Returning Migrants and Global Reparation

Vincenzo Ruggiero[1]

1 Middlesex University

Abstract

The decision to migrate is not a one-way choice, as many migrants return to their countries of origin after varying periods of time. Return migration can be coercive and voluntary, it may entail a ban from re-entry into the destination country and/or accompanied by incentives and practical support in the country where migrants return. After a brief examination of the controversial way in which return migration is dealt with in the UK, this paper looks at some examples of returning migrants provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The cases examined are then connected to campaigns that pursue reparation for slavery, leading the conclusion that a combination of successful returns and global reparation would alleviate the concerns allegedly caused by contemporary international migration.

Vincenzo Ruggiero[1]

[1]*Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom*

Introduction

Migration has produced a vast academic literature and a wealth of practical activity that match the enormous human crisis behind it. Study centres, university degrees, discussion networks and NGOs have proliferated the world over, accompanying the increasing waves of people's movement across continents and countries. Analyses have linked the need to relocate with civil strife and climate change, noting that, as borders become more porous, fear of immigrants spreads in a parallel escalation. Critical accounts describe the hostile environment in receiving countries and the scapegoating processes afflicting new comers (Goodfellow, 2020). Legislations and campaigns hinging on 'hate' have been denounced (Dhaliwal, 2015), while the growing distance between hubristic claims of cosmopolitanism and institutional practices in dealing with non-nationals has been unveiled (Bhambra, 2017).

Avoiding the daunting task of travelling through the massive materials available, this paper follows in the footsteps of contributions that examine migration policies as the product of racial capitalism and/or as a destructive legacy of colonialism (Bhattacharyia, 2018; Metha, 2019). In this respect, the suggestion has been made that asylum should be

deemed a form of reparation for past injustice. Refugees should be welcomed, particularly by receiving states that are often responsible for the their displacement. Reparation, it is argued, is inscribed in the framework of international law and could work as meaningful restitution and compensation (Souter, 2014). As migration is entangled with colonialism, protection is also advocated for economic migrants, whose need for relocation requires a radical rethinking of state sovereignty (Achiume, 2019). Receiving states, in other words, are requested to treat economic migrants as political agents who exercise the equality of rights that should accompany decolonization. Responsibility and redress also feature in the literature that inspires the present paper, particularly when such variables are extended to embrace contemporary global inequality (Bradley, 2014; Mayblin and Turner, 2020).

In the following pages, UK policies that encourage return migration are examined as potential, if controversial, forms of redress. Such policies, it is argued, could be effective if the redress they allegedly provide were complemented with reparation for slavery. After a brief examination of the way in which return migration is dealt with in the UK, examples are offered of what the International Organization for Migration (IOM) regards as successful returning migrants. The link that connects return migration with potential reparation is then explicated, and a brief account is given of the latter, focusing on the debate occurring in the US and in former UK colonies. In conclusion, the point is made that a combination of successful returns and global reparation would alleviate the concerns allegedly caused by contemporary international migration.

Immigration offenders

The decision to migrate is not a one-way choice, as many migrants return to their countries of origin after varying periods of time. Return migration can be coercive and voluntary, it may entail a ban from re-entry into the destination country and/or accompanied by incentives and practical support in the country where migrants return.

In the UK, two major official documents are available on migrants' return, one addressed to migrants, one to law enforcers. The former displays a mellifluous tone in an effort to sound reasonable, persuasive and even endearing towards the possible recipients (Home Office, 2021a), while the latter is characterized by bureaucratic firmness and a pugnacious vocabulary (Home Office, 2021b). The former document offers a 'service', that is the Voluntary Returns Service (VRS), which 'provides help, guidance and practical support (including reintegration funds where applicable) for asylum claimants and other non-detained individuals who want to return to their country of origin' (Home Office, 2021a: 2). Those addressed are described as 'individuals' and include 'those who are in the UK illegally or have overstayed their visa or permission to stay' (ibid). Applications are also solicited from people who can prove to be victims of modern slavery and from EU citizens who do not own settled status. The emphasis is on 'help', provided to migrants in the form of advice, travel documents, tickets and financial support 'of up to £3,000, which you can use to find somewhere to live, find a job or start a business in your home country' (ibid: 3).

The document addressed to law enforcers makes a precise lexical choice, as it obsessively utilizes the term 'immigration offenders', perhaps to remind officers that what they face is crime, not human crisis. The expression 'voluntary return' is coupled with 'detention', thus conveying a clear picture of the options available:

> *'Even where the VRS application has been approved, it may become appropriate to set removal directions for an enforced return, for example in cases where non-compliance indicates that the individual may fail to fully comply with the process or fail to depart (Home Office, 2021b: 8).*

Suspicion looms large in the formulation of criteria, as in the statement that voluntary return should be denied if 'there is reason to believe' that individuals 'may not' depart or are currently subject to 'possible prosecution'. In such cases, 'deportation is more appropriate' (ibid: 4).

In 2020 there were around '8,000 returns from the UK, comprising both enforced and voluntary returns: this is down from a peak of around 47,000 in 2013. Travel restrictions imposed because of the pandemic substantially reduced all major types of returns from the UK in 2020' (The Migration Observatory, 2021: 2). When compared with 2019, enforced returns fell by 80%.

The Home Office prefers voluntary returns 'in part because its research shows that they are much cheaper: the average cost of a voluntary return is £1,000, compared to £15,000 for an enforced return' (ibid: 2). However, after 2015, the number of voluntary returns has fallen more steeply. It is of interest to note that, 'in every year from 2010 to 2019, citizens of South Asian countries made up the largest share of those who left the UK via enforced or voluntary return. However, in 2020, for the first time since records began, EU citizens were most likely to be returned, making up a quarter of all returnees' (ibid: 3).

Factors behind the erratic trajectory of statistics include availability of detention space, the introduction of hostile policies and changes implemented after the Windrush scandal. However, a constant feature of the way in which the UK deals with returning migrants revolves around notions of legality, crime and punishment, rather than human needs and wellbeing. This approach hampers the appreciation of the potential collective benefits that migrants' return might produce. For instance, after a period of employment in the host country, migrants may acquire income, skills, savings and know-how and, when returning and finding favourable conditions in the country of origin, provide chances for fellow countrypersons to avoid migration.

IOM Voluntary Return Programmes

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) operates three types of assisted voluntary return programmes. The first are generally available to all irregular migrants; the second to irregular transit migrants and the third are country-specific programmes (IOM, 2002). Return programmes consist of three basic stages: pre-departure stage, focused on information, counseling, medical care, travel allowances and reinstallation grants. Transportation stage, that may include the provision of documents, travel formalities and pre-embarkation medical checks. Post-arrival stage, consisting in inland transport and reintegration assistance, often in cooperation with development agencies and NGOs.

These assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes are presented by IOM as dignified ways of providing support to migrants and, at the same time, to their countries of origin. Return and reintegration are said to 'have

become increasingly prominent in the migration governance agenda. For host and transit countries, return is an important means of exercising the sovereign right to determine who can enter and remain on their territory' (IOM, 2021: 3). This sovereign right, however, can only be exercised if host and transit countries become aware that migrants' return 'can strain the socioeconomic fabric of their country of origin, especially when high numbers of returnees arrive within a short period of time' (ibid). Neglecting this aspect in the rash of returning unwanted migrants may turn into further and more intense migration waves. It is for this reason that IOM attempt to evaluate the extent to which home countries have 'the right policies to encourage investment by returnees and to use their skills. Policy options include reducing red tape, providing information on investment possibilities, and establishing a favourable macroeconomic environment for investment' (Wahba, 2021: 5).

IOM programmes undertake community-level reintegration assistance, which entails a comprehensive assessment, also called a community profile. This 'identifies the needs and resources of a community and the impact of return migration on these' (IOM, 2020: 4). The profile attempts to identify the 'barriers to sustainable reintegration and sources of community resilience', acting as a guide to create collaboration between returnees and local people (IOM, 2020: 5).

Drivers of return decisions

Research conducted on 'migrants who have already returned gives a retrospective picture of what affected their decision' (OECD, Library, 2020: 5). Of crucial importance are social conditions in the host country, a favourable political and social climate in the country of origin and, of course, individual factors. Returns may be triggered by hostility, discrimination and poor opportunities in host countries. Disappointment with the standard of living, exposure to unemployment and failure to access the social security system are also drivers.

'A large household survey in 11 countries of origin captured more than 3,000 return migrants. The main reason for return was overall preference for the home country, followed by failure to obtain legal status in the host country and difficulties in integration' (ibid: 7). Accelerating factors, however, included assurance of a dignified life in the country of origin in the long run. Returns, however, are more likely when migrants are ready to invest what they have earned in the country of origin, but also when that country promises reasonable prospects of further earnings.

In brief, return 'is explained as a logical step after migrants have earned sufficient assets and knowledge to invest in their country' of origin (ibid). Migration policies facilitating such logical step, therefore, are likely to accelerate and intensify migrant's return. Simultaneously, the social conditions of the countries to which migrants return must be desirable enough to determine their choice. Ultimately, return strategies require wide-ranging socio-economic improvements in both host and return countries. In concrete terms, this means a leveling up process achieved through the redistribution of resources, a process that can be termed of global reparation. But it is now time to tentatively identify the relationship between return migration and reparation.

Returning migrants are led to feel that the support they receive is a form of reparation, an advance compensation of sorts, for the conditions that forced them to migrate. As for the states helping them, they may hope that what they give releases them from providing more substantial reparation. Consciously or otherwise, the states that fund migrants to

return to their country of origin may even, if vaguely, accept the idea of reparation but attempt to economize when turning that idea into a concrete offer. Returning migrants, in their turn, may optimistically locate the help received in a more general support programme to which they feel entitled, regarding that help as an 'account' that will evolve into more generous forms of reparation. In brief, the return of migrants may be seen as a step towards full responsibility on the part of affluent countries for righting the wrongs they caused in the past and continue to cause in the present. What for migrants is an 'opening' that may lead to more radical reparation, for wealthy states is a summary way of paying a fraction of their debt and quickly close the account.

Reparations

A contentious political theme, reparation is invoked by descendants of people held in slavery, who present the descendants of slave owners with a post-dated bill: 'Your father isn't here to pay. My father isn't here to collect. But I am here to collect, and you're here to pay' (Ameke, 2021: 50).

The debate around reparation for slavery was ignited by the awareness that 'only in 2015, according to the Treasury, British taxpayers finished 'paying off' the debt that the government incurred in order to compensate British slave owners. Not a penny was paid to those who were enslaved and brutalized' (Fowler, 2000: 15). Tax Justice Network attempted to identify the financial companies that granted the loans to government and, despite repeated requests, the creditors remained unnamed.

> *'Legacies of slavery continue to shape life for the descendants of the formerly enslaved. Mothers, fathers, their children and grandchildren have paid taxes to compensate those who enslaved their own ancestors' (ibid: 2).*

It could be added that descendants of enslaved people keep paying with marginalization and exclusion for the freedom accorded to their ancestors.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, when slaves were given freedom, their survival relied on the land the authorities promised to each family. As that promise was never kept, campaigners opted for direct financial payments or relief initiatives supporting the disadvantaged. An international approach to the issue emerged when campaigners called for the abolition of debts owed by African countries.

Precise estimates were made of the value of unpaid labour forced onto slaves and the harm caused to African and Caribbean economies. In the US, reparations are also computed through the gaps in wealth between Blacks and the rest of the population. Demands include state funds destined to descendants of slaves who intend to repatriate to Africa. 'Over the past half-century, calls for reparations have come from US Black political leaders including Jesse Jackson' (Goldberg, 2021: 4), many NGOs, religious groups, a number of African nations and Caricom, a grouping of Caribbean states.

Although the focus is on government finances, lawsuits against companies have also been brought, for example against investment banks, insurance firms and tobacco producers, whose corporate ancestors benefitted from slavery.

Shaniyat Chowdhury, running for Congress in 2020, when asked about the most urgent goal he would pursue,

answered: reparations addressing centuries of racial injustice (Goldberg, 2021). The idea of addressing the sins committed by a country over 400 years sounded singularly remarkable when pronounced by a congressional candidate. And yet, back in 1989 a bill on the study of reparations was presented by representative John Conyers, who said he would do so until it would become law. With the passing of the years, the prospect of this happening became increasingly distant, as two-thirds of Americans opposed reparations while Barak Obama, in 2016, deemed the idea impractical. In 2019, however, the debate was revived when proposals for the study of the impact of slavery were articulated. The word 'reparation' began to be frequently mentioned in electoral campaigns, although as moral obligation rather than as a concrete mechanism for the redistribution of wealth. In Germany the victims of the Holocaust had received reparation, therefore the US could start thinking about a similar effort.

After the killing of George Floyd, the idea of defunding of the police could be read as a form of indirect reparation, while other forms of indirect reparations came from corporations and employers funding studentships for minority people. On the other hand, the easiness with which funds were bestowed during the covid-19 pandemic shows how monetary resources can be accessed when necessary. It should be noted, however, that direct or indirect reparations do not entail an abandonment of the objective to reduce the wealth gap through increase in salaries and stricter anti-discrimination laws.

Barbadians stopped recognizing Queen Elizabeth as their supreme authority and stepped up a campaign aimed at reparation (Reuters, 1 December 2021).

> *'Barbados received 600,000 enslaved Africans between 1627 and 1833, and calls for reparations have often targeted specific individuals. For example, Richard Drax, a Conservative member of the British Government, owns a large property in Barbados, Drax Hall Estate, where his ancestors began cultivating sugar cane – using slave labour – from around 1640. Groups in Britain and Barbados have called on Drax to donate the property to Barbadians. He has refused' (Ruggiero, 2022: 308).*

Reparations were also invoked in Jamaica, when the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge visited the island. The visit was designed to strengthen the relationships between the royals and their 'subjects' in the Caribbean region, but was met with demands for apologies for colonial crimes and calls to turn the country into a republic. A group of academics and artists produced an open letter stating:

> *'We see no reason to celebrate 70 years of the ascension of your grandmother to the British throne because her leadership, and that of her predecessors, has perpetuated the greatest human rights tragedy in the history of human kind' (Brown, 2022: 2).*

Politicians, lawmakers and activists across Caricom are not only pressing for apologies, but also for reparations that may partly right the wrongs of the past.

It may be useful to note, from the above, that the demand by reparation campaigners focuses not only on descendants of slaves, but also on all victims of social injustice, notably of the wealth gap.

The end of slavery?

In a contribution by Aimé Césaire (2020), profound scepticism is expressed towards reparation intended as a precise calculus of the harm inflicted. The reparation due cannot be computed on the basis of the number of slaves one had and the number of years one owned them. We cannot multiply the two figures and 'here is your reparation, now leave us alone' (ibid: 17). This piece of squalid accountancy cannot put an end to the issue. Slavery is irreparable:

> *'The West has to do something, it has to provide aid to countries as they develop, help them thrive. It owes us this aid, but I don't believe that a simple check can pay for reparations' (ibid: 18).*

What Césaire is implying is that the iniquities produced by colonization and slavery are still at the core of international disparities, a legacy reflected in the exclusion of vast populations inhabiting developing as well as advanced countries. In this respect, even prisons can be assimilated to the means for the management of former slaves, to power machines that tend to re-create conditions of slavery (Davis, 1998).

The evolution of contemporary slavery is also interpreted as a process whereby race morphs into caste (Wilkerson, 2020). As Chicago sociologists argued in the 1930s, while slavery is dead and nobody defends it, the caste system remains so that the 'natural order' is granted continuity (Park, 1937). The caste system helped employers establish lower salaries for Blacks but, at the same time, led poor whites to claim better treatment than their black counterparts. Was class struggle replaced by caste struggle, as Myrdal (1944) suggested? Fear of losing their place in the world may lead 'lower-class whites' to distinguish themselves from other disadvantaged groups and, when following racist politicians, feel that they are not betraying their own interests: maintaining the caste system *is* in their interest (Wilkerson, 2020). Certainly, caste acts as a signaling reminder of the past that needs perpetuating. In this sense, Black people continue being persecuted not because of their colour but because that colour bears the stigma of servitude and degradation. In an anecdote 'told by Malcolm X, a dark-skinned friend who put on a turban was duly seated and served in a segregated restaurant in Atlanta (Gilda and Horn, 2021: 27). Moreover, Blacks may also suffer growing discrimination because year 2042 is not far away, a year when supposedly minorities of colour will form the majority of the US population.

Fixed social hierarchies may rank humans on the basis of their ancestry, but they are also subject to modification: when boundaries between groups dwindle, skin colour miraculously fades. This is because whiteness is a metaphor for power and, as they say in Brazil, 'money whitens'. At times, South Africans call rich black people 'white man': 'now you have money, you are so successful that you are an honorary white man' (Akala, 2018: 50). Caste or class, the label attached to those who are denied a dignified life describes similar social conditions.

The type of global reparation advocated here is inspired by the view that migrants are denied dignity by foreign states, international corporations and the greed of their own domestic elites. The idea of combining migrants' return with reparation entails specific views around territory. What follows is a short account of such views.

Islands and borders

Strict migration laws signal the self-perception of advanced countries as islands. Leaving aside the obvious geographical insularity of the UK, such self-perception applies in general to countries nagged by obsessive apprehension for their boundaries, namely countries that believe in their capacity of resisting external influence. Nobel prize winner Olga Tokarczuk (2017: 103) contends that an island represents our earliest, 'most primal state prior to socialization', when the ego has already attained a certain level of self-awareness, but without yet having entered into complete, 'fulfilling relationships with its surroundings'. A form of narcissism or even autism, belief in self-sufficiency excludes others, making their function invisible.

Again, it is too easy to think, in this respect, of the UK, with its 'German royal family, a Norman ruling elite, a Greek patron saint, a Roman/Middle Eastern religion, Indian food as its national dish, an Arabic/Indian numeral system and a Latin alphabet' (Akala, 2018: 7). The UK, in fact, is only one of many advanced countries that fail to recognize how their own economies depend upon the contribution of others who live well beyond their territories.

What allows advanced countries to prosper is located in lands that do not officially belong to them, consisting of resources, labour and customers. Western citizens live *in* developed countries and *off* developing ones: 'as if every wealthy state was coupled with a shadow state that never stopped haunting it, that provides for it, on the one hand, but is devoured by it, on the other' (Latour, 2021: 41). Devouring shadow countries is what allows developed ones to survive, to the point that claims of independence sound hypocritical or churlish. A national territory, on the contrary, extends to all external regions and states in which vital interactions for its survival take place. The extent to which, currently, international ties keep the world interlocked is revealed by the outcomes of global economic activity since the 1980s.

A simple international indicator referred to the share of income shows a 100% increase for the top 10% and that the increase in inequality has come at the expense of the bottom 50% (Piketty, 2020). This increase refers to Europe, China, Russia and the United States. Looking at other areas of the world, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, India, Brazil and the Middle East, we are faced with even starker increases. These are the result, on the one hand, of the legacy of racial and colonial discrimination and, on the other hand, of the predominance of wealth created through the acquisition of natural resources by dominant groups and states. In both developed and developing countries, inequality is also determined by the conversion of profits into financial assets. In both, the abnormal accumulation of wealth has strengthened the money-power nexus that manifest itself in the elite 'commuting' from the economic to the political arena and vice versa (Shipman, Edmunds and Turner, 2018). Inequality begets more inequality, as those endowed with funds add to their income by investing in riskier operations that offer higher returns in the long run. Contemporary markets, in brief, are entrenched in increased inequality, while governments are either unwilling or unable to act.

> 'The reintegration of power and money, unnoticed in earlier good times, has become unacceptable because it has ceased to deliver economic growth, or is delivering the kind that no longer raises average living standards' (ibid: 136).

As noted above, growing inequality is linked with the legacy of colonialism and, simultaneously, with relatively recent

economic initiatives at the global level. Reparation for slavery and reparation for the effects of the global economy, therefore, will have to elicit two-pronged demands.

The destruction of the past

Reparation for slavery entails a rejection of 'presentism', which undermines the sense of the past. A phenomenon typifying the nineteenth century (Hobsbawm, 1995), the destruction of the past obscures the mechanisms that connect past experiences with contemporary conditions. However, the phenomenon is not new, as shown by the Christians, who erased all traces of the pagan world, and as noted by Machiavelli (1997), who saw in history the repeated deletion of human memory. The vanishing of the past, in his view, was a constant historical law, similar to destructive pandemics or earthquakes, a law guiding great transformations in the spiritual and the material life. Colonialism was and remains an extreme example of erasure and substitution of the past through military and cultural domination (Prosperi, 2021). The colonized were forced to adopt the main biblical narratives cherished by the colonizers. When the soldiers and the missionaries arrived, they had the Bible and we had the land, said Jomo Kenyatta, and after a while, they had the land and all we had left was the Bible.

The perception of time as sequence or process gives us a clear notion of who we are. We should recall that colonization was in its essence a fundamental negation of time. From the colonial point of view, 'natives were not simply people, without a past and a history. They were people radically located outside of time' (Mbembe, 2021: 53). Efforts to reconnect the present with the colonial past emerged when statues, plaques and other effigies celebrating slave owners and traders were attacked or removed. Such efforts express mistrust of official narratives revolving around civilizing missions, but also constitute claims for reparation vis-à-vis the price still paid by the victims of those 'missions' (Frank and Ristic, 2020; Ruggiero, 2022).

Reparation for slavery, ultimately, goes hand in hand with the process of 'unlearning imperialism' (Azoulay, 2019), namely a 'powerful reproductive mechanism that reinforces current social arrangements' (Ruggiero, 2022: 312). contesting history as a powerful reproductive mechanism that reinforces current social arrangements. This reproductive mechanism prevents the formation of memory and the sharing of feelings and desires between generations. Such struggles over temporalities imply an appreciation of time as plastic, variously representable like space, an object of collective representation.

Global reparation

As already argued, return of migrants should be accompanied by a form of global reparation, a sort of relief for all descendants of those victimized by empires and for all those who are victimized by current economic practices.

With the growing polarization of private wealth, the top earners can invest at rates of return that exceed the economy's growth rate, allowing them to inexorably capture yet more income (Piketty, 2014). Privileges awarded to them by governments, including mobility to and from zero-tax jurisdictions, are then passed on through education and

networking opportunities, enabling capital to keep accumulating across generations. The removal of border restrictions for business led to international tax competition, and the more the mobility of the elite increased, the more ordinary people were coerced into immobility. Reparation aimed at slowing down this process could take the form of an international fiscal system, a system that would redistribute the right to move for all. With this type of reparation well established, moreover, the need for the disadvantaged to move would certainly fade.

An elite whose wealth is dispersed and/or hidden in myriads of financial centers, ignores the notion of locality, a circumstance that leads its members to increasingly distance themselves from precisely located, ordinary or poor people. An international taxation system would position the elite in a social context, making it aware that needy people are not an alien group punished by their own inadequacy.

In past centuries, wealth carried social obligations, particularly when prevailing religious sentiments acted as restraint to cupidity. The rich were asked to display thrift and moderation, thus proving that they deserved being chosen by a divine decision. The economic risk run by the wealthy engaged in enterprise acted as justification of their privileges and their greed. Charity, in this way, was seen as a form of compensation for the darker aspects of their initiative. An international taxation system is far removed from charity, being instead a reparation mechanism that partly neutralizes rent-seeking, namely activity that disregards social responsibility by channeling funds into inert financial valorization.

A new global egalitarian perspective is based on social ownership, education, shared knowledge and power. Global egalitarianism requires the shift from permanent to temporary private ownership, while steeply progressive taxes would guarantee stable circulation of wealth. Thomas Piketty (2020) advocates the creation of transnational assemblies tasked with the elaboration of 'co-development treaties'. However, 'development' encapsulates the problematic notion of 'growth', which is partly responsible for the dysfunctions suffered by societies and the devastations endured by the environment (Ruggiero, 2021). An international taxation system, instead, would strengthen the notion that transnational economies, rather than growth of polarized, abstract wealth, must produce transnational systems of justice.

Such systems have been sketched in the past and still constitute the points of reference guiding elaborations and campaigns around global justice. The fight against global poverty and the protection of global public goods, it is argued, must be fuelled by radical taxation and accounting reform, which would enable developing countries better to help themselves (Pogge, 2001; 2007). Nations would pay dividends on any resource that they use and sell, resulting in a sort of 'tax on consumption'. This Global Resource Tax would tackle the structural features that facilitate illicit financial flows, which drain the economies of developing countries (Brock, 2009; Pogge and Metha, 2016). A Carbon Tax, discussed and proposed for years, would be an element of the international taxation system advocated here, as would the Tobin Tax, imposed on all short-term currency transactions.

As argued above, reclaiming national sovereignty is paradoxical as well as hypocritical, given the international reaches of the economy and the universal costs of the inequality it produces. An international taxation will provide the underprivileged with a form of primitive accumulation similar to that accorded to (or violently imposed by) colonialist and imperialist countries before and during their industrial development.

The difficulties encountered by global justice proponents will similarly hamper the development of an international taxation system, particularly in terms of concrete implementation, administration and procedure. However, as Pogge (1994) argued, technicalities are more likely to be resolved if new social structures are imagined and different, better

moral sentiments are conceived. Technical difficulties cannot lead to views of the status quo as unalterable.

In more general terms, the system proposed here is in keeping with the decolonization project, describes as an 'active will to community', or also as a will to life as opposed to a will to power (Mbembe, 2021: 2). Ultimately, an active will to community is bound to radically criticize contemporary democracies, which although formally expressing the will of majorities, in fact represent the interests of very small minorities.

Conclusion

The short journey undertaken in this paper set off with an examination of migrants' return, a tool for the management of people's movements across the globe. Migrants' returns are driven by a range of conditions and expectations, be they coerced or voluntary. For example, hostility in host countries may convince some migrants to return, but this is likely to increase the need for their fellow countrymen and women to migrate in their turn. Returning migrants, in other words, may end up crowding out those who are seeking a chance to leave. Disappointment with the standard of living in the host country, exposure to unemployment, racism and failure to access the social security system are also drivers.

Conditions exactly opposite to those just mentioned, as we have seen, result in successful returns. Openness, generosity and care allow migrants to acquire the skills and resources needed when voluntarily returning home. Change in their countries of origin, however, is also vital for successful returns and, simultaneously, for a deceleration of migratory movements. Leveling up the conditions in developed and developing countries becomes, in this way, a necessity for the process to set off. The resources needed for leveling up chime with those claimed by descendants of slaves in the form of reparations. Hence, the link between return migration and reparation explored above.

The argument presented here extends the reach of reparation to cover contemporary social areas of deprivation, those areas that suffer the legacy of colonialism, on the one hand, and of the effects of current, polarized, economic development, on the other. Extending the meaning and reach of reparation implies the establishment of a global taxation system, a second abolition after that of slavery, as it were, this time addressed at the wealth gap.

Such a proposal, that echoes arguments put forward by global justice campaigners, requires a radical revisiting of the notions of territory and state, of history and time, accompanied by the reconnection of past events with present conditions and future expectations. States presuppose the existence of friends and enemies, they are based on the law of autochthony and birth (Derrida, 2020), while the territories that allow their very existence transcend the narrow boundaries they attempt to protect. Ties of interdependence force us to expand our concerns and redefine the nature and scope of public issues. We are inexorably interlocked: a global taxation system and global justice in general would defeat identities loaded with ideological poison and foster the idea that full-blown persons only emerge in the company of others. A global taxation system would resemble a *Secular Jubilee*, when slaves are freed, debts are forgiven and property is redistributed, the realization of the Kantian dream of world patriotism.

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