

Revisiting Some Assumptions Linked to Integration Policies: Identity and Participation Before European Refugee Crisis of 2015

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Una revisión de algunos supuestos vinculados con
las políticas de integración: identidad y participación
ante la crisis europea de refugiados de 2015

ISSN 1989-7022

ABSTRACT: Integration policies are underpinned upon assumptions that are taken for granted but that condition both the causal diagnosis and the lines of action and programs devised to respond to social challenges associated with migration and refugees movements. The so-called "European refugees crisis" of 2015 is an example of how preconceived ideas affect the analysis of social problems and the design of solutions. This crisis is the context within which the paper, first, examines the root causes of the "problem"; then, explores the notions of identity and participation and the implications they had for policy; and, finally, studies two cases of relative integration success where different assumptions inform different programs and strategies.

RESUMEN: Las políticas de integración se erigen sobre supuestos que suelen darse por sentado pero que afectan tanto los diagnósticos que se realizan como las líneas de acción y los programas que se diseñan para abordar los desafíos asociados a las migraciones y los movimientos de refugiados. La denominada "Crisis europea de los refugiados de 2015" es un ejemplo de cómo las ideas preconcebidas ejercen una gran influencia sobre el análisis de los problemas sociales así como sobre las soluciones que se diseñan. Esta crisis es el contexto de este artículo que, primero, analiza las causas profundas del problema en cuestión; después, explora las implicaciones de las nociones de identidad y participación sobre las políticas; y, finalmente, estudia dos casos de relativo éxito en términos de integración en los cuales diferentes supuestos informan estrategias y programas distintos.

KEYWORDS: Migration; integration; identity; participation; religion; public policies

PALABRAS CLAVE: Migración; integración; identidad; participación; religión; políticas públicas

1. Introduction

Analysing the causes of migratory movements and exploring the most effective migration policies are usually two distinct lines of research which rarely cooperate. Thus, those who examine the forces that lead populations to move from their homeland to other lands often use a descriptive approach which merely (although very necessarily) explain the phenomenon from a "detached" perspective. It is mainly sociologists who study migration. However, new trends of interdisciplinary research have contributed to a more refined look into migration. Besides observing objective factors, such as poverty, conflict, or climate change, they have begun to break down the reasons for which different groups, when confronted to similar situations, decide to migrate or not to.

On the other hand, those who study integration policies, usually focus on the host countries in order to identify effective patterns for the incorporation of diverse groups into a political community. In addition to empirical methodologies, they use the French model (assimilation), the English model (multicultural), the German or Canadian model (inter-cultural) to classify the different kinds of policies.

This article seeks to combine both approaches without deepening into either of them as much as this could be done by addressing them separately. However, the advantage is to achieve a wider perspective of the phenomenon that places it in a more pertinent context.

The first chapter is dedicated to the causes of the migratory movements, which originated in the Middle East, and have affected Europe in recent years. Especially, it tries to identify the causes of what has come to be known as “the refugee crisis.”

The starting point is the premise that this problem has been approached in a somewhat superficial way by European lawmakers, which has led the policies addressed at solving the problem to be simplified to a great extent. If the diagnosis is wrong, there cannot be good policies.

The second and third chapters constitute a theoretical and conceptual foundation for the fourth chapter. They intend to examine two concepts central to effective integration policies—identity and participation. In order to shed light on them, different authors who have worked on these concepts from a particular perspective emerging from a collective understanding generated by several Bahá'í-inspired organizations are quoted.

The fourth chapter is the most empirical one, it is framed within the perspective of public policy as *good governance*, and has two dimensions. Regarding good governance, this implies—given the complexity of social issues of the world today— involving several different actors and sectors of society in describing problems, searching for solutions, and defining policies. Thus, in approaching integration policies, the first dimension takes as a reference the experience of the Bahá'í community of Madrid with several grass-roots educational empowerment programmes that seem to have succeeded in bringing together diverse groups who, in the society around them, are regularly in conflict, within one community. Although experience is preliminary, the insights obtained from it are promising. The results captured here were the conclusions of a discussion group that met several times, for several hours, made up by the coordinators of the aforementioned programmes in Madrid.

The second dimension continues to use the case of the Bahá'í community of Spain, but in this case as an entity that has been able to socialize, with notable success, people from Iranian origin. Through interviews to Iranian Bahá'ís, we hope to identify the factors that have made some Iranian people to integrate much more easily than others.

It must be acknowledged that, although this last part is probably the richest and most interesting one in the article, it is also the most provisional and—especially the section on the Iranian people—the less rigorous one. Lack of rigour in that last section is a consequence, on one hand, of the small sample we have worked with, and, on the other, of the methodological challenges implied in studying the success of integration before performing a sound objectification of the indicators of integration.

2. Causes of the most recent forced migration movements

Regarding the main causes of what has come to be known as the “refugee crisis”, these can be clustered in different levels of depth.

At the most superficial level, there are at least three causes: the recent conflicts in the Middle East and Africa —mainly Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Mali— forcing populations to flee and avoid the associated evils of war (Loescher, 1993). The expansion of fundamentalism, the ensuing impact, and the outbreak of ethnic violence within the same regions, may be placed at the same level of causality (Zaragoza, 2015).

At a deeper level, we may observe other causes which are not always recognized: structural poverty, and the oppression associated to it, which forces migration and acts as a breeding ground for other social issues; the deterioration of the environment, and natural disasters (IOM, 2008), which is often the result of a relationship of exploitation between man and nature; the tensions and mafias aroused by the search for natural resources, whether petroleum, coltan, or others (Rubinov, 2016; Black 2011); the expansion of the culture of consumerism which legitimises the illegitimate exploitation of certain minerals for particular purposes; the inefficacy of both the UN collective security system to mediate in conflicts and to prevent them, and of development aid policies; the segregation of women from decision making processes; all of which provoke exodus and migratory movements.

Finally, at the heart of these movements, other causes may be identified, which have been neglected, but are fundamental: the root cause of the issue. Society has been globalised; culture, means of communication, technology, transportation, economy, science, and issues have too. But politics have not followed the same pace, giving room to the generation of a notable deficit of governance (Vietti & Scribner, 2013; Joensonn, 2010). Competition and conflict are the principles that drive relationships between people and between States, and strife for survival (a characteristic of animals) controls human consciousness and shapes relationships. Prejudices whether these be ideological, gender based, nationality based, race based, or religion based, stir up conflicts, prevent the welcoming of others, generate artificial obstacles, and do not allow for the human identity shared by all to be appreciated (Francis, 2015; Betts, 2013).

Regarding Europe’s responsibility in accepting refugees, certain structural questions, and some other conceptual ones make the channelling of good will to be a challenge. Here are some examples:

- The European project has a long way to go in terms of political unity.
- National interest shapes relationships among States even though there is a desire to be united.
- Fear of the different and Islamophobia have strengthened in recent years.
- There does not exist an effective social integration model: the German, French, and the English models seem to have been exhausted.
- There exists a notion of European identity which does not correspond to the present time, but which reminisces an assumed (religious) Christian identity, of white people. However, Muslims are European, and Afro-Europeans, Asian-Europeans, Latino-Europeans, are so as well.

- The expansion of xenophobia and its channelling by political parties hampers asylum and integration policies.
- Human rights, a hallmark of European identity, seem to be subordinated in practice to economy and the conditions of citizens.
- The social system that has been configured is not very hospitable.
- Individualism, national interest, consumerism, and competition are, unfortunately, the outstanding principles shaping European society.
- Europe has a direct responsibility in some conflicts that produce refugees: it has gone to war, it has sold weapons to different groups, it has invested in military operations of dubious legitimacy.
- Prejudice prevents the ability to see the objective analyses of the impact of refugees in the host countries, which show, for instance, that in five years, the money invested in them, when combined with employment policies, is doubled by the income they generate (Kingsley, 2016).

These deficiencies in European policy are not solely the responsibility of their leaders. We must all search for creative solutions to the challenges we confront, without placing responsibility in others.

In analysing the causes of forced migratory movements and of Europe's challenges in contributing to their welcoming and integration, some principles can be identified which could contribute to humanizing and improving the management of this humanitarian crisis. Hospitality, a virtue that is common to all religious traditions, stands out (Kirillova, Gilmetdinova & Lehto, 2014).

Hospitality is both an individual virtue and a principle of social articulation which may be manifested in personal behaviour, as well as in laws and social structures. Also, hospitality is one of the topics which, as mentioned before, are present in all religions and which somehow symbolizes the underlying unity of them all. In Islam, hospitality adopted even greater formality than before. It was apparent in both the behaviour of individuals, who would go out of their way to serve those who came to their homes, and the structures that emerged: hospitals, hospices for travellers, lodging for pilgrims.

Nowadays, strengthening hospitality would have great implications in facing some of the problems we are involved in: hosting immigrants, refugees, giving asylum to those who suffer, contributing to the elimination of wars, strengthening development policies, undertaking daring initiatives to eradicate poverty, being kind toward the environment to be hospitable with future generations... This all relates to hospitality, and once more, there is an individual aspect and a collective one. As individuals, we may try to host people, treat them as if they were from our own family. Collectively, we can also establish mechanisms to not leave anyone apart.

Thus, social systems can also be more or less hospitable. Certain social systems are not hospitable at all, not even for the citizens of the State: they are not concerned with the excessive inequality, social security for the least favoured ones, education... There are many such countries. Some other social systems may be considered hospitable with limits: they welcome those people who are citizens, nationalized, or originally from countries with which they have

agreements, but reject non-citizens or non-nationals. There are some such social systems in the world, and democracy aspires to this (Fermin & Kjellstrand, 2005).

However, there can also be social systems with universal hospitality, which welcome and protect people for the only reason of being human beings, regardless of their citizenship and nationality. This should be the standard case.

3. The question of identity

When talking about, or examining migratory movements, there is a risk of reifying the concepts we use to study the phenomenon in question. Reifying results in the concepts created becoming into real things that come between human beings and that hamper mutual recognition. Categories such as immigrant, or refugee, however helpful, need to be used with caution (Mahendran et al., 2019; Kertzer, 2017).

Behind these categories there are people, and groups of human beings, who share a primary identity with all. Religions suggest that the fundamental identity connecting human beings is the soul (Corduan, 2002). Gender, social class, ethnicity, family, or religion define secondary —though important— aspects of identity, and make us tend to connect to each other by affinity groups (Harrison, 2013). The longing to belong to a group is then fulfilled through being identified with such groups. These secondary identities, however, would always be subordinated to the primary identity connecting us all, and which, in religious terms, also connects us with God.

Furthermore, identity is manifested at two levels. From one perspective, identity is what makes each person unique (Sen, 2007). The combination of familiar, cultural, ideological, religious, and social influences define each person.

In this regard, there exists an individual work to draw these influences in our minds, in the shape of circles of complementary identity. In these circles of identity, the larger circles would be stronger loyalty bonds. Thus, the smaller circles would stay, but they would be subordinated to the larger ones. For instance, an individual can consider him-or-herself a member of a particular family, a sports-person, belonging to a particular town, a citizen of a country, a man or a woman, a believer of a certain religion and, in the end, a world citizen and a human being. As long as the smaller circles, such as family, people, or country, are subordinated to the largest circle, humanity, complementarity will be possible, and conflict will be avoided.

From another perspective, human beings' identity is manifested in the constituting of groups that may be seen as entities with a life of their own. In contemporary liberal discourse, there is little space to speak about groups, about communities, since these are considered to have been oppressive historically (Pierce, 2012). Without denying these groups might have had a role in perpetuating relationships of oppression, not all forms of collective identity are oppressive. Indeed, the contemporary eagerness to belong to virtual communities is a reflection of the longing and human need to belong to a group, a community, be it religious, ethnic, or political. However, these virtual communities do not seem to respond to this human proneness to gathering together, since, when not combined with in-person interactions, they

tend to generate greater loneliness. What is missing, then, is a new notion of community, of collective identity, which would strengthen social cohesion and the feeling of belonging, while not hampering individual autonomy and freedom, but fostering and channelling these instead towards the common good.

Further, individual and collective identities evolve through interactions among human beings and cultures (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). This is no threat, but a healthy life dynamics. Change and evolution are two characteristics inherent to reality itself. But for some exceptional situations which must be avoided —such as one culture having abundant economic resources, and using them to aggressively expand their values and world-view— cultural and personal interaction does not erode, but enrich.

Another question that is tied to identity is the exercising of rights and duties within a society. In order to properly respond, with dignifying approaches, to migratory movements, the current conception of citizenship should be questioned (Karolewski, 2010; Peters, 2003). Due to the lack for a World State and despite the universality and recognition of human rights, those who are nationals or citizens of a certain country enjoy more rights. Human beings, for the sole reason of being so, deserve rights and duties, as is recognized in all international treaties. Emphasizing the importance of equalising the rights of individuals, for the mere reason of being so, seems to constitute an important line of action to follow.

Having in mind what has been said in the previous paragraphs regarding identity would probably facilitate the overcoming of prejudices that usually accompany the process of reifying, which are an obstacle to seeing the potential of those coming from a different country.

Such prejudices often grow until becoming into popular myths which take the shape of “common sense”. To refugees and immigrants —to those who are different, generally— are often attributed the causes of the wrongs that afflict a society; or they are held responsible for certain risks. The collapse of systems of social assistance, the erosion of culture, the imposition of another religion, unemployment, are some examples of blames that have not been proved by rigorous and empiric observation and which are attributed to those coming from abroad.

This question of popular myths becomes more relevant when contrasted with Galtung’s theory of violence (1990). He points at the fact that first and second levels of violence within a society —direct violence, more visible, physical; and structural violence, related to oppression and social and economic inequities— feed from a third level of violence, the cultural one, which is deeper, and implies the stigmatising of collectivities, prejudices against groups, negative conceptions regarding “certain people.” These negative ideas regarding social groups, be these ethnic, national, or religions, allow to legitimise the oppression they engender —physical, as well as social and economic. For this reason, dealing with these prejudices is fundamental, if conflicts are to be prevented. Actually, if we take the most oppressed group within society— the Roma people in Spain, the indigenous peoples in Latin America, the African Americans in the USA —it is not uncommon to find generalised negative expressions and conceptions against them: thieves are compared with gypsies, indigenous people are considered uneducated, etc. Below, with the hope of contributing to

erase these prejudices, some data is presented related to empirical profiles of immigrants arriving in Europe.

One of the most frequently analysed facts is the profile of the migrant or the asylum seeker. Although analysing particular cases is crucial, there are some clearly identifiable patterns. The person leaving their country— be it seeking for asylum, or looking for new horizons— is usually the brightest in the family, tends to come from a middle social and economic environment, and in most cases, has great capacity for entrepreneurship and learning. Their level of studies is usually above the average of the host society, and the contribution to such society, in economic, social and cultural terms, far more than what they receive from it during the first periods. Besides, every society has produced and does produce migrants, and this —the emission and reception of people— has always been an important factor of invigorating of the peoples and nations (Catney, 2012). The human potential within a country is its greatest asset.

In brief, although it is the spiritual and humanitarian motivations that must foster welcoming others, pragmatism would also lead to eagerly receiving those who leave their environment. They are going to contribute to the society of wherever they settle.

4. Participation

Finding effective mechanisms for people and collectivities to settle, be integrated, and contribute to the betterment and prosperity of the host country is no easy task. Different countries have experimented with different models, but none seems to be completely satisfactory (Martikainen, 2014). Assimilation —the expectation that newcomers will be completely socialised into the host culture without altering it at all, often denying the collective dimension of identity— multiculturalism —the emphasis on policies focused on religious, ethnic, or cultural groups, which sometimes tends to the forming of ghettos— or the denial of the growing diversity, mark the context for the multiple initiatives which have been set in motion to manage the diversity proceeding from migration.

These policies will not be analysed in this section, but some principles that have contributed to a partially successful management will be identified. Participation in the life of the host society is one of the outstanding ones. However, what dimensions does participation adopt, and what means of participation are more adequate?

Much has been said about the importance of participating in the productive life of society. Thus, finding a job is a key strategy for integration. Within that environment, a process of socialization occurs through which the person relates to others, acquires shared values, contributes to inter-subjective agreements (Madureira, 2014). However, a more sophisticated perspective shows that, for work to be a key factor in integration, it must have possess certain characteristics: it must not be oppressive, it must allow for a dignified life, it must occur in an environment where diversity is appreciated, and have colleagues who are already socialised in the host society.

Another fundamental means of participation is language. Language is the backbone of culture, which is why its fluency and learning is usually a necessary strategy. Through language,

values, conceptions, and cultural reality are acquired. However, its deepest value consists in that it allows communication with others, channels the human longing to relate to others and share ideas, thoughts, aspirations and feelings. In this regard, school —primary, secondary, and further— and participation in its programmes have a very important role, both in learning the language, and in generating a space for interaction and socialization, which favour integration (Zorlu & Hartog, 2018).

Religious communities also play an important role regarding participation. Firstly, they facilitate the initial integration of newly coming individuals and groups. They act as a space for orientation, initial support, and security, in the midst of an unknown surrounding (Weinar & Unterreiner, 2017). However, their role is not limited to this. Very often, religious communities, through their programmes, act as a bridge between the person and the broader values of the host society. In other words, they contribute to the newcomers being socialised in the values of the host country (Bonifacio & Angeles, 2010). Some clubs, sports teams, or associations, play a similar role.

However, the most successful religious communities are those who assist newcomers to participate in a broader and more exciting process: that of contributing to the betterment of the host society. In this broader context, that of participating in the generation of practical knowledge regarding the improvement of the life conditions and the creation of a more just, human, and harmonious pattern of social organization, seems to be the most determining factor for satisfactory processes of integration (Cesari, 2017).

5. Some preliminary insights taken from the experience of the Bahá'í community to integrate individuals and groups¹

It was mentioned in the introduction that the most recent tendency in public policy is to adopt a mode of functioning that some authors have called the “governance mode.” (García, 2016). Good governance implies, on the one hand, making good diagnoses of the social transformation that is underway, and, on the other hand, to operate through the introduction of certain mechanisms that have shown to be more effective to respond to complex problems under conditions of uncertainty. Among these mechanisms, the creation of spaces where organized civil society, the business network, and the public institutions of government may discuss together, make decisions, and act harmoniously is a highlight.

The paradigm of this mode of functioning derives from political experiences, such as that of Sacramento, California, which faced problems of great complexity and highly difficult to solve. In other words, the implication of different actors in the discussion, decision making, and implementation of policies to deal with social problems is not a trend, or an “aesthetic” or “cosmetic” activity, but a pragmatic imperative to respond to highly complex problems for which traditional solutions are not applicable, and which require much more sophisticated collective levels of intelligence and action. Policies to integrate diverse groups within one political community, especially when these come from immigration, are an example of these challenges. For this reason, to rely on experience from different collectivities linked to organized civil society, be these secular or religious, takes on greater relevance. Great

problems require action by multiple actors, preferably connected and coordinated among themselves.

The Bahá'í community in Spain has had two types of relatively successful experiences of integrating diverse groups where some principles and approaches may be identified, susceptible of being transferred into integration policy. The first type of initiative has to do with the influence of the processes of community strengthening and development in place in different neighbourhoods in the country, on the field of integration and social cohesion; and the second kind has to do with the growing experience of a number of Iranian Bahá'ís who have succeeded in joining, with complete regularity, the social, economic, cultural, and religious life of the country. However, the insights offered in both cases are quite provisional.

In the processes of community strengthening and development —from now on community building— there is a meaningful percentage of people originally from other nationalities, although the issue of language has been solved in most cases. Most of the work is carried out with youth, adolescents, and children, since their families often have economic problems, work many hours, and find it challenging to participate in community life. These family dynamics of instability have an impact on long-term planning, and school performance among youth, many of whom abandon school.

This is precisely one of the indicators used to see the influence of community building processes on integration. Those who participate more regularly in Bahá'í activities, especially the educational ones, are less prone to abandoning their studies. Another indicator is that friendships between participants go beyond the interactions during the period that the programmes last. Youth from different national backgrounds who rarely interact with each other in the neighbourhoods and who often enter into conflict among each other, after participating for some time in the programmes of the Bahá'í community, overcome initial prejudices and become friends, occasionally forming groups made up of people from very different nationalities. The improvement of relationships with their families is another indicator. It seems that those youth who become more committed to the activities improve their relationships with their parents.

This reduces potential conflict and favours, for instance, the continuation of their schooling. The last indicator that has been used is the frequency with which they speak of their secondary identity. Youth usually emphasise their background identity and that of their parents initially, but as they advance through the community building processes, in time, this kind of conversation decreases considerably, and there seems to emerge a new group identity. In this regard, there are some exceptional cases of prevention from joining gangs, which, although nascent, show a hopeful horizon.

Below, an effort is made to identify some causes of the aforementioned effects. The Bahá'í community building programmes are based on a strong sense of purpose and social commitment. All those who are integrated into it enter a community of discourse and practice, who speak of and act on the transformation of society. Furthermore, these efforts, from the outset, involve all participants into collective processes of decision making regarding the future of the neighbourhood and the lines of action to be taken. In this regard, the need to develop further capacity is highlighted, and empowerment and capacity-building programmes are

set in motion for people who wish to contribute to the improvement of the neighbourhood. Education and knowledge are highly valued in these programmes.

The fact that most activities and programmes consider identity from a spiritual perspective, contributes to them seeing themselves as members of one family, and in the final analysis, as children of one God. This primary identity is strengthened, and, although it allows for the expression of secondary identities, such as race, gender, ethnicity, and nationality, these are subordinated to the primary identity that connects them all. With analogies, such as “we are flowers of one garden, we are fingers of one hand, we are leaves of one branch,” which are present in quotations, songs, stories, and all kinds of artistic, social, and cultural activities, progress is made towards recognizing the essence of human identity.

Further, in relation to secondary socialization², the pattern of community life that is reinforced welcomes all participants to work for the improvement of the neighbourhood and city. Thus, spaces are facilitated to try to understand the neighbourhood’s and the city’s dynamics, forces, and structures, which may influence the appreciation of the host society’s values. They see themselves as part of a society that needs to be transformed and a movement for change, with a social dimension and a deeply spiritual dimension, which provides their efforts with greater direction, meaning, and motivation.

The categories of immigrant and refugee are not used in either of the programmes. This might assist them in seeing themselves as being part of a community, a neighbourhood, a country. Those who accept the Bahá’í Faith and decide to convert to it are socialized in other features related to the Bahá’í teachings which they integrate as articles of faith, and which may further strengthen social cohesion. Obedience to one’s government, the use of constructive and pacific strategies for social change, avoiding violent protests, renouncing backbiting, healthy recreation—all become into spiritual and moral imperatives, as weighty as praying, and preferring others before oneself.

Regarding the experience of Bahá’ís originally from Iran, by analysing cases successful in completely integrating into the new society, certain patterns may be observed. For instance, those who left Iran as pioneers of a new religion that was to be brought to the whole world, came with great motivation to teach in the host country. An implication for this motivation was an eagerness to learn this society’s customs, language, and culture, in order to fulfil the initial purpose. Further, they did not only need to familiarize themselves with it, but they had to value and appreciate it, since this was probably going to become into their new country, and the country of their children and grandchildren, for the rest of their lives.

The case of the Iranians who have recently become involved in the community building processes described above is similar. Those who are most involved seem to be more motivated to learn the language and to integrate into new customs.

On the other hand, the migration project of Iranian Bahá’ís leaving as pioneers was an individual project, in many cases. Although they would sometimes seek for countries and regions where there may already be other Iranians, their purpose was not to create a community made up of Iranians, but to find support in the initial stages of identifying themselves with

the host society. Many have married locals, and it is hard, when seeing their children—unless one knows the family’s history—to tell that their origins are in Iran.

Another element that has facilitated the greater and faster integration of Iranians—apart from the Persians’ disposition to relate with other cultures, as a cultural idiosyncratic factor—and of other non-local individuals and groups is that Bahá’í institutions quickly assign responsibilities to them. These responsibilities lead them to interacting with Spanish people and others in the same way. In other words, they are given responsibilities and roles of coordinating, in some cases, which do not only have a relationship with communities of the same national, ethnic, and cultural origin.

6. Conclusions

The integration of diverse groups, especially coming from immigration, is a greatly complex issue, demanding new perspectives regarding good governance, from where to approach public policy in this field.

The first step for an accurate response requires a good diagnosis. In this article, the causes of the so called “refugee crisis in Europe” have been broken down, in terms of three layers of causes, with different levels of depth—the most apparent causes, such as escaping violence; structural social and economic causes, which stimulate certain groups to seek for a better life abroad; and deeper causes related to the deficit of an adequate world governance to deal effectively with problems that transcend national borders.

Regarding integration policies, practical measures, as well as clear conceptions, are required to find feasible and lasting solutions. As to concepts that prove essential for the definition of effective integration policy, identity and participation stand out. The article explores a notion of inclusive identity, based on empirical and objective observations, which balances the individual and collective dimensions, and which allows for overcoming prejudices and stereotypes related to cultural violence, as mentioned by Galtung.

Regarding participation, different dimensions of it have been analysed, such as language, friendships, socialization into the values of the host society. Further, the need for the existence local communities has been highlighted, often religious in their nature, which assist in the initial steps for participation and integration. Lastly, it has been pointed out that the deepest and most effective level of participation is participation in collective learning processes at the grassroots, ideally in a neighbourhood, about the transformation and improvement of the life conditions of the population. This kind of participation generates the kind of sense of mission and the necessary ties to foster a sounder integration.

Finally, after undertaking a brief conceptual clarification of the notion of governance and justifying why it is necessary to involve civil society and other sectors of society in integration policy, a study case was taken—the Bahá’í community of Spain. This group has generated quite a successful experience regarding integration, although modest, in two areas—grassroots programmes for community strengthening through implementing educational and group empowerment processes, and the integration of the Iranian population. Preliminary

lessons emerging from the limited —although promising— experience, could be susceptible of being tested in the field of public integration policy.

It should also be said that this provisional document intends to highlight the role of religion in refining identity and promoting participation in the processes of integration and strengthening of social cohesion.

As a final conclusion, it must be noted that, throughout the study, two levels of work can be identified to strengthen the processes of integration and social cohesion. The first one has to do with the changes in the structures related to public policy which may make integration processes more effective, including some principles and approaches highlighted above. The second one refers to capacities, qualities, and attitudes of the individuals, which could be nurtured through formal and informal educational programmes and strategic efforts in the area of means of communication, and which enable people from foreign national origins to incorporate into and contribute to the host society.

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Notas

1. Many of the nascent insights suggested in this section are extracted from conversations sustained in October 2016 with a discussion group made up of several people who, in the last years, have been heavily involved in Bahá'í processes of community strengthening and development in Spain, mostly in Madrid.
2. The process through which the values of the society where one resides are adopted. This usually happens during adolescence and youth, through school, friends, means of communication, etc. Primary socialization usually occurs within the family and in school, during the first few years of one's life, and it is where an individual adopts certain values from these groups, which will stay with them for the rest of their lives.