again, Africa, after going through the decolonisation, is the protagonist of both labour and political migration. Finally, in Asia and Latin America, there are also highly complex internal migratory flows. These regions have experienced increased movement of their autochthonous populations towards other parts of the world (Castle and Miller 2003).

Castles and Miller (2003: 7-9) underline the main features of the phenomenon of contemporary migration by taking into account its various forms, scale and extent:

- (a) A *global dimension* with an ever-increasing number of countries being affected by the international movements of people;
- (b) *Accelerated international movements* in practically every region of the world;
- (c) *Different types* of migration within each country (labour, political, permanent residence, temporary change of residence ...);
- (d) A certain *feminisation* where women represent an increasing percentage of immigration in all regions and within each type of immigration;
- (e) A *politicisation* of migration so that national policies, bilateral and regional relations and national security policies of states are increasingly affected by international migration.

### **3. DEONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS**

Processes of uncontrolled massive migration exacerbate the conditions of extreme poverty and social inequality for millions of people. In recent decades, the causes of

migration to Western European countries have gone from being mainly political to other “push factors” in the countries of origin, for example poverty, famine and drought and armed conflict. The majority of immigrants coming from non-European countries are seeking a way of life that will guarantee their survival and/or better social and economic conditions. Is this quest enshrined in human rights declarations?

The movement of people across borders is regulated and subject to the norms of international human rights. We understand by the “international human rights regime” a set of interrelated and partially overlapping juridical norms that are global and regional in their reach and that include human rights treaties along with international customary law (Benhabib, 2005; Neuman, 2003)<sup>2</sup>. Within this system, there are different interrelated areas that pertain to the rights of foreigners throughout the world. In particular, we can identify an area of human rights and transnational migration, specifically concerned with the rights of individuals when they come into contact with territorially delimited communities, try to enter them or to become members of them (Benhabib, 2005). We shall now look at this in detail.

Article 13 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) recognises the right to freedom of movement across borders: the right to emigrate, which is to say, to leave one’s country, but not the right to immigrate, which is to say enter a country with the aim of residing there. Article 14 establishes the right to asylum under certain circumstances, while Article 15 asserts that:

- (1) “Everyone has the right to a nationality”, and
- (2) “No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality”.

It is therefore surprising that the Universal Declaration makes no mention of the obligation of states to permit the entry of immigrants, to uphold and protect the right to exile and to hold out the right of citizenship to foreign residents. Despite the so-called

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<sup>2</sup> Within this regime, we must include UN treaties under the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987),

universal nature of these rights, the Declaration also upholds, as is well known, the national sovereignty of individual states.

To sum up, then, in the Universal Declaration the right to freedom of movement is defined in a contradictory and vague fashion. There is no clear recipient of this right and neither are there specific obligations that host states or states of origin must comply with, let alone any mechanisms for enforcement. Nonetheless, the only idea that the international regime contributes in this context is that states no longer enjoy ultimate authority over all the human beings in their territory and, hence, they must somehow respond to international law with regard to human rights.

Given the ambiguity of the international legal framework with regard to dealing with the rights of immigrants, we need to look elsewhere to provide a basis for any normative discussion of assigning a Basic Income to immigrants. From a moral point of view, one of the key notions for considering the question of the right to free movement of people is the republican concept of “the right to hospitality”. This notion is a good basis on which to argue for the right to Basic Income for immigrants.

In 1795, Immanuel Kant wrote his famous essay “Perpetual Peace” after the revolutionary France and Prussia signed the Treaty of Basle. In this essay Kant ventured three definitive articles for attaining perpetual peace among nations:

- (i) "The Civil Constitution of Every State Should Be Republican"
- (ii) "The Law of Nations Shall be Founded on a Federation of Free States";
- (iii) "The Law of World Citizenship Shall Be Limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality".

Curiously, the third article, which we wish to explore now, is the one that has received least attention in the academic literature. Kant says:

“Here, as in the preceding articles, it is not a question of philanthropy but of right. Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the

land of another. One may refuse to receive him when this can be done without causing his destruction; but, so long as he peacefully occupies his place, one may not treat him with hostility. It is not the right to be a permanent visitor that one may demand. A special beneficent agreement would be needed in order to give an outsider a right to become a fellow inhabitant for a certain length of time. It is only a right of temporary sojourn, a right to associate, which all men have. They have it by virtue of their common possession of the surface of the earth, where, as a globe, they cannot infinitely disperse and hence must finally tolerate the presence of each other.”<sup>3</sup>

The Kantian concept of hospitality is not, in principle, a socially exigent idea. In fact, Kant clearly distinguishes between the rights of the host and the rights of the visitor. While the former represents a special privilege that the republican state can bestow at their discretion to certain foreigners who live in their territory (whether it is for carrying out certain functions, or economic activities, or representing political bodies), the latter is simply a right to temporary residence.

The right of hospitality cannot be denied, in Kant’s words, if denying it entails the destruction of the other. Kant considered it unthinkable to deny residence to victims of religious wars, pirates, shipwrecks, for example, because this denial would mean the almost certain deaths of these people. Today, the degree of poverty in some countries is so great (every day 50,000 people die of poverty-related causes) that crossing a high barbed-wire fence is literally a matter of life and death. Every rich country, Kant would have said, should take in their victims. Nonetheless, the countries of Western Europe and also the United States have fortified their rules of entry and multiplied expulsion procedures. The toughening of anti-immigration measures in the face of worsening poverty today is ethically reprehensible.

In order to justify providing a Basic Income to immigrants, we still need to look a little further. Historically, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was principally concerned to find a common standard of individual development for all the people in the world and all nations. Article 1 affirms the equality of rights and duties of all people, independently of their origin and upholds brotherhood as an indispensable element in interpersonal relations:

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kant/kant1.htm> (last accessed 27 June 2006).

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

The words of this famous article leads us directly to the three ideals of the French Revolution of 1790, *liberty*, *equality* and *fraternity*, which became the emblem of the Republic and contributed towards subsequent enunciations of the rights of man (woman, child) and citizen (Gauthier, 1992). *Liberty* must be understood in terms of natural law: the right to life, personal freedom and freedom in society or citizenship. In the times of the French Revolution it meant reciprocity of rights: if I am free, I have to respect the freedom of the other. Hence, freedom means independence from the arbitrary will of another (including the “most charismatically legitimated” political authority). This independence is *always* based on the possession of sufficient material resources to assure one’s social existence. Anything else is one or other degree of servitude or slavery.

The second part of Article 1:

“They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”,

is related with the third and most overlooked republican idea, *fraternity*. This is the ideal that links human beings together, a shared identity that means that all human beings should have the same rights and duties, a common consciousness and rationality.

After the bitter combats of the 16<sup>th</sup> through to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, belonging to the human race was considered by Enlightenment thinkers to mean a common identity for all human beings. *Fraternity* has been assailed from all sides today, from communitarian experiments through to the more recent liberal theories such as the so-called liberalism II of Charles Taylor (1992), John Gray (2001) and Will Kymlicka (1995), who are more concerned to emphasise difference than the real need to interrelate or fraternise. These supposed differences have been fervently embraced by certain governments and easily converted into hierarchical relations based on *belonging* to one or other cultural group and the consequent vulnerability of outsiders.

If any article of the Universal Declaration points to the need for a Basic Income for immigrants too, it is Article 25, which states:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

This is nothing less than guaranteeing the right to the means of existence, which is logically the first law of any society: dead people can't exercise their rights. “All other rights are subordinated to it” (Robespierre [1792] 1968). During the French Revolution democratic left-wing groups understood perfectly well that it was necessary to recognise the social character of the basic material needs. Guaranteeing the right to existence required a popularly-based political economy concerned with redistribution of resources, including on the world-wide scale (Gauthier, 1992).

Today, increasing social and economic inequalities between countries makes it essential to recognise this right as the primary and most important one. A possible mapping of “popular political economy” on to present-day circumstances might crystallise in Basic Income of citizens. In other words, the proposal of Basic Income can be seen as a right of existence in contemporary societies, a pivotal component of any feasible global justice model for the twenty-first century. Immigrants, whose greatest difficulty (in brief) is to lead a full social existence, would also benefit hugely from this proposal.

#### **4. CONSEQUENTIALIST ARGUMENTS**

Just few studies have approached the relations between Basic Income and the immigrant population (Roswitha Pioch, 2002; Michael W. Howard, 2004). In this sense, three major challenges of feasibility have thus been raised for the Basic Income proposal. First, should citizenship be the legitimating characteristic of a person in order to receive a Basic Income? In other words, who should receive a Basic Income in the context of the high degree of international mobility in today's world? Second, in this world of global or European integration, can national Welfare states continue to be the

basic units for distributing a Basic Income? Third, and not less important, could Basic Income encourage massive immigration of people from poor countries?

### ***Right of Citizenship?***

A considerable number of people who migrate do not fulfil the requisites for being considered as citizens. Are they then legitimate recipients of a Basic Income? In order to answer this, we shall have to clarify what we mean by “citizenship”. The basic elements of the concept of citizenship are belonging, rights and duties, and participation. It is usually understood a citizen somebody who is a full member of the community (not a foreigner or mere resident) having, thanks to this status, certain social, economic and political rights (and the corresponding duties) and, thus, the possibility to participate in public life. In academic discussions little attention is paid to the question of belonging but is rather focused on the other two dimensions of rights and participation.

T. H. Marshall (1949) memorably defined the ideal of citizenship as being a set of rights that bestows formal equality on individuals. But he never questioned the fact of real inequality and took it for granted that such rights were sufficient to correct certain perversions of the market without considering that inequality is not only inherent in the logic of the market, but also protean, adapting to any remedial measures. Least of all, did he ponder how to guarantee the right of material existence?

The crucial point here is that, according to the currently practised concept of citizenship, the status of full citizen for one person automatically excludes other potential citizens – and thereby introduces a serious form of inequality or exclusion – because of the quota system. There is a clear distinction between “immigrants” and “citizens” in the sense of belonging and, most importantly, the former are bereft of rights and are hence unable to participate in the society, the *ghetto* being the symbol of this. Marshall’s concept may appear to be egalitarian, but it hides the old dichotomy of privilege and deprivation.

Defining the mechanisms of inclusion into the space of citizenship, on the one side, and regulating the mechanisms of exclusion, on the other side, are the two big

challenges that a State has to reflect upon everyday as a result of foreigners' presence in its territory. Finding the equilibrium between the universalism of rights and the particularism of belonging that defines the citizenship is not an easy task and depends very much on the division between the *jus sanguinis* model of citizenship that configures the community of citizenship in a restrictive way as community of descendents and the *jus soli* model that defines it in purely theoretical terms as territorial community (we can imagine the differences in immigrants' chances to become naturalised or, even more to the point, integrated into the political community) (Mezzadra 2005).

There are more citizens every day that do not belong in terms of rights to the *polis* and this circumstance debilitates the basis of the national state as the central place of democracy. Some scholars interpret this positively pointing to a so-called tendency of Western European States in the last years to guarantee social, political and economic rights to immigrants independently of their formal admission as citizens, that is seen as a result of an increasing immigrant appeal to international instruments of human rights (Soysal, 1994 and 2000). But this position ignores the relentless sovereignty that States exercise over their borders (and in this way over the possibility to enter their political-juridical space) and moreover, the difficulty that immigrants experience, even in this "very open" European countries, to get their rights recognised, living in a significantly precarious situation where the threat of being expelled as a consequence of distinct conducts continuously lives up with them (Castles, Davidson 2000, Mezzadra 2005).

Increased international migration, "globalisation" and, in particular, the inequalities between rich and poor countries challenge the conventional model of national citizenship. Many of the so-called "problems of" (i.e. caused by) immigrants would disappear (and the immigrants themselves would have fewer problems) if the formal requisites of belonging to a nation-state were extended through criteria of inclusion that are sociologically more substantial. In the general discussion about citizenship we need to think about the introduction of new economic and social rights that respond to the origins of the immigrants' situations of vulnerability and dependence. A Basic Income guaranteeing material existence would be a first step. In today's world, it is not only naive and out-dated but also immoral to debate the issues of

citizenship in the nation-state as if the goods to be distributed bore no relation with anything outside its borders.

### *Who Distributes?*

In the debate in European academic circles, two specific proposals are now being discussed in response to this second question. The first is to offer a universal Basic Income, on the planetary scale. The second is to designate the European Union as the new unit of distribution for Basic Income (Schmitter, 2000; Pioch, 2002). The former may, at first glance, seem to be somewhat unfeasible from a political point of view, although it would no doubt ease the “problem” of international economic migration and poverty<sup>4</sup>. From a similar standpoint of political practicality, the second option does not hold out much hope for the application of a Basic Income. The economic and institutional diversity of the member states constitutes a real barrier to agreement on how to implement a Basic Income on this scale. The design and management of social welfare policies still take place at the national level. Moreover, European integration imposes economic and political restrictions that tend to reduce the possibility of bringing in generous national policies in the domain of welfare (Pioch, 2002). For the moment, in spite of the aforementioned limits, it would seem easier to introduce a Basic Income on the national rather than on the world or European scale (unless we completely overhauled the World Bank and the IMF).

The response to the first two challenges raised can be summarised as follows: there are enough arguments to assert that, with the high mobility of the international population, any Basic Income proposal – and the most politically feasible option would, at present, be at national level – should include as beneficiaries not only fully-fledged citizens but also accredited immigrants. This should also include any immigrants who come under the heading of “right to hospitality” (refugees or displaced people because of war, famine and armed conflicts...), while excluding any immigrants with regular papers (migrant workers, those coming by family reunification...) who, to a substantial

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<sup>4</sup> A Global Basic Income might be one part of a broader and more radical plan for using funds raised through a Tobin Tax – an universal tax over currency transactions - or Global Resources Dividend (GRD) - a proposal through which those who extract natural resources or discharge pollutants compensate for their devaluation of our planet - toward poverty eradication (see Pogge 2005).

extent, maintain the social services system, would seem reprehensible by any criteria of distributive justice.

### *The Phantom of the Pull Factor*

Another common objection to be raised in any discussion about Basic Income is that it could encourage massive immigration of people from poor countries. This may easily be rebutted with two arguments:

- a. Not only Basic Income but any measure aimed at improving standards of living in the rich countries can bring about the so-called “pull factor”. Yet, it does not seem to occur to anybody to say that any social policy that might improve the conditions of young people in rich countries would aggravate inequalities between people in rich and poor countries, thereby causing massive “avalanches” of immigration.
- b. The second argument is programmatic. Basic Income is universal in principle and thus applies to everybody in the world. It is therefore (especially) applicable to all the underdeveloped areas, whatever the method of financing this is. In fact, offering a Basic Income in the poor countries could be seen as a way of diminishing the costly – in individual, social and, of course, financial terms – processes of international migration.

These are both well-founded arguments but a consequentialist defence of Basic Income with regard to migration can and must go even further. The assertion that Basic Income is deterministically related with the massive arrival of immigrants is, at best, based on early neoclassical economic theories, which gave rise to the first systematic theory of immigration<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately little has changed in thinking about immigration since then. In general terms, these theories stress the tendency of people to move from

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<sup>5</sup> See Ravenstein’s pioneering work from the late 19th century in which he formulated the first statistical laws on immigration (Ravenstein, 1885, 1889).

the most densely populated countries in the world to less populated zones, or from lower-income to higher-income regions, or they link migrations with economic cycles<sup>6</sup>.

The basic argument of this economic model of migration is based on individual decision to emigrate after rational assessment of the relative costs and benefits, or of whether it is better to stay at home or move to any one of a number of alternative destinations. If we limited ourselves to this perspective, it might seem reasonable to imagine that Basic Income would be a huge incentive to these supposedly economically rational immigrants. However, it must be pointed out that neoclassical theories of migration have been unmasked as simplistic and unable to explain present-day migratory movements, let alone future ones. It is sociologically untenable to think about immigrants as cold and calculating individuals with all the information they need at their fingertips and total freedom to put such a rational decision into practice.

Historians, anthropologists and geographers have empirically shown that immigrant behaviour is heavily influenced by political and social experience and family and community dynamics. And there can be no doubt about the fact that the vast majority of immigrants have very scant and contradictory information, and are subject to a multitude of restrictions, especially asymmetries of power in the economic, social and political spheres. Immigrants therefore tend to rely on their social and cultural networks (see Sassen, 1988; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Portes and Böröcz, 1989, Castles and Miller, 2003). Hence, the idea that introducing Basic Income into a rich country would involve increased immigration would seem to be fallacious since it does not take into account the host of factors behind the decision and, even more to the point, the possibility, of emigrating. Finally, are these neoclassical theorists really unaware that we are talking about living and breathing human beings? Do they not take into account the incredible hardships and huge risk to life and limb of the conditions of crossing, into Europe, say, from the sub-Saharan countries? Would a Basic Income really inspire such risks?

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<sup>6</sup> These are known as “push-pull factors”. The former are the harsh conditions in countries of origin that induce people to leave, while the latter constitute the “bright-lights” phenomenon. Push factors include demographic growth, low standards of living, loss of economic opportunities and political repression, while pull factors are supposedly the demand on the job market, access to land, economic opportunities

Let us accept for a moment the postulates of neoclassical theories about migratory processes. This means that we must accept that the mere existence of economic inequalities between different areas is enough to bring about massive immigration. Then, the influence of introducing the (modest) Basic Income on the so-called “pull factors” must, at the very least, be gauged in relative terms. Economic, social and political inequalities between rich and poor countries when the former already have the classical systems of social welfare in operation are more “push factors” than “pull factors”. If poor countries had minimal standards of social existence, the much-vaunted pull factors would hardly exist.

Furthermore, from the same economic standpoint, some theorists have suggested that, in the long term, transnational economic flows can help to equalise conditions and salaries between rich and poor countries. Several studies demonstrate that money sent by immigrants to their countries of origin has improved the standards of living for people in the home regions and fostered local community development (Castels and Miller 2003; Borja 1989; Portes et al., 1999). It is clear that the effects of such remittances would be enhanced if a Basic Income were to be applied to these wage-earning immigrants. It goes without saying that, if the Basic Income were on a world-wide scale, conditions at home, with a guaranteed regular payment, would be infinitely better and much less conducive to emigration.

Another related objection to Basic Income with regard to immigrants is that, if its recipients were no longer prepared to do the least desirable jobs, then immigrants without the requisite papers would have to fill the vacuum. A certain inefficient balance might then be reached between rich and poor countries through this “bottom-up” phenomenon, which would have a high social price: a totally stratified society with the local population enjoying reasonable levels of social existence and a semi-enslaved and ghettoised immigrant population living side by side but in totally different worlds. There is no moral value whatsoever in such a draconian situation.

There are two hypothetical ways to get away from this awful neoliberal “paradise”. The first is unrelated with Basic Income and involves massive state

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(these latter two being precisely what induced people to “avalanche” to the gold-rush areas!) and political liberties (Castels and Miller, 2003).

intervention and more rigorous labour law enforcement so as to put a stop of abuse of workers by employers, in particular, because of the vulnerability of migrant workers. However, this only affects the employed. The second, and much more appealing, alternative is to return to the concept of true citizenship with all the rights (and duties) involved, starting from the right of (economic, social and political) existence through to cosmopolitan rights to hospitality everywhere, so that all human beings could participate as proper members of the societies in which they choose to live.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Having considered all these arguments, we believe that excluding immigrants from the right to receive a Basic Income cannot be justified by any known criterion. From the human rights perspective (and as the Universal Declaration makes clear), it is completely unacceptable to deny the right to existence to anybody, especially the most vulnerable populations. In present-day circumstances, the right to existence can only be offered through proposals, which, like Basic Income, guarantee at least the minimal material support so that the recipients not only stay alive but can participate as full citizens in the societies in which they live. Independently of the institution(s) that are chosen for distributing a Basic Income, the possible negative effects are not nearly as evident as many critics have suggested. On the contrary, empirical evidence strongly suggests that, in general, this proposal would be more desirable than damaging in social (not to mention ethical) terms.

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