



A p r o f u n d a m e n t o

THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF REFUGEES: CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND PUBLIC POLICIES

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This study* evaluates the social capital of refugees, by joining the role of the cultural background they bring with them from the country of origin with the public policies adopted by the host place. Its importance is within the relationships produced between locals and foreigners, precisely between refugees and the local community, due to the irreversible migratory phenomena. Thus, it is necessary to prepare the host community and the government to host them, as the integration among them could join efforts to weaken situational problems already rooted in the society, as lack of trust in the community and in the public institutions. Comparison and transdisciplinarity were the approaches chosen, as there is no single science able to solve the refugee dilemma.

Keywords: Refugee; Social capital; Cultural background; Public policy

Introduction

The following work evaluated the social capital of 63 refugees, 33 in São Paulo and 30 in Toronto; the role of support networks esta-

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blished for them, integrating them in these cities; the importance of cultural background that they bring from their countries of origin and influence of policies adopted in their regard in these cities. The interviewees were Latin American and Spanish-speaking Caribbean, African Portuguese-speaking and Arab Moslems, with the aim of identifying the various present and past conflicts and the cultural background brought from the country of origin. Regarding the social capital, the interviews examined the refugees' profiles, their arrival and groups and networks formation in their new home, in addition to the relationships of trust and solidarity, of collective action and cooperation, information and communication, cohesion and social inclusion and empowerment and political action.

Firstly, it was concluded that refugees have guaranteed rights in Sao Paulo and Toronto, although these rights and various adopted public policies neither reach them nor fit their cultural characteristics nor are properly implemented in the public domain. Secondly, they are integrated to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the dimensions examined, characterising themselves as citizens, despite the absence of certain political rights. Finally, this integration results in producing some types of social capital, which result from the adopted public policies, provided that such policies are created and implemented considering the cultural background of the refugees and their problems of adjustment due to the inadequate physical and psychological conditions that characterise them as human beings and citizens.

It is expected, based on this research, that governments, civil society, whether organized or not, and private sector start to see refugees in a different light, using their example to improve living standards and, on the basis that they are also human beings, with the same opportunities for growth and development of any community, provided they are given sufficient conditions to feel and be treated as citizen and also be seen as part of the whole society.

The crisis continues and refugee dilemma needs solution and a new interpretation. Moreover, refugees need to be integrated and covered under "a system which succeeds in simultaneously satisfying our bodily, mental and psychical needs whilst, at the same time, reducing the costs of having to treat all the different maladies and disorders."¹ This method is transdisciplinarity.

There is an urgent need to join issues concerning refugees, such as access to employment, housing, health care, education, rights, social relations, public policy, etc.. Together, civil society, government and Non-

¹ NICOLESCU, Basarab. "Transdisciplinarity – Past, Present and Future".

Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can create better public policies, resulting in the development of the refugee and of the host community. Finally, the greatest challenge to refugees, at a global level, is to find a permanent solution, not only in the host community, but also to help them end conflicts and, thus, prevent them from being forced to flee from their homes. The solution is social capital production.

The refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)² takes the lead and coordinates international action to protect refugees, seeking a solution to their problems at an international level, whilst safeguarding their rights and welfare and making it clear that they may voluntarily return to their country of origin, be integrated locally or be resettled in a third country, in a humanitarian and apolitical way.

The UNHCR's partnerships³ with NGOs are integral to the process of local integration of refugees in their repatriations to their country of origin. UNHCR therefore created the Partnerships in Action programme finding the best way of caring for and protecting refugees in these cases. Local governments, transnational companies, civil society, the refugees themselves and NGOs⁴, partners of UNHCR, provide services such as food, water, housing, legal assistance, education, medical care, training, advocacy and funds.

The partnerships show the need to instal a network⁵ society, fundamental to solving the problem of refugees, which, since its beginning, has shown no change. The considered durable solutions are repatriation, resettlement in a third country and local integration. This research examined integration in the host community, aiming to adjust the refugees to their new home.

To Chimni⁶, the definition of refugee in international law is of critical importance because it can mean the difference between life and death for an individual who seeks asylum. This definition has both historical and political origins. Realities make a difference when countries such as Brazil and Canada are trying to legally define what refuge is, not only by extending the definition given by the international community, through the UN, but also adapting them to local conditions.

² UNHCR. *Protecting Refugees and the Role of the UNHCR. 2007-2008*.

³ JUBILUT, Liliana. *The International Law of Refugees and it's Application in the Brazilian Legal System*, p. 156.

⁴ Cf. <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/3bb0773ec.html>, access 17 feb 2008.

⁵ CASTELLS, Manuel. *The Power of Identity*.

⁶ CHIMNI, Bhupinder Singh. *International Refugee Law: a Reader*, p. 1.

The legal definition of refugees, as article 1, § 1 of the 1951 Geneva Convention, amended by the 1967 Protocol, is “any person who is outside any country of such person’s nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution⁷ or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” Although persecution on grounds of gender is legally excluded from the granting of refuge, in practice it has been granted, because the majority of refugees are women and children.

While Brazil has a specific law for refugees (Act 9474/97), Canada⁸ protects rights within the norms that protect immigrants in general. However, both are considered leaders in the protection of refugees in the American continent and are models for their neighbours and for the world.

As for the rights of refugees in Brazil, the 1988 Constitution guarantees equality of rights for nationals and foreign residents (hereby are included refugees and asylum seekers) (article 5, *caput*). In Canada, the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms⁹ guarantees a number of rights and freedoms for individuals, whether citizens or not. In fact, section 7 of the Charter (right to life, liberty and safety of person) has been used to challenge various aspects of legal immigration and of refugees. Regarding economic and social rights, each province has its legal system which includes, among others, social and legal assistance.

There are some differences between Brazil and Canada related to the refugee regime, as follows: Brazil has a simple system, facilitating the application and entry of refugees, whereas Canada has a complex system, making it harder for the claimer at the border to acquire the refugee *status*. If, on the one hand, Brazil is seeking to take in and integrate them more effectively, Canada makes use of *refoulement*, detention and deportation centres. On the other hand, Brazil has just started its policy of resettlement and Canada has offices in several countries for tracking down. It means that both systems have positive and negative points.

For Castles¹⁰, globalization itself generates factors that promote mobility and are more powerful than measures of state control which does not

⁷ The 1951 Convention does not define the term persecution, but Hathaway defines it as sustained or systemic violation of basic human rights, demonstrating the failure of state protection. HATHAWAY, James C. *The Law of Refugee Status*, p. 105.

⁸ CANADA. *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act C-27*, 2001.

⁹ *Idem*. *The 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

¹⁰ CASTLES, Stephen. “The International Politics of Forced Migration”, p. 11-20.

eliminate the problem of refugees or any form of migration. For Huntington¹¹, a rapid change in the existing models for development is required.

The host country sometimes forgets that refugees are human beings equal to nationals, protected by domestic and international laws and cannot be sent back to the country of origin, as prescribed by the principle of *non refoulement*¹², as enshrined in the 1951 Convention, article 33 (2). *Refoulement*, “prescribes, *lato sensu*, that no refugee should be sent back to any country where he/she can suffer persecution or torture.” Moreover¹³, this principle is not absolute, because it can be revoked in the name of national security and public order. States like Canada, which are members of the Safe Third Country Agreement¹⁴, use these agreements to prevent refugees from entering the country, when they come from countries considered safe by the agreement. For Goodwin-Gill¹⁵, this is *refoulement*.

In proposing changes in models of global governance as regards refugees, the concern is the fact that there are about twenty million people¹⁶ on every continent. Castells¹⁷ argues that modern society has caused migration. In his view, it is because of the failure of the nation-state, or the liberal social welfare system, to comply with its role of protecting the citizen who has contributed to the flow of migrants. He believes that only the network society solves the problem of relationship between state and citizen. According to him, a network society would be one in which the state, the private sector, individuals, NGOs and the third sector would be united in achieving the same goal: collective welfare.

The social capital

For Tocqueville¹⁸, “after the freedom to act alone, the most innate freedom of a man is to combine his/her efforts with those of their peers and act together.” Classically, Bourdieu¹⁹ defines social capital as

¹¹ HUNTINGTON, Samuel. *The clash of civilizations and the rebuilding of World Order*.

¹² GOODWIN-GILL, Guy. *The Refugee in International Law*, p. 117.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 139.

¹⁴ UNHCR. *Canada – United States “Safe Third Country” Agreement. Monitoring Report, 2006*.

¹⁵ GOODWIN-GILL, Guy. *op. cit.*, p. 167-170.

¹⁶ UNHCR notes that, in 2007, there were 11.4 million refugees under its protection, in addition to the 4.6 million Palestinians under UNRWA protection, the internally displaced and stateless persons, asylum seekers, returnees and the “others”; totaling about 32.9 million forced migrants in the world under his protection. In total, there are around 77 million forced migrants in the world (in UNHCR. *2007 global trends: refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced and stateless persons*).

¹⁷ CASTELLS, Manuel, *op. cit.*, p. 287-363.

¹⁸ TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis de. *The Democracy in América*, p. 149.

¹⁹ BOURDIEU, Pierre. “The Forms of Capital”, p. 248.

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.

Coleman²⁰ notes that

social capital is one of those forms of capital which depreciate over time. Like human capital and physical capital, social capital depreciates if it is not renewed. Social relationships die out if not maintained; expectations and obligations wither over time; and norms depend on regular communication.

Moreover, the social capital is not just the private property of people who benefit, existing only when shared. Thus, Putnam²¹ agrees that “the more two people trust in each other, the bigger is their mutual confidence”, resulting in a public, not private benefit. Therefore, trust and cooperation complement each other in the production of social capital which may result from the rules of reciprocity and systems of civic participation.

In addition to Bourdieu and Coleman, Portes²² says that with social capital actors can gain direct access to economic resources, increase their cultural capital through contacts with experts or particular individuals or join the institutions that offer them valid credentials. For him, and also for Flap²³, social capital consists of resources (information, ideas and support) that individuals can obtain for their social relationships and “stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures”²⁴.

Portes²⁵ analyzes individual social capital in the same manner as Coleman and Bourdieu, and collective social capital as Putnam does, affirming that “there is nothing intrinsically wrong with redefining it as a structural property of large aggregates,” such as cities, countries and communities. For Putnam²⁶, social capital is the means by which members of a community interact in various informal networks and formal civic organizations,

²⁰ COLEMAN, James. *Foundations of Social Theory*, p. 321.

²¹ PUTNAM, Robert. *Community and Democracy – The Experience of Modern Italy*.

²² PORTES, Alejandro. “Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology”, p. 1-24.

²³ FLAP, Henrik. “Creation and Returns of Social Capital – a new research program”, p. 3-7.

²⁴ PORTES, Alejandro, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

²⁶ Putnam defines a civic community as a community where there is a vibrant associative life, connected, even through local journals, associations (cultural and recreational places, except, in operational terms, unions, the church and political parties) and attendance to the polls. It is the one which shows social relationships based on horizontal cooperation, trust, reciprocity, citizenship and collective welfare, resulting in the emergence of democracy and economic development (PUTNAM, Robert, *op. cit.*, p. 100-132).

from conversations with neighbours or engaging in recreational activities to becoming members of environmental, political and religiously affiliated organizations.

Portes and Putnam analyse the relationships of kinship, comparing it to horizontal civic engagement, considering family more universal than the need for weak ties that strengthen community collaboration. Granovetter²⁷, for whom strong interpersonal relationships (family and friendship) are less important than weak ties (knowledge and affiliation with secondary associations) to support community cohesion and collective action, disagrees with Bourdieu, for whom prestige, reputation and noble titles are more important than educational level. For Granovetter and Coleman, within systems with weak ties, individuals are more likely to join with other groups, increasing the probability of interaction and growth of capital; while in systems with strong ties, individuals are focused on their groups, isolating themselves and remaining uncooperative.

In the relationship between social capital and culture, Fukuyama²⁸ defines social capital as “a set of shared instantiated, informal values or norms that produces cooperation between two or more individuals.” If, on the one hand, Putnam agrees with Fukuyama, that social capital is only produced and accumulated in civic communities, on the other hand, he also believes that it can not be produced automatically or spontaneously.

Franco²⁹ argues that humans are naturally cooperative and, to achieve democracy, economic development and good governance, society needs to produce social capital, which he³⁰ defines as

the ability of people of a given society to subordinate individual in the interests of larger groups; to work together intending to the same goals or mutual benefit; to associate with each other and form new associations; and to share values and norms to form groups or organisations and to build, share the management and, in short, to live in community.

Therefore, “social capital is multidimensional and some of its dimensions are subject to different understanding”³¹. As to its forms³², it can be: bonding or intra-groups (links between similar people); bridging or

²⁷ GRANOVETTER, Mark. “The Strength of Weak Ties”, p. 1376.

²⁸ FUKUYAMA, Francis. “Capital Social”, p. 155-171.

²⁹ FRANCO, Augusto de. *Social Capital*, p. 20 and 49-67.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

³² ANUCHA, Uzo et al. *Social Capital and the Welfare of Immigrant Women: A Multi-Level Study of Four Ethnic Communities in Windsor*, p. 2-3; GROTAERT, Christiaan et al. *Integrated Questionnaire to Measure Social Capital (IQ-MS)*, p. 6-8; FIELD, John. *Social Capital*, p. 87-88; FLORA, Jan; FLORA, Cornelia Butler. *Desarrollo Comunitario en las Zonas Rurales de los Andes*, p. 555-578; PUTNAM, Robert; GOSS, Kristin A. *Democracies in Flux – The evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*, p. 11.

inter-group (social networks that link people with different characteristics); and linking (maintained ties with people who hold positions of authority). Anucha et al³³ point out that bridging social capital facilitates information and takes advantage of opportunities, and that bonding social capital reinforces exclusive identities and homogeneous grouping.

There is also a distinction between dense and tenuous³⁴ social capital, depending on the open or closed relationship between the members. Regarding the former, Putnam³⁵ mentions a group of coal miners, which work together every day, go out for a drink and go to church on Sundays, whilst in the latter, there are individuals that meet occasionally at markets or while waiting for a lift, for example.

Putnam³⁶ also lists the social capital of formal networks (with recognised offices, requirements for membership and regular meetings) or informal networks (e.g. family dinners). He also mentions inlooking (it promotes the interests of its members) or outlook social capital (concerned with public goods). Finally, Flap³⁷ divides social capital into individual (micro level) and collective (macro level).

This study evaluated the individual social capital produced by the refugees, focusing on it as multidimensional, .i.e., referring to groups, networks, norms and trust that people have available for productive³⁸ purposes.

As for the goal, it depends on the researcher's interest, the kind of social capital required for the research, how to measure it and also the variables used. In general, it can be related to democracy, to economic development and to the culture, also of importance in studies aiming to compare groups of migrants.

Emphasising the relationship between culture, economic development and democracy, Inglehart³⁹ argues that "the world is changing in order to erode traditional values" because "economic development brings, almost invariably, the decline of religion, of provincialism and cultural differences," For him, not only do the religion and family have an impact on their societies and cultures, but also on the social structure, economic level and the influence of colonial ties. For him, social capital is recognized as a cultural element which, together with other factors, promotes democratic culture.

³³ ANUCHA, Uzo et al., *op. cit.*, p. 2-3.

³⁴ This distinction is what Granovetter (*op. cit.*, p. 1973) called the relationship with strong ties and relationships with weak ties, stressing that the weak ties are more likely to produce social capital.

³⁵ PUTNAM, Robert; GOSS, Kristin, *op. cit.*, p. 9-12.

³⁶ *Ibidem.*

³⁷ FLAP, Henrik, *op. cit.*, p. 199-212.

³⁸ GROTAERT, Christiaan et al., *op. cit.*, p. 5-7.

³⁹ INGLEHART, Ronald. "Culture and Democracy", p. 133-153.

As for how it should be measured, Flap⁴⁰ maintains that given its multidimensional nature, its goals and its specific institutional conditions, there is no single means of measurement. The World Bank published a questionnaire⁴¹ which served as the basis for this research, in which the variables used were: groups and networks; degree of trust and solidarity; collective action and cooperation; sources of information and communication; social cohesion and inclusion; training and political action.

The social capital of refugees in São Paulo and in Toronto

The capital avoids the refugee dependence syndrome, making them feel useful. Moreover, it is assumed from interviews, that most of the social capital produced by the refugees remain in Brazil and Canada, with all the wealth produced by them accumulated in Sao Paulo and in Toronto.

It is considered that encouragement and supporting for refugees arriving in Sao Paulo and Toronto serve as a starting point for the development of society, as both cities are multiethnic metropolis. Unlike what happens in Canada, in Brazil, foreign nationals are considered under the 1988 Constitution, in which the 5^o article, *caput*, states that “all are equal before the law without distinction of any kind, guaranteeing to the Brazilian and foreign residents in the country the inviolability of the right to life, liberty, equality, safety and property.”

As for those interviewed in Sao Paulo, the majority are young, single and arrived alone, while in Toronto, most are married and came with their families. Being young and with some degree of education, they want to work and/or study to avoid the dependency syndrome, resulting from support policies imposed from above. However, 55% of those interviewed in Toronto who had graduated from university and the 14% who had not yet completed their course, still complained about the lack of employment access. Those interviewed obtained their job more easily in São Paulo than in Toronto. The new language and religion were not obstacles.

The causes of the refugeeism and its concession were perceived, by those interviewed, as being political-ideological persecution, human rights violations and racial-ethnic persecution. Thus, Brazil and Canada have an expanded definition of refugees, recognizing as refugees those who suffered human rights violations (in Brazil) or torture (in Canada). Regarding the fact they have chosen Brazil or Canada, the interviewees gave some reasons

⁴⁰ FLAP, Henrik; BOXMAN, Ed. “Getting Started: the Influence of Social Capital on the Start of the Occupational Career”, p. 159-181.

⁴¹ GROTAERT, Christiaan, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

such as the language, geographical proximity, culture, the aid promised by family members and also good information.

Amongst the biggest problems encountered, except for Africans in Brazil, inability to learn the language featured predominantly, associated with the difficulty of obtaining employment, discrimination, prejudice and problems of housing. In Toronto, the housing difficulty was the main complaint. With respect to prejudice and discrimination in Toronto, refugees complained, not about civil society, but about the long, bureaucratic and discriminatory legal procedure in the granting of refugee *status*.

Despite the difficulties, the interviewees identified some positive points about the host country. While some, especially Africans, complained about the climate, it was easier to find employment and housing for the interviewees in Sao Paulo than in Toronto, just as the local culture and language were more accessible (Africans and Latins had the advantage of sharing a similar or the same language spoken in Brazil). Unlike in Toronto, local culture, envisaged by interviewees as the support and trust of neighbours, was important in the integration process in São Paulo. Whilst the biggest difference in São Paulo was in government support, because in Toronto the Public Power has always been present.

As for the bonding social capital or intra-groups, the vast majority of interviewees in Sao Paulo keep in touch with their compatriots in Brazil and in the country of origin. The majority of them, except for Moslems, send some financial aid to relatives abroad. Furthermore, most Latins and Africans receive some money from relatives abroad, unlike the Moslems. In Toronto, most maintain contact with their compatriots in Canada and at home. Regarding the money remittances, only a few do, due to financial difficulties encountered in Toronto. It is a fact that all Latins and Arabs (and 89% of Africans) acknowledged receiving some money from relatives outside.

Moreover, in São Paulo, the majority of respondents want to return to the country of origin, whilst, in Toronto, the vast majority do not want to return. When asked what they would like to modify in their new lifestyle, the majority mentioned employment acquisition / improvement and further study; seeking self-sufficiency being the main motive. An important data was that 36% of the Arabs and 33% of Africans in Toronto, said that they wouldn't change anything in their new lives. Many of them expressed it in this way: "There isn't any more to change, everything has already been changed."

Looking closely at the interviews, it appears that there is social capital produced by interviewees in Sao Paulo and Toronto, in various ways

and degrees, depending on the interviewed group. For example, refugees, individually, produce bonding social capital (within their own groups), bridging social capital (when seeking and/or accepting support from people outside their groups), linking social capital (among refugees, for example, and associations' workers to which they belong, especially when there are cultural or religious associations), tenuous social capital (the interviewees said they, sporadically go out to meet groups of friends and/or acquaintances in public places and/or in private only for a drink and/or to chat), dense social capital (interviewed members of neighbourhood associations, such as religious, cultural, ethnic or local language study groups, meeting daily or weekly for voluntary services in support of the community and newcomers), social capital of formal network (interviewed members of voluntary immigrant associations) and social capital of informal network (meetings and gatherings with neighbours and friends, even sporadically).

There are, also, inlooking and outlooking social capital formation among the interviewees, such as refugees who were concerned about trying to help their compatriots and refugees engaged in support services, voluntary or not, in NGOs, unselfishly, helping newcomers and other refugees, their compatriots or not. Finally, individual and collective social capital were identified. Although this study examined only the micro-level social capital (refugee access to available resources), several available resources to interviewees result from NGO support. It was, therefore, necessary to carry out visits and interviews in some of these organizations.

The support networks for refugees

While in Toronto there are various NGOs providing support to refugees, there were difficulties in identifying them in São Paulo, due to the lack of government support in Brazil and the monopoly exercised by the *Caritas* Refugee Programme⁴² in Sao Paulo, which is responsible for meeting all demands of the refugees in the region (about half of refugees arrived in Brazil). In Canada, the national policy on refugees aims to share the garden of the Ontario province, which, due to geographical issues, takes most of the refugees arriving in the country, sending them to other provinces and facilitating the opening and maintenance of other NGOs.

There are available, in the *Caritas* Refugee Programme, for refugees and asylum seekers in São Paulo, assistance programs (food, housing, health and assistance with documentation and transport), integration (integration

⁴² FURTIM, Cezira; JUBILUT, Liliana. Interviewed by the author for this research in 2008. All interviews can be read in full in the original thesis.

of employment and education), protection and legal assistance, mental health and citizenship and divulgation. The refugee population in São Paulo and, in general, in Brazil have access to all public services designated as universal by the 1988 Constitution, such as freedom of movement in the country, unlike in Canada, where there are different provincial rules. In other words, the refugee, after having settled in one province, is not allowed to be established in another one without prior permission from both (the receiver and the sender province).

Although the *Caritas* Refugee Programme has partnerships with other institutions, access wasn't possible, except for Dr. Francisco Lotufo⁴³, from the mental health program, and CREDISOL, owing the fact that *Caritas* didn't pass on the information, claiming it to be confidential. *Caritas* did however pointed out some of the needs of the refugees: the failure of subsistence aid provided in the first 6 months; insufficient rooms; huge waiting lists for dental care; the high cost in partner pensions; difficulties in renting property; partial lack of healthcare access; insufficient places in childcare and schools rosters; etc..

In Canada, there is the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)⁴⁴, an NGO run by a volunteer executive committee, elected by the members (about 180 organizations). There are, however, other NGOs, in support of refugees and immigrants in general which are not members of the CCR, some of which have even been visited, interviewed and analysed. There are no such organizations in Brazil.

Using the participatory observation, 8 NGOs⁴⁵ were visited in Toronto, comparing them with the *Caritas* Refugee Programme in Sao Paulo, as follows: *Gente de habla Hispana Center*; FCJ Refugee Center; Matthew House Refugee Reception Center; House of St. Kitts; SIAO - Somali Immigrants Aid Organization; COSTI Immigrant Services; the Salvation Army - Services for Immigrants and Refugees; and Canadian Red Cross (CRC) - Programme for Immigrants and Refugees.

It became clear from the interviews that a host civil society has to take part in the integration of refugees. Although in São Paulo, between 2006 and June 2008, several programmes in the media had been spreading news about refugees, they nevertheless remained invisible in the eyes of the local population, who still regarded them as criminals. If, in São Paulo refugees

⁴³ He was interviewed for the research.

⁴⁴ Current information on the Canadian Council on Refugees is in the official web page of the Council: www.ccrweb.ca

⁴⁵ They were interviewed for the research.

are largely invisible to society, in Toronto they are apparently segregated from the native population.

Carolina Gajardo, Project Manager of the COSTI Immigrant Housing Services, said that “the participation of civil society in NGOs and community development programmes are the solution.” Only in this way can civil society be sensitized to the problems of refugees, by facilitating their integration. This segregation of refugees in Toronto begins in their own homes, where they are forced to share rooms with other families, which, in terms of housing, makes São Paulo better than Toronto.

The NGOs networks remain weak if their programmes are not produced in the public sector and local society which facilitate the access of refugees to already constitutionally promoted rights. The NGOs gain importance through articulation initiatives with the State and the private sector, which improve people’s standard of living which forms the basis of it. To Wanderley⁴⁶, “although not free of ambiguity, they are providing precious subsidies for the expected publicization, by providing relevant public services and by creating innovative forms of partnership with public authorities.” The role of networks, in supporting access of refugees to citizen rights, is primordial.

The integration of refugees

The interviewees become integrated, to a greater or lesser degree, which should not be confused with cultural assimilation, or the process by which the individual needs to erase his/her cultural past in order to become absorbed into a new culture, in order to be adjusted to the host community. For Schmidt⁴⁷, “investing in social capital, [...] takes to network formation, [...] that is, social ties generating trust.” To be integrated is not the same as to feel citizen in the host place. But networks and groups formation is the first step to achieving it.

Firstly, in economic terms, despite local government programs for integration for poor people in the labour market, such as CREDISOL (*Instituição de Crédito Solidário*) in São Paulo, the refugees almost unanimously complained about difficulties in joining to the labour market, which leads to self-sustainability of the family and economic development, eliminating a probable dependence syndrome. That complaint came especially from women, who claimed to be offered only temporary work and did not have

⁴⁶ WANDERLEY, Luis Eduardo Waldemarin. “Direction of the Public Order in Brazil - the construction of the Public”, p. 101.

⁴⁷ SCHMIDT, Benicio. *The course on Social Movements in Americas (Social Capital)*.

a specific place or people to whom to leave their children, making it harder to become part of the local labour market.

Secondly, in social terms, in addition to the difficulties of economic integration, lack of opportunities to learn the local language is another barrier (except for Angolans in Sao Paulo), despite free courses offered by SESC (*Serviço Social do Comércio*) in São Paulo and the LINC Program (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) in Toronto. Another problem is the difficulty in obtaining places in universities, as in Brazil and Canada, despite free elementary and high school for children and adolescent refugees, many of whom need to study to get better jobs, whilst, in Toronto, all complained about the lack of access, since universities are private and expensive.

The same complaint applied to access to the health care which although free in Sao Paulo, is very precarious, whilst in Toronto, the refugees need to be registered on the Social Welfare Program in order to obtain certain medicines and go for tests. There was no complaint about religious or cultural freedom or the climate (not even in Toronto).

Politics is another factor that characterises refugee integration. The interviewees mentioned they would like to have more time to engage in voluntary associations to help their compatriots and also to defend their rights and their own community as said by some Latin American interviewed in Toronto, who complained about “lack of unity” among the members of this community, who “do not help each other to improve their lives in Toronto.” However, the interviews showed that perhaps because they do not have the right to vote and to be voted for, in neither city did the refugees interviewed worry about the local political party, regional or national (with rare exceptions), being unaware of the government platforms of the main leaders. Some of them said they had already taken part in meetings with their community to petition and/or demand improvements for the benefit of themselves and/or members of their community.

Finally, in cultural terms, the refugees (except for an interviewees in Toronto), did not complain about the new environment into which they are settled in, being already able to make friends, understand and make themselves understood in the host place, regarding their wishes, needs and goals, although these are not always fulfilled, specially among their compatriots and/or individuals from the same culture and/or religion, what would generate trust and reciprocity which are the basis for social capital creation. From the interviews conducted, it became evident that refugees fit the new culture without destroying its cultural background in the new environment.

Integration should serve as the basis for modern concepts of citizenship, rose from the globalization process of removing borders, in the same dimensions as the theory of integration⁴⁸, because what the interviewees feel is the lack of access to rights that, theoretically, should be provided by the State, which is the public entity responsible for making the refugees feel they are citizens in the new host community.

For Nyers⁴⁹, “citizenship is something that is taken as much as is given”; more than a legal condition, it is the recognition of a person. The need to create new forms of citizenship is justified, for refugees and immigrants in general, due to the constant threats resulted from being labeled as unwanted, which profoundly affects their integration, preventing them from seeing and being seen as citizens. With citizenship, structural problems can be transformed, allowing them to avoid or, at least, to see the risk and uncertainty in their lives reduced.

Therefore, citizenship, and also social capital, is a multidimensional element that could be used for various purposes and also to harmonize relations between different subjects, depending on the purpose, justifying the need to seek the meaning of modern citizenship used in Brazil and Canada, for this research.

In Brazil, Dagnino⁵⁰ emphasizes that Brazil needs to strengthen the concept of differentiated citizenship, which means “introducing the idea of collective rights, which are relevant to a certain group of people who share ethnic and cultural identities.” In São Paulo, for example, the interviewees claimed that although there are specific rules to assist them, there are not enough qualified people to perform the service, such as translators and public workers to help them with micro-credit projects (CREDISOL).

The interviewees in Sao Paulo complained about the lack of access to employment, education and the health care system. Even those who were employed said that they would like to get a better job. In practice, refugees do not have access to citizen rights, not feeling as citizens in the new host place.

In Canada, Kymlicka⁵¹ argues that citizenship is still confused with nationality or the legal citizenship. This country submits its nationals to national policy on multiculturalism, imposed from above, contrary to the integrationist processes occurring with foreigners in Brazil, corned out from

⁴⁸ SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa (org). *Globalization and Social Sciences*, p. 25-102.

⁴⁹ NYERS, Peter. “Introduction: Why Citizenship Studies”, p. 3.

⁵⁰ DAGNINO, Avelina. “Meanings of Citizenship in America Latina”, p. 33-35.

⁵¹ KYMLICKA, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship – A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*; KYMLICKA, Will. “Immigration, Citizenship, Multiculturalism: Exploring the Links”, p. 195-208.

the bottom up. This multicultural citizenship provides language classes for refugees, access to insurance, unemployment and health care, allows freedom of expression and association and, most importantly, protection against anti-discriminatory laws related to housing and employment, although all of the interviewees in Toronto complained about access to housing and many were unemployed. Moreover, Canada deports refugees convicted of serious crimes, while in Brazil they are not deported, expelled or extradited.

Those interviewed in Toronto also complained about the delay in the outcome of the decision, undocumented detention and also deportation and *refoulement*, practised in Canada. Ultimately, they do not feel like citizens and the host society fears they will make fraudulent requests, hence treating them indifferently⁵². The intention to provide quick legal citizenship to immigrant in Canada, according to Kymlicka⁵³, is proven by the fact that

when immigrants achieve a psychological and legal security that comes with citizenship, they have a higher probability of establishing roots, of contributing to local community initiatives [...], and investing in the language skills and social capital needed to thrive and, more specifically, in developing stronger feelings of Canadian identity and loyalty.

Therefore, in addition to the fact that interviewees in general do not feel like true citizens, because of denial of some rights, due to lack of appropriate public policies or of knowledge of culture, of language and/or of local institutions working way, there are also difficulties with access to guaranteed rights in the new home. Hence, interference of refugees' cultural background and of adopted public policies in social capital formation need to go.

The interference of cultural background and public policies on integration

Culture is, to Inglehart⁵⁴, "a system of common basic values, attitudes and knowledge widely shared in a given society and passed from generation to generation." Being multidimensional just as social capital and citizenship, culture serves to study almost everything, including the local integration of refugees in the host community and the social capital generated by them.

Refugees do not want to be aculturated⁵⁵ to the host place and they should not be obliged to do so. They should only have the right and the op-

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 199.

⁵⁴ INGLEHART, Ronald. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, p. 18-19.

⁵⁵ Aculturation "is the process by which racial and ethnic groups learn and begin to participate in cultural traditions, values and beliefs and take part of the dominant culture or the host community practices"

portunity to maintain their own culture and, in a hybrid perspective, should acquire features of the new culture, which is necessary for adaptation and inclusion in their new home. This can be done through public policies.

Public policies are, in general, implemented by the government, directly or through authorised agents, to improve standards of living of the population, referring not only to assistentialist policies, but also to any policies directed at the population. For Klein & Marmor⁵⁶, public policy is “what the government does and also what the government refuses to do. Everything refers to politics”. Its implementation comes from partnerships between the public and the private sectors.

In Brazil, act 9474/97 and the implementation of the resettlement programme justified the need to create public policies to integrate refugees and asylum seekers, who also need to recognize the ones already in existence. Unfortunately, in São Paulo, there were no specific policies for refugees who had been allowed to stay. There are ongoing programmes and activities oriented towards refugees, by agreement between UNHCR, the *Caritas* and certain other organs or agencies.

Positive results in the establishment and implementation of policies may be achieved more quickly if and when public and private sectors and civil society articulate, *i.e.*, when they become aware of the importance of the network society in the refugees’ host community, facilitating the social capital formation. Only then, can they move within and between networks, accumulating resources, creating networks of trust and cooperation for citizen recognition and obtaining access to rights.

In Canada⁵⁷, while the refugee determination procedure is not finished, the claimer can not work or require permanent residence, being considered “immigrant without *status*”, or refugees *in limbo*, and may be deported (*refoulement*).

According to Nyers⁵⁸, “what begins as a legitimate demand for protection may end up as a cruel form of discrimination”, because the hard borderline to be crossed by the refugee is not only the physical border, but also the boundary of access to public services, in the host community, such as housing, health care, school and access to employment.

(LANDRINE Hope; KLONOFF Elizabeth A., apud BUDDINGTON, Steve Apalong. “Acculturation, Psychological Adjustment (stress, depression, self-esteem) and the Academic Achievement of Jamaican Immigrant College Students”, p. 447-464).

⁵⁶ KLEIN, Rudolf; MARMOR, Theodore. “Reflections on Policy Analysis: Putting it Together Again”, p. 893.

⁵⁷ CANADA. *Citizenship and Immigration Canada*. Section: Refugees.

⁵⁸ NYERS, Peter. *Access not Fear – Non-Status Immigrants & City Services*, p. 9.

According to the report above, the government and many NGOs provide essential services, but no articulated policy to deal with refugees or asylum seekers *in limbo*, without basic rights guaranteed. Some who are resettled are selected abroad and they do not face problems of access to rights, having arrived in Canada with work permit and a permanent residence visa, being able to apply for citizenship after 3 years.

Thus, there are public policies directed at refugees in Sao Paulo and Toronto, which are not publicised, generally depend on state bureaucracy and the time taken by responsible agents for their implementation. Brazil, as a liberal state, despite the various support policies established (Community Solidarity, Family-Aid etc.), is different from Canada, a social democratic state, as to the policies adopted for refugees. For Sefton⁵⁹, “the liberal regime has policy focused on the poor or minority specific groups, whilst social democracy is universal and it favours universal welfare provision for all”.

There are universal policies in Sao Paulo and Toronto, which does not consider the cultural background of refugees or the reasons for arrival, such as slow bureaucracy in the refugee *status* determination, which would enable access to rights. These individuals arrive with mental and psychological disorders and urgent physical needs. On the other hand, there are focused policies, such as free language courses.

Therefore, Brazil (liberal) and Canada (social democrat) are characterised as *hybrid regime*, regarding public policies for refugees and asylum seekers: there are universal policies and target policies for specific situations, especially in Toronto, whose direct policies (adopted by the government) are universal, and the target policies are indirect (implemented via NGOs).

Conclusions

Regarding refugees, it would be better to create and implement redistributive policies, even if indirectly, through authorised agents or agencies, such as *Caritas* in São Paulo and reception centers for refugees in Toronto, which include, among their employees and/or volunteers, citizens who were refugees.

Universal policies do not usually reach the refugees and/or asylum seekers, due to the lack of knowledge of how local institutions work and hence they do not have access to programmes targeted at nationals, at residents in the country and, *lato sensu*, at host foreigners. As to target policies, to be implemented successfully, they need media support or an effective channel of communication for the asylum seekers and/or refugees so that they can benefit from them.

⁵⁹ SEFTON, Tom. “Distributive and Redistributive Policy”, p. 611.

Interviewees seek further information via television (38% in Sao Paulo and Toronto) and on the internet (33% in São Paulo and 23% in Toronto). *Ipsa facto*, this research suggests more contact by television and mail is required, so that refugees can obtain information and also inform the host community on their rights.

Social capital, as such, is not acquired automatically and needs the visible hand of government to formulate and implement universal and target public policies at refugees. Universal public policies facilitate integration, making the refugees feel they are citizens, avoiding segregation and reducing physical, mental and psychological problems which refugees brought from the place of origin.

Escaping from collective deaths, these individuals seek refuge in multicultural cities, but end up living in isolation and exclusion, if there aren't public policies on integration. Hence, 42% of interviewees in Sao Paulo and 57% in Toronto claimed not to belong to any group or network. The lack of trust in people was heightened with the trauma of exile. Accordingly, 73% of interviewees in Sao Paulo and 67% in Toronto said that overall, people are not reliable.

Having broken with their community of origin, asylum seekers feel they are in a strange world. Traumas are more easily ended up when adapted to a new culture and a new system. To Pestre⁶⁰ "the collision that occurs within the psyche among mental, social and political disaster is universal and confronts each one with the uniqueness of his/her history and his/her culture".

All interviewees fled from persecution or fear of persecution. Thus, although coming from different regions with different cultures, histories, traumas, conflicts and realities, the refugees or the asylum seekers need to break, temporarily, with the community of origin and establish links with their new home, integrating themselves, feeling useful, participating of social life, *ie*, creating social capital in the new home.

The creation of networks and social relations of trust and cooperation, essential for obtaining or maintaining adequate resources, will enable the refugee or the asylum seeker to feel citizen and to be seen like that by the host community. However, the states strengthen their trauma in different situations, such as in the pain of waiting and the necessity of the interviews⁶¹. The individual is forced to relive trauma and pain in a court to prove he/she is a victim of persecution and also the journey made to the host country, as well as to recognise his/her own diseases.

⁶⁰ PESTRE, Elise. *L'État, le réfugié et son thérapeute: Les Conditions de vie psychique des réfugiés*, p. 140.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 143-171.

The state, in order to categorize the individual in a clinical and legal aspect, recognizes him/her as a victim of persecution and trauma, in order to give them access to citizens' rights; therefore, if he/she is not a victim, he/she will not have refugee's rights, and may even be deported. Hence, "the trauma and how to diagnose it are more important to legal sciences which are only interested in the regime of proofs and ownership of attention to the legal issues."⁶² This clinical-legal aspect of the state practice lacks the cultural aspect which is also needed in order to reduce and avoid distortions of understanding.

In this era of integration, culture is required to produce networks of social capital and for the treatment of disorders or diseases that affect the asylum seekers and refugees. For example, among the interviewees who stated belonging to any group or network, religion and gender were the most cited.

Due to cultural differences, lack of physical and mental health, to language difficulties and the fear of what is new, it is important to ask if the asylum seeker or the refugee will be able to convince the state authorities of the persecution and trauma they are suffering, from the time they set out to the arrival in the new home, because there is not always preparation or help in supplying answers to the immigration authority, as well as a lack of knowledge of local rules.

Owing to the trauma and difficulties faced by the asylum seekers and/or refugees, it is necessary target public policies, considering each culture, resulting from the relationship among cultural background, the cause of the flight and the need for integration, without requiring acculturation that could lead to segregation or social *apartheid*.

The solution is to modify the legal system and strengthen public policies that help in the creation of social capital. Resources must be available to refugees in accordance with their cultural diversity, and access to social networks should be facilitated. Public policies should avoid segregation and strengthen self-esteem, enabling the refugees to accept themselves and also accept their new home.

In this research, although the majority of interviewees recognise differences between their own and local characteristics, more than half said they do not cause problems. Thus, Durston⁶³ argues that "a national policy for social capital formation can incorporate learning from other countries, but could and should also be based on proper diversity of cultural back-

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 367-8.

⁶³ DURSTON, John. "Capital Social: Parte del Problema, Parte de la Solución, su Papel en la Persistencia y en la Superación de la Pobreza en América Latina y el Caribe", p. 197.

ground and of social forms.” For a public policy to become effective and compatible with the social needs, it has to be focused on the culture of the beneficiary and their peculiarities, although there may be universal public policies that put an end to deficiencies in other areas of refugees’ life, making it easier the social capital formation to the development of the refugee, the host community, government and private sector.

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Resumo

O capital social dos refugiados: bagagem cultural e políticas públicas

Este estudo analisa o capital social dos refugiados, aglutinando o papel da bagagem cultural trazida por eles do país de origem com as políticas públicas adotadas no local de acolhimento. Sua importância reside nas relações que se formam entre locais e estrangeiros, mais precisamente entre refugiados e comunidade local, devido à irreversibilidade do fenômeno migratório. Assim, há necessidade de melhor preparar a comunidade e o governo acolhedores para recebê-los, pois a integração entre os três poderá unir forças que enfraquecerão problemas conjunturais já enraizados no cerne da sociedade, como a falta de confiança na própria comunidade e nas instituições públicas. A comparação e a transdisciplinaridade são as abordagens utilizadas, pois não há ciência, singularmente, que solucione a problemática dos refugiados.

Palavras-chave: Refugiado; Capital social; Bagagem cultural; Políticas públicas

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