CHAPTER 1

Introduction: General Description of the Study, Key Issues, and Provisional Conclusions

Laura Zanfrini

1 Migrants and Religion: a Challenging Couple for European Contemporary Societies

International migrations have registered, in recent years, an extraordinary evolution, both in the volume of flows and in their composition.[1] Within this complex scenario, Europe has become the first destination in the world in terms of migrants' arrivals and, in the last years, it has faced the most dramatic refugee crisis since the end of World War II. In a more patent way than ever, newcomers are obliging Europe to confront with the multi-faceted religious landscape of migrants' sending countries. Dramatic circumstances such as the growing influence of Boko Haram in Nigeria –and of its foolish attempt to "purify Islam" and society as a whole–, the increasing intolerance towards Christians in Egypt –a sort of "spill-over" effect of terrorism in Iraq and Syria (Open Doors, 2019)–, or the upsurging of religious nationalism in India are now irrupting in European society, through the arrival of people claiming protection or, at times, accused of corrupting "our" religious identity, or even of importing the virus of religious intolerance and religious radicalism to Europe.

While forcing European societies to become aware of the tremendous religious-based violations and persecutions that are characterizing the contemporary global scenario, new arrivals are challenging the main distinction on which European migration regimes have been traditionally based: the discrimination between voluntary and forced migrants. For this reason, all along the book we will put the adjective "forced" within brackets, in order to emphasize the porous and disputable character of this concept. More deeply, paraphrasing the well-known Sayad's concept (1999), new arrivals "disturb" Europe and its systems of refugee protection, whereas asylum seekers' religious affiliations seem to represent, in themselves, an "embarrassing" variable that discloses the

1 https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/international-migrant-stock-2019.html.

weaknesses and pitfalls of these systems, since the latter were built in a geopolitical context that was very distant from the contemporary one.

As a matter of fact, religious-based claims mirror the extraordinary enlargement of the concept of forced mobility, once circumscribed to the definition provided by the Geneva Convention. However, today it has been progressively extended to include new categories of individuals, situations, and agents of persecution. On the other hand, because of their nature, both complex and intimate, this kind of claims easily feeds the suspect of the recurrence of "bogus" requests, thus contributing to the delegitimization of the asylum institute. Finally, asylum's procedures and practices face, while being influenced by them, preconceptions and distorted convictions about the different religious groups, and about the relations among them. As it is emblematically shown by the Middle Eastern region –the cradle of the three main monotheistic faiths, chosen as one of the focuses of the present study–, current analyses are often dominated by opposite understandings, unable to comprehend the "turbulent" situations of Europe' peripheries, but also unable to grasp what really is the bet at stake.

Just to cite an emblematic example, while accusing humanitarian channels and reception services to become an instrument for the attraction of (Muslim) (fake) refugees, European public opinions seem to disregard how these same channels provide a possibility of survival for many Christians currently "under attack".[2] Not to mention the case of those migrants –Muslims and not Muslims– prejudicially perceived as "enemies" only because they come from given "Islamic" undemocratic countries. Ultimately, a debate dominated by concerns of a cultural and security nature ends up obscuring the other implications of the migration-religion link; first of all, the importance of the religious factor in the genesis of migration. In this context, the European religious identity has been repeatedly evoked as a vessel to be wielded in order to protect "Europe" from arrivals, depicted as a menace. One of the most shocking examples was the *Rozaniec do Granic*, the Rosary on border boundaries: a collective prayer that took place on October 7, 2017, involving an impressive number of people along the over-3,100-kilometre Polish borders, creating an ideal human chain. The official motivation of the event was that of imploring the intercession of the Mother of God "to save Poland and the world", on the occasion of the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, "established after the great battle of Lepanto, where

2 As a matter of fact, according to the reports produced every year by "Aiuto alla Chiesa che soffre", the persecution of Christians has been producing significant outflows of people trying to escape, to the extent of putting into question the very survival of some of the oldest Christian churches of the world, thus compromising the multi-religious composition of the sending societies (Aiuto alla Chiesa che soffre, 2019).

the Christian fleet defeated the much larger fleet of Muslim society, thus saving Europe from Islamization".

Finally, European public opinion looks at current migrations as something from which "to defend itself", and is worried about not only the economic, but also the cultural impact of incoming flows, particularly when they are composed of migrants presumed to be Muslims (Mavelli, Wilson, 2016). Both economic and humanitarian migrations are perceived as an "identity challenge", since they are forcing the symbolic borders of European nations, shaped by their "Christian roots". In this manner, they "miss" the key point: policies for the granting of asylum and other forms of humanitarian protection represent a conscious way of affirming principles, values and worldviews. In the end, they should be an opportunity for societies to reflect on the values on which they are based and deserve to be handed down as a legacy to future generations, and an extraordinary –if not prophetic– opportunity of self-reflection and of display of "our" own culture. The goal of contributing to raising the general awareness of this concept is one of the main reasons behind the present study: as it often happens, migration proves to be a "mirror" that permits to grasp and discuss key issues and emerging challenges.

Indeed, as it is emblematically showed by the experience of (forced) migrants intercepted thanks to the research on which the present book is based, religious rights and religious freedom represent a "litmus test" of the quality of a democracy. On the one hand, their systematic violation dramatically gives evidence of the lack of democracy in many sending countries, and marks the limit beyond which it is not possible to accept any abuses, thus forcing victims to opt for the "exit strategy" represented by migration. On the other hand, they offer European citizens the opportunity to realize the importance of religious rights at both individual and collective level, shaking them from the inertia that sometimes seems to characterize European societies, not to mention the temptation to encourage authoritarian turns. It is exactly the experience of people migrated for religious motives that encourages a reflection about the importance of religion in both the private –individual and family– life and the public life; particularly in Europe, where this dimension has been traditionally expulsed from the public sphere and it is now more and more reduced to its "identitarian" dimension (Roy, 2019). As we will deeply analyze, the contemporary "post-secular" scenario proves to be particularly stimulating for this kind of reflection since, alongside the insistent secularization, a more composite, not easily defined picture is emerging. Religion is closely connected with cultural and social transformations involving today Europe, but it is also the borderline where contradictory pressures and, in some cases, thorny questions relating to the coexistence between people with different religious traditions interweave.

At the same time, since contemporary (forced) migrations are perceived as more and more unpredictable in their dimension and internal composition, they are obliging Europe to come to terms with the full and long-standing legacy represented by its relationship with immigration and the "diversity" – including the religious one– that immigration brought with it. According to our interpretation (Zanfrini, 2019), as it was institutionalized during the post-war phase, the European migration regime contained in itself the reasons for cultivating the illusion of the temporary nature of migration, discouraging the stable settlement of immigrant families and communities, and defining migration as a pure economic phenomenon; that is a phenomenon unable to change the political and identity borders of European national communities. Nevertheless, the unpredicted settlement of the post World War II "guest workers" and their progressive inclusion in the citizens' community, the huge number of family reunions, the implosion of the Soviet empire and the subsequent re-definition of the internal States' borders, as well as the arrival of millions of asylum seekers following the crises in various regions of the world (from Latin America to South-East Asia, from the Balkans to the Medium-East) have contributed to the formation of ethnic and religious minorities. Their presence and their "visibility", also in the public space, represent an unexpected –if not an unwelcomed– phenomenon; a phenomenon definitely inconsistent with the myth of the ethnic, cultural and religious homogeneity on which the European nations have been founded.

As a matter of fact, in recent times, the main societal institutions have been profoundly challenged by the settlement of people with different cultural and religious background (Vilaça *et al.*, 2014); even more so when these people not only expect to be treated as "equals", but ask to be acknowledged as "diverse". National school systems –another of the topical issues chosen by the present study–, invested by the task of socializing new generations to the role of future citizens, have therefore become a key actor: the presence of students with a (minority) religious background challenges them through the request of recognition; what is more, it offers a unique opportunity to grasp the concepts of democracy and citizenship, without avoiding the confrontation with the dimension of conflict inevitably present in every pluralistic and truly democratic context. Finally, among the other consequences, the permanent settlement of migrant families and migrant communities has transformed European States into multi-religious societies, thus offering them the opportunity "to test" the principle of religious freedom.[3]

3 For a brief review of the issues and possible solutions concerning the governance of post-immigration religious diversity see: Modood, Sealy, 2019.

Another point deserving our attention is that the migrants' condition of structural disadvantage –in its turn, a "natural" inheritance of a migratory regime that has traditionally attracted a "poor" migration, useful to enter the lowest ladders of the occupational stratification (see again Zanfrini, 2019)– has amplified the perception of a social and cultural distance between migrants and natives. In other words, it has fed the anxiety for the "diversity" embedded in the population with a migratory background, starting exactly from their religious diversity. Religious affiliations, particularly Islamic affiliations, have therefore turned to be viewed as an element of vulnerability, if not as a barrier inhibiting the integration process and the relations with the native population. Not to mention that, according to available data, low levels of socio-economic inclusion tend to be correlated with a higher involvement in religious practices. Lastly, the transformation of an economic process –as immigration was originally conceptualized– into a political process, has catapulted at the core of the political agenda issues and problems related with the "identity" (included the "religious identity") of European societies. Not surprisingly, the religion of refugees has become a noticeable issue (Schmiedel, Smith, 2018), definitively denying the prophecy of a decline in the importance of religion in the public sphere that has accompanied the modernization of European societies. At the height of the refugee crisis, religion has even been identified as a useful filter to select, among potential asylum seekers, those individuals who should be able to cross the symbolic and cultural boundaries of European national communities. "Anti-migrants" actors make an open and sometimes violent use of religion in order to endorse securitarian and selective approaches in the management of migratory flows. What is even more embarrassing, "pro-migrants" narrative sometimes evokes the low percentage of Muslim migrants as a supposed reassuring argument for public opinion, thus implicitly reaffirming the problematic character of religious diversity. All this in line, after all, with the historical European approach to the topic at issue, which has been traditionally shared by both policy makers and social researchers. As it is well known, once confronted with the "ideal-type" of immigration country (the US), Europe not only has a different migration history, but it has also suffered from the different role and meaning traditionally attributed to religious affiliations. In its seminal volume *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955), W. Herberg stated that it is precisely through religion that immigrants, and even their children and grandchildren, have found an identifiable place in American life; still today, in a much more diversified scenario, many immigrants "become Americans" thanks to the participation in the religious and the community activities of Churches, Mosques and Jewish temples (Alba, 2009). Furthermore, the American population is much more "religious" than the European one (according to available statistics), so as to perceive less distance from the immigrant

communities, usually more inclined (or supposed to be more inclined) to religious practice. However, even more than the actual data, it is the interpretation that social sciences have provided that illuminates the different meaning of religious practice. Until recently, religiosity has been eventually depicted, by European social researchers, as a "refugee" and a balm for the soul, an instrument to enforce intra-community solidarity and to contrast individual frustration and isolation, but also as a possible source of self-segregation, reactive identification, and potential conflict with the mainstream institutions. Thus, while in the American context many sociologists are inclined to see in religious affiliations a factor supporting integration, in Europe religiosity has often been described as the indicator of a lack of integration in the framework of an a prioristically-defined secularized society –as well as a factor negatively affecting interethnic relations (the French experience is indeed emblematic in this regard)–. The same public discourse has often tended to underestimate the role that religious affiliations and organizations can play not only in supporting integration, but also in the process of identity building, by favoring the internalization of values oriented towards the common good and some peaceful coexistence. Finally, by reflecting the common tendency to confine religion in the private sphere, European studies have tended to emphasize the "bonding" component of the religious capital of migrants; that of the "bridging" type, more emphasized in the American tradition, in Europe has a potential that is not only underused, but also largely neglected by academic research. Just as much evidence of how the role of religion –and of the migrant religion nexus– is socially constructed.

Finally, there are several reasons behind both the misunderstanding and the underestimation of the role of religion in migratory and integration processes. However, as it will be deeply analyzed, migrants' religious affiliations have become increasingly visible also in the public space and, despite religion's marginality in the mainstream analysis of the integration processes, religion today has being more and more acknowledged as a significant component in the construction of migrants' individual and collective identity, in (peaceful or conflicting) interconnection with the other actors of society. In this way, the religion of migrants is set to be one of the relevant themes in the debate on the so-called post-secularized society.

Given this background, the study-project on which this book is based – *Migrations and religious belongings. From the periphery to the core, for a new humanism*– supported by Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan and developed in 2016–2018, has aimed to contribute to filling significant knowledge gaps, and to provide both theoretical analysis and empirical evidence on

the relationship between migrants and religion. This phenomenon has been studied by using the concept of religion in its broader meaning, including:

a) individual and collective religious affiliations, belongings, beliefs, identities, and practices;
b) religious-based organizations and institutions, as well as interreligious initiatives;
c) religious rights' violation, religious-based discriminations and conflicts.

Furthermore, it has been inquired by different disciplinary perspectives –from philosophy to law, from sociology to psychology, from political sciences to theology– and has been focusing on different levels of analysis –macro, meso and micro–. Finally, from a methodological point of view, as subsequently illustrated, the study has made use of a variety of methods –including literature review, key-informants' interviews, and focus groups discussion (FGDs)– described in detail within each thematic part.

While ensuring a scientific approach to the subject, the study has been based on a clear cultural and ethical option: the need to acknowledge and illustrate how religious-based belongings, identities, and institutions affect both the genesis of contemporary migrations and the development of migration and integration processes – and, as a further implication, the opportunity to activate religion-related potential in order to support migrants' integration and social cohesion, as well as in order to improve the global governance of (forced) migrations and the efficacy of the protection system.

More in detail, two key hypotheses have encouraged the present study, and guided both the speculative analysis and the collection of empirical evidence.

First of all, *the denial of religious rights –in its overall meaning– is one of the main drivers of contemporary* (*forced*) *migration, usually in interconnection with other social, political and economic factors*. As a matter of fact, the current global scenario witnesses a dramatic recurrence of situations of religious rights' violation and even of open persecution towards minority groups or single believers. Just to cite one of the most dramatic examples, exactly during the time-span of realization of this study, the international community has helplessly witnessed the forced expulsion from Myanmar of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya, a long-standing discriminated Muslim minority. This is only one of the many emergencies involving religious minorities and single believers – or non-believers escaping from "pre-secularized" States–, which have been producing millions of displaced people, asylum seekers, and "voluntary" migrants. All this notwithstanding, the relationship between religion and migration choices and strategies has still been studied insufficiently. More precisely, our hypothesis was that the factors connected with religious affiliations and

belongings play a much more significant role than what is shown by available data on refugees for religious reasons, not to mention the common (improper) perception of their effective importance. As a matter of fact, despite the growing concern for the religion of migrants and refugees, there is scarce evidence on the role it played and plays in the life of people who try to penetrate the European Fortress. Besides the possible shortfalls of the legislation in force, our hypothesis was that a multiplicity of factors concurs to a general underevaluation of this issue, including the existence of religious-based biases and anti-religious sentiments. In order to analyze this point, we have deeply studied the situation of contemporary Middle-Eastern region, chosen as an emblematic place where to investigate the processes which generate (forced) migrations (Part 2); as well as an emblematic example of how current analyses are often dominated by opposite understandings, unable to comprehend the "turbulent" situations of Europe's peripheries (but also unable to grasp what the bet at stake really is, as suggested above). Moreover, we have collected plenty of evidence from migrants escaped because of religious-based persecutions (or, in more general terms, from migrants for whom religion has played a significant role both in the decision to migrate and in its subsequent developments) and from different kinds of key informants (Part 3). Finally, a selected group of families, adolescents and children have been included in the study in order to grasp the relationship between religion and migration culture also along intergenerational links (Part 5).

Related to this latter point, the second key hypothesis at the basis of the study was that *religious institutions, religious affiliations and religious values are crucial factors not only in structuring migration patterns and practices, but also in supporting the adaptation of newcomers –particularly in the case of* (*forced*) *migrants and asylum seekers– and the integration processes of first- and second-generation migrants –especially through the mediation of the family and faith-based organizations* (from now on: FBOs)–, *thus positively impacting on the social cohesion and the common good*. Recent contributions, from sociological (Part 4), psychological (Part 5) and theological (Ahn, 2019) studies, offer new insights in order to grasp the (positive) role of spirituality, religious belongings and interreligious dialogue, thus concurring to fill the traditional knowledge gap on the issue. Besides providing a systematic review of this literature, our study emphasizes how the emerging "post-secularized" Europe offers a renovated scenario in which to analyze their role and their future evolutionistic prospects. This hypothesis has been tested through different kinds of analyses, focused on migrants and asylum seekers (Part 3), families (Part 5), FBOs (Part 4) and public schools (Part 6).

As explained in detail in the remaining chapters of Part 1, the discussion on these two hypotheses has been conducted in the light of a philosophical, sociological, and judicial theoretical framework which provides suggestions for:

a) a perspective to "deinstrumentalize religion" and to "rehumanize" migrants and asylum seekers (Chapter 2);
b) the unexpected vitality of the religious phenomenon currently emerging as a result of a continuous intersection of long processes and secularizing influences, as well as of responses reacting to those processes and those influences, not without new dilemmas and conflict (Chapter 3);
c) the opportunities and the limitations that follow the interpretation of the relationship between the violation of religious rights and the status of protection granted by international judicial and quasi-judicial organs (Chapter 4).

2 Book's Content

In detail, the book is articulated in six parts, each composed of four chapters (except for Part 6, which is composed of five chapters).

Part 1 (*Migrations and Religious Belongings: from Periphery to Core, for a New Humanism*), after the general description of the study's aims and contents, and the presentation of its provisional conclusions (object of the present *Chapter 1*), illustrates the philosophical, socio-cultural, and legislative frames that constitute the research background.

Chapter 2 starts with a description of the unethical ambivalence of the dominant narratives about migration and (forced) displacement. On the one hand, refugees are criminalized and targeted as a threat to border security. On the other hand, counter-narratives portray refugees as innocent, vulnerable victims. The paradox is that these two stereotyped images of (forced) displacement are two faces of the same unethical process of dehumanization: in both cases, refugees are the objects of other people's interpretations and actions. Moreover, in this process of dehumanization, religion is often politicized and plays an instrumental role in justifying two opposite narratives and political solutions. Given this picture, the author develops the proposal of a new "ethics of hospitality", based on two conditions: (*a*) de-instrumentalizing religion, in order to analyze the real, multi-dimensional role of religion in refugees' experience (as both a root cause of displacement and as a source of resiliency and support); (*b*) returning refugees their human subjectivity, which means enabling them to express their subjective outlook on their own experience of

(forced) displacement and on the importance of their religious belonging. The political effect of this "post-secular" hospitality is a discursive act that creates a public space, where social ties can be (re-)built. Religion, in this context of re-humanization, can be an integral part of refugees' public space making, along four main lines of research:

1) *identity*, which focuses on the individual and collective processes of (re-) shaping some forms of self-definition, based on religious beliefs and values;
2) *religious freedom*, which legitimizes the pluralistic involvement of (religious) identities in public life;
3) *citizenship*, which is not tied to rigid national territoriality, but includes fluidity of borders and multiple (religious) identities and loyalties;
4) *common good*, i.e. a multi-religious social capital, generated by the new citizens and their desire to participate in their new society of settlement.

Moving from the perspective of the sociology of religion, *Chapter 3* intends to outline the main characteristics of the so-called (European) "post-secular society". Although a vast literature from the second half of the 20th century announced the imminent end of the religious phenomenon, in Europe –as well as in other regions of the world– a different scenario has been unfolding: religion is still present, even if it is in crisis, as it has increasingly been relegated to the intimate sphere and set free from institutional set-ups, reinvented in content and contaminated by secularization factors. Moreover, in many cases, this presence is strengthened precisely in relation to the migration phenomenon.

Consequently, the European scenario cannot be explained by simply choosing between two options: "secularization *versus* non-secularization". There is a much more articulated and complex picture, certainly from a geographical and national point of view, but in general also because of the singular forms it assumes: these elements are the result of a continuous intersection of secularizing thrusts and responses that oppose them –not without this leading to new dilemmas and, sometimes, to real conflicts–. It is therefore evident that we are living in a different time than that defined as completely "secularized". As a matter of fact, the post-secular society constitutes the socio-cultural context within which migrants enter when arriving in Europe, often bearing forms of religious belonging considered to be significant for the construction of their identity in interconnection with the other actors of society, whether it is a peaceful or conflictual interconnection.

Finally, *Chapter 4*, authored by two law scholars, aims to verify the relationship between the right to freedom of religion and the status of refugee considering, in particular, the applications of these institutes given by the international judicial and quasi-judicial organs.

Freedom of religion is a fundamental right recognized in many acts within international and European law. It includes the right for everyone to have, to change and to manifest one's religion. Serious violations of this right could be ascertained as a form of persecution, thus giving rise to the possibility, for those who escape from places where this right is not respected, to obtain the recognition of the status of refugee, according to the Geneva Convention of 1951, and to the EU directive 2011/95/EU concerning the recognition of international protection to refugees. However, following the pronouncements of the European Court of Human Rights and of the Court of Justice of the European Union, a violation of freedom of religion or belief does not automatically grant the right to receive protection, which is obligatorily reserved only to those individuals who are exposed to serious breaches of their fundamental rights. Finally, as clearly illustrated by the empirical study presented in Part 3, the "space" of religion within the system of international protection is subject of different interpretations and negotiations.

Part 2 (*Where* (*Forced*) *Migrations Are Generated*) focuses the attention on one of the most turbulent word-wide regions, which is particularly explanatory with reference to the study's main topics.

The multiple crises that, especially from 2001 onward, inflamed the wider Middle East dramatically altered the geopolitical equilibriums of a region that has always played a crucial role in the international arena. Affected by heightening levels of violence and widespread destabilization, the area became increasingly associated with processes of radicalization and socio-political fragmentation destined to redefine the very foundations of a system whose roots can be traced back to the end of the Great War. The arch of crises that came to bisect the region largely contributed to project the image of a Middle-Eastern region "endemically" marred by divisions and instability and destined to be partitioned according to apparently undeniable ethno-sectarian fault lines. In this framework, Middle East ethno-linguistic and religious diversity has become the focal point of two different and opposite arguments. On the one hand, diversity has been considered as the victim of the rising polarization, manipulated and politicized in order to impose a specific political agenda. On the other, it has been listed as one of the drivers or sources of present instability in a region experiencing its own Thirty Years War, as Europe did in the 16th century.

The authors of *Chapter 5*, thanks to their specific background of experts of contemporary history of the Middle East, aim to maintain distance from both understandings, reconsidering the contemporary history of the Middle East and of state- and nation-building process in the region according to the image of multiple geographies. Instead of proposing once again the idea of the Middle East as a mosaic, the chapter aims to offer an account of the role of diversity

in the region. Through the idea of multiple geographies, the chapter explains why diversity in the Middle East has always played a crucial role. Middle East does not stand out only for its diversity *per se*, but because the features that compose and define its diversity and "multi-vocality" often strongly intertwine and overlap, thus giving birth to social fabrics that are far more complex and branched than usually represented. In this spirit, the analysis ends by showing how a more precise understanding of the Middle East's diversity, of its significance and its role can help to demystify today's sectarian narratives and tackle instability and violence in the region.

This perspective is paradigmatically developed in *Chapter 6*, whose aim is to offer a dynamic account of the Christians' presence within the Middle East, of their contribution and position in the contemporary history of the region. In this regard, the historical vicissitude of the Coptic community is helpful to focus more clearly on the challenges, issues and ambitions that have influenced Christians' historical vicissitude from the beginning of the contemporary state- and nation-building process in contemporary Middle East until today. Firstly, the chapter focuses on the multi-vocal dimension of the Christian presence in the Middle East – a feature that needs to be taken into account to fully understand its position and condition within the different States in the region; the study helps to reconsider how the interplay between international, regional and local interests affected and shaped the political and institutional presence of Christians within the region. Then the authors analyze the dynamics of sectarian violence and persecution against the Christians in the Middle East. In particular, they focus on contemporary Egypt, from the 1950s until the 2011 Uprisings, taking the specific case of the Egyptian Christian Copts (also object of the qualitative study presented in the Part 5 of the book) as a case study.

The remaining chapters of the part offer a general picture of cultural orientations in the Middle East and a special focus on attitudes about women's role.

Chapter 7, authored by a researcher with a long experience in the study of societal values and world-views, provides a sociological analysis of data produced by the Arab Barometer. This latter constitutes an important source for monitoring the cultural and social dynamics in the countries of the region, since it provides longitudinal surveys supporting comparisons over a long time frame (from 2006 to 2018) in 14 Arab-speaking countries. The emerged data allow knowing what Arab heterogeneous public think about key issues related to social coexistence, among which religious beliefs and belongings have a fundamental relevance. Beyond the official representations of the strong relations between religion and the political system inside the Arab countries, the focus of this contribution is to check how people perceive their religious affiliations, in order to understand their level of openness toward different religious

identities, and so far toward a more tolerant and pacific coexistence. Some people's attitudes give support to this desirable transition, but many other changes ought to happen inside civil laws and political system.

Chapter 8 focuses on the interpretation of the Shari'a law in relation to women's rights in countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In particular, the study deals with the transformation of people's beliefs and values as far as the role of women over the Arab Uprisings of 2011 is concerned. These have often been considered, especially by Western observers, as drivers of social change leading to democratization processes that would enhance the value of equality. In addition to the theoretical review of the topic, the study provides empirical evidence of different forms of feminism existing in this region. By using data from the Arab Barometer (2010, 2018) and the Arab Transformation Project (2014), the study combines elements of secularization versus radicalization in people's support for the Shari'a Law and for women's rights. It also aims to define four typologies of feminism, which are differently distributed across countries: Islamism, Islamic Reformism, Islamic feminism, and Secular Feminism.

Parts 3–6 are devoted to presenting and discussing the empirical evidence collected during the study. With few exceptions, the data presented refer to Italy. Two major aspects make the country an interesting place where to analyze the role of religion in migratory and integration processes. Firstly, as it is well known, the country is one of the most involved in the last refugee crisis, as well as in the violent debate based on the two opposite narratives described above. Since it is one of the main European countries of first arrival, according to what established by the highly disputed "Dublin agreement", it plays a very critical role in the evaluation of asylum demands, that is on defining the distinction between voluntary and forced migrants; not incidentally, a presumed high discretionary in the assessment procedures has conducted to the recent –and violently discussed– legislative reforms. Secondly, Italy is commonly portrayed as a Catholic country, and until recently it has had a population almost homogeneous from a religion point of view; this circumstance makes it the ideal place where to analyze the transition towards an increasingly heterogeneous society, also from a religious point of view. The same reception system is here described as a space strongly challenged by this evolution; a space in which it is possible to detect the emergence of prejudices on a religious basis, but also to experience the coexistence of people of different religions; to analyze individual spiritual needs, but also the importance of educating to religious pluralism, understood as a constitutive condition of a democratic society.

The aim of *Part 3* (*The Religion's Dimension in the Trajectories of* (*Forced*) *Migrants Directed to Italy*) is to inquiry the role of religion as a root-cause of

(forced) migrations addressed to Italy, as well the "place" of religion in the context of the Italian asylum seekers' reception system.

Chapter 9 –written by one influential member of the Italian association of immigration lawyers–, traces the legislative and procedural framework in force in Italy, which was the object of recent significant changes, some of which directly impact on the issues here discussed. Moreover, it examines the discipline of the religious dimension of everyone's life, which can also be applied to the foreigners who have been forced to migrate to Italy (and, of course, who have voluntary chosen to migrate). In particular, in addition to the description of the legislation on the prevention and combating of discrimination, the chapter focuses on the discipline about the State's relations with the different religious denominations, as well as on some crucial aspects of family law, school legislation –for the part that concerns the teaching of religion (a topic that will then be deepened in the empirical study presented in Part 6 of the volume)–, and the discipline of religious assistance in health facilities and prisons. Throughout the chapter, the presentation of the legislation in force is enriched by the reporting of pertinent jurisprudential judgments.

Chapters 10, *11* and *12* present the results of an original research, based on data and suggestions emerged from different sources: five FGDs, which have globally involved around 40 key informants (selected among executives, officials and operators of the reception system for asylum seekers; spiritual leaders and pastoral agents of different religions; representatives of Italian and international organizations and associations involved in the reception of asylum seekers; managers and members of the assessment commissions for asylum applications; local administrators; executives and officials of police stations and prefectures); six semi-structured interviews with religious leaders and pastoral operators belonging to different Catholic organizations involved in the reception of migrants and asylum seekers; 20 in-depth interviews with migrants and asylum seekers who, regardless of the entry channel and of their current legal status, have been significantly influenced by their religious belongings, as for both their decision to migrate and the development of migration and insertion processes.

Chapter 10, after a general introduction on the role of religious belongings and institutions as both push and pull factors in the Italian immigration experience, focuses the attention on the role of religion as a factor contributing to defining the distinction between forced and voluntary migrations. Moving from the current political and ethical debate about the increasing "porosity" of this distinction, the author –thanks to her strong background in the field of migration studies– discusses how the evidence from the fieldwork can help to describe and understand the role of the two key concepts represented by

Religious Identity and Religious Liberty. Furthermore, on the basis of the testimonies provided by the interviewed migrants and the key experts, the chapter offers a classification of cases in which religion turns out to be a direct or indirect cause of migration.

Chapter 11 is devoted to analyzing the role of religion within the procedure for the scrutiny of asylum applications. Given the legislative framework in force in Italy, the author discusses how the actual implementation of rules and procedures allows (or does not allow) for the emergence and the acknowledgement of those aspects variously connected with asylum seekers' religious belongings. Here, religiosity has emerged as both an obscured and a sensitive issue.

Thirdly, *Chapter 12* explores the "space" dedicated to the religious dimension and to the spiritual needs of migrants, also during the delicate phase of first reception and re-elaboration of the migratory distress. Thanks to the involvement of a theology scholar as co-author, the chapter also investigates the "functions" and meanings that (forced) migrants for religious reasons attribute to religion and spirituality, seen both in their individual and communitarian declinations. Finally, following the approach suggested in Chapter 2, through a de-instrumentalization of religion and the acknowledgement of migrants' human subjectivity, the authors discuss the results of the study through the concepts of identity, religious freedom, citizenship, and common good.

Part 4 (*Religion, Faith-Based Organizations, Integration and Social Cohesion*) is devoted to inquiring the relationship among religion, FBOs, migrants' integration and social cohesion through different levels of analysis: a critical review of European social research on this subject; a qualitative sociological study on a selected sample of FBOs; a theological reflection about the role of interreligious dialogue, and a "chronicle" of the Synod recently launched by the world-wide largest Catholic Diocese, exactly solicited by its demographic transformation into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious social space.

Chapter 13 provides a critical review of the international sociological literature, focusing the attention on the role of religion as a factor that hampers or fosters migrants' integration. As it is largely acquired –and as we have already observed–, this issue has been tackled through rather opposite perspectives in Europe and in the US – taking the latter as a paradigmatic immigration country. Moving from the analysis of this divergent path and of its historical and social reasons, the chapter focuses on the European approach, which has traditionally understood religion as a barrier to integration. The authors examine how migrants' religion has been approached by European social researchers, and highlight the circular dynamic interlinking this approach with public opinion's concerns. Finally, the chapter hints at some recent trends in the

European discourse on religion and integration. These trends mostly regard policy-making practices and, to a certain extent, applied social sciences – also as an answer to recent phenomena of religious radicalization, which have solicited to rethink the role of religion and FBOs in integration processes.

Chapter 14 –authored by sociologists with a strong expertise in the field of non-profit organizations and civil society's initiatives– focuses on the migrants' reception practices offered by a selected sample of FBOs, mainly located in Italy. The analyses, performed on four qualitative case studies, show the difficulty of bringing out the theme of religious persecution as one of the explicit motives that led to the migration choice. Despite such critical point, the authors show how the empirical findings lend support to the claim that the religious dimension affects the migratory processes in different modes.

Chapter 15, signed by the Under-Secretary of the Refugees and Migrants Section, Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development of the Holy See, offers a series of suggestions concerning the potential role of religion in the governance of human mobility. Mainly based on the analysis of documents produced by Catholic Church's teaching and on the personal experience of the author –who has performed his pastoral mission in different regions of the world–, this essay moves from a basic assumption: because of the very fact that a vast majority of the world population declare to adhere to a given religion, the governance of human mobility, as well as any other political process, would take care of religion, intended as an essential component of human wellbeing and self-achievement. The presumed superiority of laicism and the political-ideological instrumentalization of religion have helped to dispute the relevance of religion in human achievement, and to expel it from the public sphere. While facing this scenario, it is imperative that religion regains its fundamental role. Moreover, according to the author, since the different religious traditions offer an inestimable patrimony of values and principles, it would be desirable to look into them in order to build a common platform for a global ethic. Finally, beyond the role that religions and FBOs play in supporting the migrants in their processes of mobility and integration, the inclusion of religions in the public space and debate can help to identify and disseminate principles and values indispensable to guarantee a pacific cohabitation.

Chapter 16 (co-authored by the book's editor and the president of the commission in charge with the coordination of the 2018 "Synod from the Peoples"), provides a selection of the suggestions emerged from the consultative phase of this pioneer initiative promoted by the Archdiocese of Milan. The empirical base of the analysis, then, constitutes of reports, consultations, FGDs, and bottom-up contributions collected all around the local Church and its various institutions and stakeholders (among which parishes, religious orders, associations, charities, public schools, and single citizens, including non-believers).

Launched immediately after the pick of the refugee crisis, which invested Milan with the arrival of thousands of asylum seekers, the Synod aimed to support an evolution of the local Church, coherent with the tremendous transformation of the demographic composition of the diocesan space. As stressed by the authors, from a Catholic perspective, the Synod can be understood as a "prophetic enterprise", as much as the social transformation of the city can be approached as a "prophetic challenge".

More in detail, the growing presence of Muslims represents both an identity challenge and a chance for the development of interreligious dialogue, exactly like the presence of many Christian Orthodox believers constitutes a spiritual challenge and a chance for the development of ecumenism; lastly, the significant number of Catholics with a migratory background embodies both a pastoral challenge and a chance to develop a self-reflective ability. To sum it up, it is exactly by managing these challenges and chances that the Milanese Church – as well as any other local Church– will be able to fulfil its authentic "catholicity", while positioning itself in the global society and in the universal Church.

As previously reported, according to the study's initial assumptions, family represents –together with FBOs– a crucial medium through which religion contributes to structuring migration and integration practices. *Part 5* of the book (*Migrations, Intergenerational Relations and Families*), deals with this topic, once again through both theoretical and empirical contents.

Chapter 17 provides a critical review of the sociological and psychological literature devoted to religion in families' migratory history, and more specifically to the intergenerational transmission of (religious) values and practices. Two macro-themes emerge from international literature and empirical inquiries: the relationship between family and society and the dynamics within generations. The main themes emerged, and the challenges migrant families face in the relationship with the younger generation, are then re-proposed.

The following chapters of this part (*Chapters 18*, *19*, and *20*) focus on the paradigmatic case of Coptic families belonging to the Diaspora community "escaped" from Egypt to Italy during the last decades. Indeed, despite the relevance of the Christian Diaspora in the world, little scholarly attention has been paid to Middle-Eastern Christians' migration to Europe, in particular to the Coptic Diaspora in Europe. This circumstance makes the study particularly suggestive.

Chapter 18, substantially based on a literature review and a desk analysis (and on the research background of the author, who is an expert in the field of African and Diaspora studies), provides the basic information and analysis regarding the history and the characters of the Coptic Diaspora in Italy, which today is supposed to represent around 70,000 people scattered along the territory – the exact number remains quite obscure also because of the religious

menaces and attacks received by those who migrated from Egypt. The majority is concentrated around the Milan area, where also our study has been developed. The role of this religious community is very important: the Copts not only give aid to their parishioners, but they also offer shelter to local communities valorizing the churches and the territories where they pray and live. The chapter tries to give a short overview of the presence of this religious community, with testimonies from its exponents.

Chapter 19, authored by two experts in the field of social psychology of the family, aims to explore how Coptic Orthodox families migrated from Egypt to Italy define and negotiate their identity within the resettlement society. 10 households and 30 people (10 fathers, 10 mothers, and 10 adolescent children) were involved in the study and inquired through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis carried out on the interview transcripts allowed to identify several themes, thus revealing the complexity that characterizes Coptic families' post-migration experience in Italy: the acculturative challenges faced by parents and children, parental norms and expectations, the role played by the Churches in sustaining heritage identity and faith across generations, not to mention the meaning associated with Christians' persecution, martyrdom, and migration.

Even more scarce are the studies specifically addressed to minors with a (forced) migratory background. Trying to contribute to fill this gap, *Chapter 20* illustrates and discusses the results of a qualitative study based on four FGDs with Coptic minors living in Milan, both Orthodox and Catholic. A total of 18 adolescents were involved in the research, daughters and sons of Egyptian parents migrated to Italy because of the harsh condition in the home country, characterized –according to their storytelling– by discriminations, inequity and violence against Christians. Moving from the developmental and intercultural psychology's perspective, the authors depict a portrait of their psychological needs, expectations, and hitches. The condition of being a migrant child is often burdensome, especially in the case of (forced) migration, and the combined effects of this experience can lead to problematic consequences for the mental health of minors and for the parent-child interaction. The study aims to identify the acculturative challenges faced by these minors, and the role played by Churches in sustaining heritage identity and faith across generations.

Part 6 (*Religious Diversity in Italian Schools*) deals with the multi-ethnic and multi-religious transformation of Italian public schools, and with the role of religious education. As a matter of fact, religious diversity is a largely neglected topic in educational studies, despite the fact that education is one of the most sensitive fields engaged with religion. The latter represents a crucial resource

for many immigrants, but can also be a source of conflict, and is sometimes perceived –as we have already observed– as a threat for European cohesion and identity, with an intuitive impact on the school space. Drawing from this ambivalent scenario, this part investigates the role of religion in multi-cultural schools.

By exploring the nexus immigration-religion-education, the study has aimed to update the picture of the Italian situation, often stereotypically depicted as a mono-confessional environment, fairly reluctant to the recognition of pluralism. The whole study, authored by experts in the field of sociology of education, was based on 14 FGDs, globally involving 69 adults (teachers, schools' managers and students' parents) and 74 minor students. The participation of different generations and ethnic groups has offered the opportunity to compare diverse points of view on religious diversity, religious belonging, and religious freedom in public school, and to identify strategies to prevent and resolve religious conflicts.

Chapter 21 discusses some institutional, relational and strategic issues related to the religious dimension in so-defined "plural" schools. The role of religions within public schooling is presented, together with the "space" of religion education in the contemporary frame of multi-ethnicity. The chapter also includes a general appraisal of the European and Italian legislative and cultural frame on the subject. Finally, the author presents the different approaches to prevent and contrast religious conflicts involving students and parents with different religious backgrounds, and the methods for enhancing intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

In *Chapter 22*, by focusing on the basic concepts of religious freedom and citizenship, the author explores youth religious beliefs, spirituality and atheism in a context of "weak secularization" and illustrates how the school can be deemed as a public space to test religious plurality. The latter is portrayed as a deep challenge to the school, intended as a secular and open place, and as producing opposite reactions, from neutralization of religion to the promotion of its cultural dimensions. Finally, interreligious and intercultural dialogue are proposed as training ground for democratic citizenship, since issues that were thought to have been secularized –finding a peaceful solution in the differentiation of private, civil and religious spheres– come back in the school debate (e.g.: how protecting the right to freedom of expression, which are the boundary of parental authority over children's education).

Chapter 23 faces the issue of interreligious conflicts and integration in multicultural schools. After the description of the state of art emerging from the international literature, the author illustrates the hypotheses of the research and then describes and discusses the study's results related to some specific topics.

Interreligious conflicts are analyzed from the point of view of adults (teachers, school managers, parents), as well as from the students' point of view. School narrative about religious radicalism is also analyzed, together with the role of religion in the integration process in schools.

The last section of this part, compiled thanks to the involvement of some researchers based in France and Spain, explores the question of religions and *laïcité* in the French republican school (*Chapter 24*) and the manner through which Spanish public school cope with multi-religiosity and religious freedom of students and school professionals (*Chapter 25*).

3 From the Periphery to the Core: Key Issues and Provisional Conclusions

As can be guessed from the description of the content of the single chapters, our study has provided a rich collection of both speculative analysis and empirical evidence in order to improve our knowledge about the role of religion in the genesis of contemporary (forced) migrations and as a relevant (supportive) variable in the processes of migration and integration in the society of destination, particularly through the mediation of the family, the school, and FBOs. In this paragraph, we will discuss some of the key issues emerged from the whole project, and we will offer some provisional conclusions, articulating them according to the theoretical prospect described in Chapter 2, that is assuming religion as an integral part of migrants' and refugees' public space making, along four main concepts: identity, religious freedom, citizenship, and common good.

Confirming our initial hypotheses, the study has revealed that not only the understanding of these issues suffers from their extraordinary complexity and from still insufficient research investments; what is more, a widespread ideological bias has traditionally inhibited the possibility to adequately analyze and grasp the role of religion within migration and interethnic coexistence. If this is true at general level, it is even more pertinent in the case of Europe, for reasons related to both its historical relationship with immigration and its self-representation in terms of a secularized society.

About the first point, an initial option for the "temporary labor model" – characterized by a "reluctance" toward the prospective of migrants' stable settlement– has provided the imprinting to the whole European attitude toward migration (Zanfrini, 2019). To the point that the contemporary multiethnic and multi-religious society can be understood as an unexpected (and largely unwelcomed) outcome, due to the normative and institutional

foundations of the European democracies, which impose serious limits on the governments' ability to restrict immigration and immigrants' rights (including the right to settle permanently, to reunite family members, and to ask for asylum) (see, among others: Cornelius *et al.*, 1994; Hampshire, 2013).

About the second point (Chapter 3), the concept of secularization –which significantly received, since the late 1800s, a strong impulse from the European sociologists– has until recently benefited from an undisputed hegemony. The theses of a progressive decline (and of a final disappearance) of the religious phenomenon has strongly influenced both the scientific and the political approach to the issue, particularly encouraging religion retreat from the public sphere. What is more, this assumption has deeply affected the manner in which both social sciences and politics have approached the issue of migrants' religiosity (Chapters 3, 13, and 17).

As analytically described in the following parts of the book, in the context of the contemporary "post-secular" Europe, a renewed attention to the role of religion, even within the public sphere, characterizes the social sciences and encourages civil society's activism. Across European countries, both institutions (at different levels) and civil society have started considering religious leaders and communities as potential allies in facilitating integration and in promoting social cohesion, thus possibly getting past the idea that religion is intrinsically an obstacle to integration. This, in turn, may open further directions for research, producing a rapprochement with the American experience, traditionally more attentive to the bridging function carried out by religion and religious organizations (Chapter 13), as we have already pointed out. Within this promising scenario, our study –conceived with the ambition to enhance scientific and political debate on the ethical implications of contemporary migratory policies and practices– has actually been based on a clear cultural option: the opportunity to give evidence and illustrate how religious-based belongings, identities, and institutions affect both the genesis of contemporary migrations, and the development of migration and integration processes. As a further implication, the researchers involved share the belief about the opportunity to activate religions-related potential in order to manage migrations and support migrants' integration and social cohesion. This clear set of values has not invalidated the scientific nature of the results, although it has certainly guided the choice of themes, problems and possible developments on which to focus the attention.

The study was conceived in 2015, at the apices of the largest refugee crisis that Europe has had to face since the end of World War II. Besides other consequences, our continent has been challenged by the question of (re)defining the "borders" of forced mobility (Chapter 10), in order to distinguish between

"true" and "bogus" asylum seekers – this operation, in its turn, is fundamental in order to guarantee the political and financial sustainability of the reception system, facing a growing public concern. As a matter of fact, as described in Chapter 4, international and European law clearly establish that the right of freedom of religion or belief covers a very wide number of situations and can be limited only in few cases; however, this legislation do not automatically protect everybody who cannot effectively exercise this right in the country of origin, and who decide, for this reason, to migrate abroad. Therefore, to choose who must be welcomed and protected represents an extraordinary challenge, in both political and ethical terms. What is more, religious-based claims (or potential claims) are an extraordinary litmus test in order to analyze the capacity of our protection systems to remain faithful to the principles on which the European democracies are funded.

As clearly emerged from the study (see in particular Part 3), reception and protection systems are certainly ruled by a detailed legislative discipline, as meticulously described in Chapter 9. However, these systems are also embedded in a particular socio-cultural and political context, which results to be strongly influenced by negative and positive bias about the role of religion, particularly when the latter is related to the migration phenomenon.

In our days, dominant narratives about religious seekers are prisoners of antithetical ambivalences (Chapter 2). On one hand, migrants and refugees are criminalized and targeted as a dangerous threat to border security, particularly if they are "religiously others". On the other hand, they are portrayed as helpless and passive victims, particularly if they are supposed to be persecuted for religious (anti-Christians) motives. According to our interpretation, these two stereotyped narratives are the two faces of the same unethical process of dehumanization; what is more, in this process of dehumanization, religion is often politicized and plays an instrumental part in justifying the opposite narratives. In order to overcome this unethical paradox, two conditions are needed. Firstly, we need to de-instrumentalize religion and analyze the real, multidimensional role of religion in refugees' experience: the role as a root cause of displacement, in the countries of departure; and the role as a source of resiliency and as a key factor, which can both facilitate (and eventually hamper) integration processes in the countries of arrival. Secondly, we need to give back to the refugees their human subjectivity, which means enabling them "to enter the discourse" and express their subjective outlook on their own experience of (forced) displacement and on the importance of their religious belonging.

As we have already illustrated, these conditions have been tested through both theoretical analysis and a rich spectrum of original empirical evidence collected thanks to this study. In the following lines, we will anticipate and

discuss some of the key points emerged, organizing the examination around our four main lines of research.

3.1 *Identity*

As we have already illustrated, during the recent and dramatic refugee crisis, the issue of religious identity has been frequently evoked as a reason to protect "Europe" from arrivals depicted as a menace for "our way of life". While millions of (Christian) faithful are everyday engaged in welcoming asylum seekers and migrants, "anti-migrants" actors, in a more and more explicit manner, use religious symbols as strong argument to endorse securitarian migration policies, as well as discriminatory schemes for the access to welfare provision and to religious rights (for example, when it comes to hindering the construction of mosques and minarets). As a matter of fact, their arguments are in line with the contemporary tendency to "culturalize" religion, intended here as a strategy to restrict rights and opportunities of non-Christian groups, while formally maintaining the liberal State's commitment to neutrality in religious matters (Chapter 3, §4.2; Brubaker, 2016).

All this sounds as paradoxical: not only because this kind of solutions is difficult to reconcile with the Christian basic principles (synthesizable in the expression "I was a stranger and you welcomed me"); but also because, according to the existing estimations,[4] Europe is the only continent in which the number of Christian faithful is expected to decrease in the coming years. More than the growing of the Muslim community –through new arrivals and new births–, it is the decreasing percentage of "native" Europeans who define themselves as Christians that will provoke a new equilibrium in the religious composition of the European population. In this landscape, the concept of religious identity clearly risks to be emptied exactly of its religious content, and reduced to a cultural construct and an instrumental argument (Roy, 2019).

Academic reflection on this topic is clearly aware of this tendency, not even really resolved by the emerging post-secular scenario (Chapter 3). Our study offers a complementary perspective from which to analyze the phenomenon, looking at asylum seekers and migrants as subjects able to challenge the concept of religious identity, in its both individual and collective declination.

Coherently with the first theoretical premise, our study has illustrated the prospect of de-instrumentalizing religion, by choosing the Medium-East region as an emblematic place where to analyze a "super-diverse" society from an ethno-linguistic and a religious point of view; as well as a region endemically represented as marred by divisions and instability exactly because of this

4 https://worldchristiandatabase.org/.

plural composition. The regional socio-political spectrum is here described (Chapter 5) as the result of multiple geographies of power which have historically subordinated the role of civic society and of any form of autonomous organizations. According to our interpretation, the entropic spread of violence that destabilizes today's Middle East, threatening the survival of its populations beyond religious or ethnic affiliations –and producing large flows of (forced) migrants–, can be understood without the need for subscribing to a culturalist approach, that is the idea of an intrinsically anarchic Middle East shaped by primordial identities. On the contrary, it is the most recent manifestation of a matrix, established at the turn of the 20th century, which has fostered a struggle for authority and legitimacy taking place at intra- and interstate levels. In this framework, the controversial spread of sectarian violence and its destructive effects over the wider Middle East have to be considered as an integral part of an historical continuum whose roots cannot be tracked to the beginning of the 21th century alone, and that have further been exacerbated by competing geopolitical agendas. Accordingly, the exploitation of sectarian forms of violence represents other forms of struggle for supremacy within national and supranational political fields, where the religious, along with other features, have become particularly manipulated for developing new political meaning out of the regional multiple geographies. Egypt, the sending country of the Coptic Diaspora in Italy studied in the Part 5 of the book, is a case in point. Indeed, within the multi-vocal character of this country, even Christians are not at all a homogenous subject, not even where they suffer a condition of minority and oppression (Chapter 6). Local, regional and denominational distinctions make them a plural presence, as well as a living testimony of a two-thousand history of a religion embodied in the true life of peoples and communities. By renouncing to acknowledge this plural composition – and essentializing their condition of fragility and discrimination (and their inevitable emigration)– we risk stereotyping their faith as an impediment to a fully integration into a socio-political fabric inspired by Islam. On the other hand, according to a second type of common narrative, Christians are invested of the role as mediators in conflicts and crisis, thus making their Muslim neighbors aware of the usefulness of their presence. In both cases, Christians' identity is denied, together with its "multi-vocal" character, which implies that each voice possesses a distinctive ecclesiastical identity, biography and local history to tell. On the contrary, it is exactly their presence that expresses the history, and the *identity*, of their countries; to the point that some components of the Christian population exactly refuse to be identified as a "minority", since they consider themselves as a constitutive part of historic Egypt. Moreover, since the 1980s, Christians in Egypt have elaborated new theological thinking and

understanding about their minority condition and conflict and crisis in the region, bringing them to the conclusion that they are not religions that have provoked Middle-Eastern instability, but the lack of social justice and the political struggle.

Coherently with the second basic theoretical premise –that is the need to give back to the migrants their human subjectivity– a central part of our study has consisted in the collection of a significant number of interviews with (forced) migrants. As a matter of fact, this prospect is also in line with the Global Approach on Migration and Mobility (GAMM) –the overarching framework of the European Union's external migration policy– and its *migrant-centered* approach thus synthesized: "In essence, migration governance is not about 'flows', 'stocks' and 'routes', it is about people. In order to be relevant, effective and sustainable, policies must be designed to respond to the aspirations and problems of the people concerned" (European Commission, 2011: 6).

"From flows to people": we have decided to take this fundamental shift seriously, and that is why our study has strongly emphasized the role of migrants' narratives – as well of a "lived religion", unavoidably shaped by a multiplicity of biographical variables (Cadge, Howard Ecklund, 2007). We are aware of the methodological and ethical problems involved in "listening" to migrants' voices. As Bhabha suggests, "it's never adequate to say their voices must be heard as voices, because none of their voices is just an innocent voice, their voices are mediated through the dialogue they have with the questioner, through their own sense of what it means to represent themselves, through their own ideologies, so they are also framed voices, if you like, and produced voices. But, in just that sense, they are testimonies of the construction of a changing identity, of a changing polity, of a changing transnational community" (Bhabha, 1994: 199). This kind of testimonies are exactly the concrete empirical results arising from the fieldwork: biographical journeys marked by sufferance and oppression, but also by resilience and hope, where religious belonging plays a vital role, as a factor of either empowerment or disempowerment during the process of migrations, asylum application and its aftermath.

From the interviewed migrants' perspective, religious identity represents a source of resistance and resilience, but it is also the limit beyond which it is not possible to accept any violations. The concept of religious identity provides a meaning to the decision to migrate – even for those who have discovered this concept only after having migrated to another country, where they first experienced a context of religious freedom. Therefore, together with this latter concept (religious freedom), religious identity provides the *lexicon* through which to understand migratory choices and strategies (Chapter 10), well beyond what emerges from the common perception of the quantitative importance of

religious-based asylum demands, and offers new elements to be considered when it comes to trace the distinction between voluntary and forced migration (we will return on this point later). Finally, migrants are often "more religious" compared to non-migrants, not only because most of them come from pre-secularized States (with all the ambivalences that this circumstance may involve), but also because they often find in religion a source of self-identity and a balm for the soul.

Given the extraordinary relevance of this concept in the experience of (forced) migrants, it is easy to understand that one of their main expectations, once landed in a democratic context, is that of being acknowledged as members of a given religious community, and witnesses of its history and of its turbulences. This point too has clearly emerged from the migrants' narratives. As we could expect, Muslim migrants suffer from what they perceive as a stereotyped representation of Islam, and even more so from the destructive image produced by "Islamic" terrorism and attacks. Asylum seekers asking for protection towards persecutions carried out by religious authorities, regardless of what their religious affiliation is, lament the incapacity of the commissioners to grasp the complexity of the religious landscape of their sending community, particularly in the case of Muslims escaping from what in Italy are commonly depicted as Islamic countries (Chapter 11). But even more thought-provoking is the experience of Christian migrants, who remark with sufferance and resentment the widespread unfamiliarity of Italian people with regard to traditions different from the (Roman) Catholic one. Proud of their identity –particularly in the case of migrants belonging to "religious enclaves"–, they find themselves dealing with those who do not know the variety of ritual and religious traditions. Copts are a case in point: while their presence constitute an ancient reality in Italy, today the majority of Italians are substantially ignoring them; the striking lack of recent sources and information, compared to the richness of Middle Eastern sources of such a lively religious reality, is a symptom of the need for further research (Chapter 18), but also of the social invisibility of this community, which does not create any problems (surely, and paradoxically, also thanks to its strong religiosity).

Particularly when they had been victims of persecutions because of their religious affiliation, and after having accepted to be persecuted in the name of their Christianity –according to the concept of martyrdom (Chapter 19)– it is easy to understand the frustration that migrants feel every time they touch their misleading perception by the hosting society. Coptic teenagers inquired in Chapter 20 are used to experiencing that not only their schoolmates, but also their teachers, label them as "Muslims" just because they (or their parents) come from Egypt, thus realizing the Italians' ignorance about the very existence

of Christians in Egypt. Their experience is similar to that of many others, who are depicted as "Muslims" (or as "Arabs", that in the contemporary Italian *milieu* is quite a synonymous of Muslims), exactly after having escaped from an Islamic country, which harassed them in the name of religion. This widespread "confusion" is clearly perceptible in the school environment, where young students tend to attribute improper affiliations to their foreign classmates, while parents and teachers rather tend to "neutralize" religious identities, reducing them to socio-economic data (Chapter 23), thus depriving migrants of a fundamental element of their individual and communitarian identity.

To a certain degree, this widespread misunderstood interpretation seems to reproduce the stereotypical way through which we use to portray the religious scenario of the sending country. Our multi-situated study has provided interesting insights on this regard, particularly through the analysis of one of the regions in which contemporary (forced) migrations are generated (Part 2). As clearly illustrated, once more, by the experience of Christians in Egypt, it is very easy to stereotype faiths and religious-based identities. On the contrary, the analysis provided in Chapter 6 suggests that, exactly through their theological reflection, they have elaborated a sort of *lexicon* useful to be applied to the same European context, in order to contrast the misleading use (and abuse) which often is made of the concept of Christian identity (see again Roy, 2019). The risk that we have to avoid is exactly that of reproducing what has happened in Egypt in the last decade, where religion has replaced nationalism; and where matters that should be governed by the law was managed as identity politics. We are speaking exactly of that kind of risk which has materialized during the last refugee crisis, when the need to protect the European identity has been repeatedly evoked in order to hide the lack of a real migration management (Zanfrini, 2019).

Finally, a fundamental indication emerged from the research is that *the recognition of the* (*religious*) *identity of migrants is an essential condition for that process of re-humanization on which to build a new ethics of hospitality* (and, as it is easy to understand, for allowing them to take part in a virtuous manner to the building of the common good). However, to satisfy this condition, it is necessary to deal with a sort of "educational emergency" represented by a situation of widespread illiteracy on religious matters; not only about "other" religious traditions, made visible through the presence of migrants coming from abroad; but also about "our" religious tradition.

As suggested by the international literature, the actual acknowledgement of the right to freedom of religion represents one of the basic conditions in order to create a favorable context where to reconfigure one's own religious identity, thus avoiding reactive solutions and behaviors (Chapter 2). Our study

suggests that, before and beyond the formal recognition of the freedom to believe and practice one's religious belief, what migrants experience is the lack of recognition, both at the cultural level and through daily interactions, of their religious identity. Italians' "religious illiteracy" ends up constituting a factor – invisible and certainly undervalued– hindering the processes of integration and mutual acculturation. What's more, religious leaders and pastoral operators are also involved in the problem. According to what has emerged from the key experts involved in the study, during their education career, not even the Catholic pastors receive an adequate preparation regarding the richness of Christians' and Catholics' history, since school programs are focused on the Latin Church; not to mention the lack of knowledge about non-Christians religions. A fortiori, those who cover key roles in the processes of integration and cohabitation –teachers, public officials, cultural animators…–, often perceive precisely through the presence of faithful coming from elsewhere how the knowledge they possess, sometimes reduced to stereotypical descriptions, is completely inadequate to interpret the complex contemporary religious scenario.

In the same line of thinking, the evidence provided by the study denounce that *"regaining" the awareness of "our" religious identity –here intended as the majoritarian religion in Italy* (*as in Europe*)*– is a precondition to meet and confront with the "others"*, and to manage possible conflicts produced by the cultural distance. Not incidentally, Italian and European (Christian) scholars sometimes openly speak of the challenge of Europe's "rechristianization" (see Chapter 16). As a matter of fact, plenty of data coming from our research prove the tendency to reduce religion to a mere type of culture, losing the connection with both its transcendent dimension and with the essence of a religion "embodied" in the lives of Christians. This clearly emerges within the school context, also through the vantage point of religion teachers (Chapter 22). Significantly, this sociocultural framework even influences the setting of the interviews with asylum seekers: still reflecting its invisibility in the public sphere, the religion dimension turns out to be largely "invisible" in the interview's setting; worried about the possible reactions of the commissioners, aprioristically perceived as agnostic, some asylum claimants declare that they tend to gloss over the elements of their personal and migratory trajectory linked with their religious belonging, and even denounce a positive discrimination favoring migrants who declare other kinds of "diversity", such as homosexuality; sometimes, and even more paradoxically, the hegemony attributed to Islam in the public discourse inhibits the concern towards other religious traditions (and towards the variety of Islamic traditions as well), through a game of mutual "compliance" between commissioners and asylum seekers (Chapter 11). Finally, this aspect is also clearly

apparent from a critical analysis of the current global governance system of migration which, as we will deepen later, radically underestimates how the religious/spiritual dimension is constitutive of every human being (Chapter 15).

In this context, *migration proves to be a sort of "prophetic" challenge for a society –such as the European and the Italian one– which would pretend to be founded on Christian roots*. Migrants often perceive themselves as more "religious" than the hosting society, sometimes recognized as even anomic and threatening (Chapter 12). Migrant families with a strong religious identity –as in the emblematic case of the Copts– look at the Italian environment with apprehension, since religion and faith seem to be forgotten by many people (Chapter 19); even their children suffer the charm of a society that they describe as without any beliefs or ethics: the deep sense of belonging to a religious tradition contributes to the lack of apparent signs of psychological distress and to the gratitude for the parents' efforts to give them a better future, but it makes them distant from the society in which they grow up (Chapter 20). By explicitly using the concept of martyrdom, these migrants proudly affirm their belonging to a thousand-year-old Church, and identify in suffering a constitutive element of their religious identity: the furthest from the loose and tepid ways in which we live today, in Italy, the experience of an increasingly intimate faith (Chapter 3). Sometimes this kind of perception is shared by the same religious leaders and pastoral operators, who represent migrants as those who recall them the true substance of their faith and spiritual essence (Chapter 12) and who challenge pastoral and liturgical practices (Chapter 16). Finally, school teachers discover that pupils belonging to minority groups and recently arrived migrants have more familiarity with the religious sphere compared with the increasingly agnostic manifestation of the (Spanish) indigenous population (Chapter 24).

As it can be read between the lines in various chapters of the present book, Christian people (and, in a certain way, the entire "Christian" Italian society) could decidedly gain from a valorization of the typical feature of Christianity, represented by "reflexivity" (Magatti, 2018). Just to cite some example, local communities of faithful can even rediscover the essence of their spiritual lives, when confronted with the faithful of other religions, or with the faithful of their own religion who have come from elsewhere, custodians of other liturgical and spiritual traditions (Chapter 16). Migrant (and not migrant) families involved in the transmission of their faith to the younger generation end up being an exception in contemporary Europe, where it is exactly the declining religious socialization leading to the phenomenon of religious disaffiliation, in its turn, the main driver of the new religious scenario. But they can also offer an important example for parents (believers and agnostics), called to educate

their children in an "ethically neutral" society, as contemporary society is perceived and described by social scientists (Chapter 18). Teachers in charge with religion education –among the other teachers– can find in Christianity and in its cultural heritage a lever for curriculum enrichment and for promoting constructive dialogue skills among pupils (Chapter 22). However, teachers feel definitely not prepared to manage interreligious classes and classroom discussions about all the topics and issues related to religion(s) within the legal system and the cultural context of reference. Grown up within a context commonly represented as mono-religious, they have firstly "met" the religion issue through the arrival of migrant students, and therefore they have tended to overlap the intercultural dynamics with the interreligious ones. Socialized in the 1960s, most Italian teachers mainly emphasize the material socio-economic nature of the conflicts between students, since they grew in a political era in which the main reference was class or gender conflict (Chapter 23). In their view, religion is downgraded as a pretext for the conflict, that is the most visible aspect, legitimized and culturally accepted, to justify the division between groups: thus doing, they underestimate the question of the religious identity, its relevance in the process of the students' identity development, but also its potential in terms of religious agency to be activated for the common well-being.

Finally, and once again, migrants prove to be a "mirror" through which to grasp critical processes and risks involving society as a whole. The vicissitudes of migrants in search of emancipation tell us of how religion can become oppressive also for the majority group, when it marries a fundamentalist interpretation of religious dictates, or even incoherent with the sacred texts themselves. On the other side of the Mediterranean –that is in Italy–, growing discrimination and intolerance are among the possible outcomes of marginalization of Christians in the public sphere. Marginalization impacts on their civil rights, thus inhibiting their freedom to express their thoughts, to exercise conscientious objection, and to contest, within the democratic deliberative process, solutions aprioristically defined as "progressive" although conflicting with religious values. Also for this reason it is important to take the rights of religious minorities seriously, since they are nothing but the other side of the coin of the "majority" rights (for a deeper analysis of the phenomenon of the erosion of religious freedom see: Durhan, Thayer, 2019). Ultimately, as it will emerge throughout the book, there is a strict link between religious liberty and liberty more generally; that is between religious liberty and human dignity.

3.2 *Religious Freedom*

The prospect of rehumanization of asylum seekers and migrants, that is the willingness to listen to their voices and narratives, has also made it possible to

grasp the strict link between religious freedom and personal freedom, between the respect for religious rights and the concept of democracy. Moreover, it has made clear that these concepts are not only a theoretical argument, but they are embodied in the real lives of people, different from each other (Chapters 10–12; 19–20).

In many cases, the experience of migrating –particularly for those who migrate for religious motives, but also in all the cases in which the religious dimension breaks the scene before, along, and after the migration process–, is exactly linked to the need to protect the human openness towards the transcendent, in front of the possible absorption operated by political, social, and familial structures; sometimes even by religious structures, when they instrumentally pursue goals far from their own nature. So, the concept of religious freedom, once applied to the (forced) migrants' experience, shows how "freedom" is a necessary attribute of religion, i.e. an intimate expectation of any believer, which therefore mirrors individual characters and feels.

As a matter of fact, not only religious diversity intermingles with other "diversities", relating to the political, cultural, linguistic, spatial, and kin-family background, and reflecting the "multi-vocal" character of the sending societies (Chapter 5), as well as the socio-economic status acquired in the destination society (Chapters 20 and 23). These variables also combine with personal characters such as gender, age, and cohort. Once again, this plurality can be grasped by hearing migrants' voices and narratives.

Gender, intended in its sociological meaning –that is as a product of a process of social construction– has emerged as a crucial variable, particularly in the case of migrants coming from Muslim-majority countries. As it is well known, the relationship between Islam and the concept of gender equality (or more precisely the woman condition) is currently intended as crucial. According to a common Western perspective, Islamic countries are characterized by patriarchal gender norms, to the point of making their women in need "to be saved", exactly because they are supposed to be deprived of their personal freedom. Actually, evidence collected during this study seems to prove a positive discrimination toward female asylum seekers when they come from given countries, perceived as prey to Islamist regimes (Chapter 11). On this regard, the analysis provided in Chapter 7 endorses the hypothesis that Islamist authoritarian drifts tend to associate with a patriarchal reading of Shari'a, but it also introduces the variety of gender cultures existing in Muslim-majority countries, the different levels of gender equality in the domestic legislations, and the different way in which people conceive the influence that religion should have in politics and legislation. Furthermore, it discusses how, alongside a secular perspective that considers theocracy as a limit for gender equality, forms of feminism combining the quest for women's rights with the support

for the Shari'a law are possible (or, in any case, envisaged by a significant percentage of the population). Here again, the choice of giving back to migrants their own subjectivity has proved to be profitable in permitting the emergence of new insights. Among the many testimonies collected, there are Muslim women who do not contest the Shari'a's influence on the everyday life of men and women, but the way in which the Islamic law is (mis)understood and imposed in their country of origin. As a matter of fact, the process of radicalization, which currently involves various countries, implies a regression in the field of women's rights and condition, often interpreted as an opposition to the Western model of life. Revolving this kind of reading, some (female) migrants have described the "true" essence of Islam, that some of them declare having discovered only in Italy (Chapter 12), thus realizing the misleading interpretation of religion by religious leaders who had transformed it into an instrument to exercise power and social control.

Passing to consider another biographical character, the same commissioners in charge with the assessment of asylum demands are aware of the different meanings assigned to religion by people of different ages, particularly if coming from countries recently involved in radical political and social changes (Chapter 11). So, together with the chronological age, cohort's belonging is another crucial variable influencing the way in which to interpret and live religion, as well as the concept of religious freedom. Basing on this circumstance, we can try to understand some bizarre data emerged from the study. As discussed in Chapter 7 –based on the analysis of the last Arab Barometer surveys–, the relationship between the individual age and the way of understanding religion and its role in the public sphere is ambivalent; in other words, youngest interviewed are not necessarily less "traditionalist" than the older ones. Passing to consider a completely different context, within the Italian school system, interreligious relations and religious-based conflicts are read and interpreted in very different ways by young students and adults. For the latter, religion is just a pretext for a conflict that has to do with a socio-economic divide, resulting from the migrants' weak economic fragility. For the students, instead, the question of (religious) identity and belonging to the (religious) group is the most important, and the religious dimension is the bullet that deeply hurts identity dimensions linked to personal, familial, and communitarian elements (Chapter 23).

The individual way of experiencing the faith, as a consequence of the personal and family background, is another relevant variable. The study of Coptic families and their children (Chapters 19 and 20) describes a completely unique way of experiencing faith also through the succession of generations, making it a fundamental anchor of identity and a protective resource in the process of

adaptation, but also a possible obstacle to full membership in the destination society. However, it also happens that, through the teaching and the example of parents, the faith becomes the catalyst for a feeling of openness, capable of transforming the experience of suffering into a motivation for the commitment to the common good, and the sense of captivity in something that sets the real religious sentiment free (Chapter 12). Finally, it also happens that one's faith is hardly declared as one of the main reasons to escape, for fear of retaliation against family members left behind or threats and pressures internal and external to their groups (Chapter 14), thus making it difficult to elaborate one's own experience in a context of religious freedom.

Significantly, in the personal biographies of (forced) migrants, the link between religious freedom and individual freedom has emerged, from time to time, as a crucial node in the decision to migrate, or as an awareness acquired *ex post*, once arrived in a democratic context. This awareness is the yardstick with which migrants measure the gap between the country of origin and European democracy; but also the gap between their expectations and real life conditions in the destination country –in this case, Italy– which are not always up to the promises of freedom and equality on which the European democracies claim to be founded. As a matter of fact, these concepts represent a sort of litmus-test of the quality of a democracy.

On the one hand, migrants asking for protection "vote with their foots", by opting for an exit strategy in front of the violation of their (religious) rights, or of the counterfeit interpretation of religious duties imposed to the same majority members. For those who escape from places where religious rights are not guaranteed, the possibility to obtain a status of protection because of this is a first and crucial test. On this regard, the research has revealed the existence of both technical-procedural and cultural-political biases which, more or less deliberately, influence the relationship between commissioners and asylum seekers, giving opacity to the treatment of religious arguments (Chapter 11). The emergence of this issue suffers from various aspects: the instrumental recur to religious motives, particularly in the context of reiterated chronicles, which concurs to delegitimize all religious-based claims; the complexity of the contemporary religious scenario in many sending countries, which makes it very arduous for the commissioners to mature an adequate level of knowledge and competence; the tendency to negatively or positively "pre-categorize" on the basis of well-known situations; the role of the media, which defines the semantic framework within which, in a less or more deliberate way, the different actors involved in the process construct their personal perceptions; the media hype reserved to given situations, together with the neglecting of others, despite their gravity.

On the other hand, European democracies are challenged by the heterogeneity of individual experiences, which provide many insights useful to think about the distinction between voluntary and forced migrants. Indeed, religious-based claims are particularly useful to illustrate the difficulty to process through standardized procedures –such as the procedures regulating the acknowledgement of a status of protection– the extraordinary complexity of contemporary (forced) human mobility. The stories of our interviewees (Chapter 10) illustrate how the violation of individual rights and dignity often passes through subtle practices, which hide behind the appearance of legality. Since vulnerability is part of the everyday life of some religious minorities' members – regardless of whether or not they directly suffered persecution–, once adopting a humanistic perspective (that is a perspective targeted to the governance of "migrants", not of "flows") it becomes quite impossible to clearly distinguish between voluntary and forced migration; particularly when this distinction is linked to the dimension of religion and its relationship with personal identity and personal freedom. Should the concept of forced migration be limited to the situations in which individual survival and integrity is seriously in danger? Or should it be extended to every situation of serious limitation of individual freedom and lack of democracy?

State-borders have a clear political dimension, strongly emphasized by current debate. However, through the adoption of a prospect of rehumanization of asylum seekers, another critical dimension of borders has clearly emerged: the ethical one. The management of borders, often reduced to a security language, has appeared here as a "filter" through which we decide the right to move and cross national boundaries; to obtain protection; to fly from a condition of subordination and dearth –or eventually of "captivity"– variously intermingled with religions variables; to freely benefit from individual freedom and manifest one's religious beliefs; to make visible, also in the European public space, particularistic belongings, particularly those connected with different religious background.

Defining the contours of involuntary mobility is an indispensable operation to guarantee the sustainability of protection systems, as we have had the opportunity to anticipate. However, listening to the voices of migrants should make us more aware of the possible effects, on the *real* life of human beings, of certain political choices, such as the policies of externalization of borders' control, that leave the responsibility to "play rough" with extra-EU countries (Zanfrini, 2019). Significantly, exactly in the days in which we are closing this book, the Italian government has approved a new list of "Safe Third Countries", which includes States that do not offer, according to our study (Chapter 9), a sufficient level of protection towards the risk of being persecuted and discriminated

because of religious motives. Finally, in the light of the narratives we have gathered, the arbitrary character of this type of operation appears to be evident more than ever.

What is more, through the experiences of asylum seekers and migrants coming from countries that deny both religious freedom and religious pluralism, European societies can appreciate the importance of these concepts, and their strict link with the concept of democracy (Chapter 10); ultimately, they have given the opportunity to test if their everyday functioning is coherent with the promises of equality and inclusion. In this regard, a first focus of attention is represented by the gap separating fundamental principles asserted by their constitutional codes and the rules and procedures regulating specific matters, besides those specifically addressed to process religious-based protection's demands. Among the many concerned fields, our research has concentrated on the role of religion and religious pluralism in the context of the reception system (Chapter 11) and on the role of religion teaching within the public school (Chapter 22). In both cases, what has emerged is, on the one hand, an inclusive attitude –which shapes the professional cultures of many operators and teachers, and sometimes stimulates their creativity in experimenting innovative practices and solutions– and, on the other hand, the persistence of weaknesses at both legislative and organizational level. As a matter of fact, in the context of contemporary (post)secularized society, religious freedom seems to be acknowledged and proclaimed more than an evidence-based experience: since the migrants often represent the main religious minorities in their receiving country, it is exactly their arrival that has permitted to gain the awareness of this gap. The fulfilment of personal needs (including the spiritual ones) by respecting the individual cultural and religious traditions is in principle guaranteed within the asylum seekers' reception system, although with some limitations (particularly when it comes to the centers for repatriation) (Chapter 9). However, despite the importance quite unanimously attributed, by our experts and key informants, to the religious/spiritual sphere in the process of adaptation, the solutions adopted are different, reflecting the heterogeneity of approaches that distinguish the Italian reception system –largely entrusted with the initiative of the actors of the civil society– and producing a situation of clear lack of homogeneity in the access to spiritual assistance and in the possibility of participating in religious rites and interreligious initiatives (§12.2). In its turn, the field-work conducted within public schools provides significant evidence of this gap, starting from the students' scarce ability to identify moments and contexts in which they take advantage from this freedom. What is more, this phenomenon is common to both Italian (Catholic) students and foreign (non-Catholic) ones. Among the minority groups there

could be the habit to keep religion belonging to the foreground, in order to reduce contrasts and possible stigmatizations, if not the risk to be excluded. Whereas among Italian students who claim to be Catholics there is little awareness that religious belonging may represent a means for their self-affirmation or self-definition (Chapter 22). Finally, they are exactly the migrants – particularly if they emigrated for reasons linked to the violation of their religious rights–, who can provide the importance of religious rights and –as repeatedly highlighted– their connection with the concept of personal freedom and the quality of the democracy.

In this regard, a substantially neglected aspect in the interventions that accompany the path of reception of migrants and asylum seekers is education to religious pluralism. Within the framework of European democracies, this concept tends to be considered as self-evident, and therefore not problematized. *Educating for mutual recognition and respect between religious groups is instead of particular importance if we are to lay the foundations for peaceful and constructive coexistence*. All the more so, if we consider that immigration is composed to a significant extent by citizens of countries still far from the principles of authentic democracy and who have mainly experienced their religious identity as an antagonistic marker. Countries in which, if not the law, at least the practice acts in a discriminatory manner towards certain religious groups, and disavows their equal dignity. In this regard, differently from what one can sometimes think –and although religious freedom and religious pluralism are sometimes represented as Western constructs–, it cannot be said that there is *a priori* hostility towards them in the Muslim world. Significantly, indeed, in the course of our research work, the urge to promote education in religious pluralism for newcomers derived precisely from a Muslim Imam (Chapter 11): this is one of the areas in which it would be desirable to strengthen cooperation between government institutions and FBOs. Here, again, *it emerges the need to invest in training initiatives directed both to religious leaders and operators and to public officials* (Chapter 15). The former must be made more aware of all the facilities and opportunities that can be activated to support migrants, but also of the legal framework that is expected to regulate both migrants' arrivals and integration, and must be solicited to diffuse correct information to both migrants and would-be migrants (thus discouraging them, for example, from improper and instrumental exploitation of the protection's measures).[5]

5 See, on this regard, the project report realized by the IOM – International Organization for Migration, *Integration: A Multi-faith Approach*, aimed at working with migrant religious leaders to help migrant communities better understand the expectations and norms of host communities in relation to their own cultural and religious values.

The latter, in turn, need to be trained on the characters and contents of each individual religion, especially with regard to those aspects that can have a greater impact on social life, or that can be activated in integration and interreligious programs. Furthermore, the provision of education programs addressed to religious leaders and pastoral agents of different religions can be a way to promote the mutual confidence and the common engagement, and possibly to encourage the launch of shared programs.

Concerning these points, it is acknowledged that the social and political context of the host country has an important influence on making religion a divisive cleavage or, alternatively, a source of unity and solidarity. At the same time, different religions and religious groups exhibit different approaches, not necessarily oriented to support a full integration and a sense of belonging to the new society. Consistent with some classical contributions of sociological thought on migration and integration pathways (Chapter 3), the collected evidence proves that religious affiliation, by its cosmopolitan nature, allows the migrants to adapt to the new context while maintaining its cultural specificity, and passing it on to new generations (Chapter 20). However, it also shows how the perception of the outside world as threatening can produce the risk of an introverted tendency and of displaying reactive solutions and behaviors, thus making it more complicated to identify the common good that human migration can promote (Chapter 19).

On this regard, the study directed to analyze the "space" of religion within the reception system (Chapter 11) suggests that the first phases of the reception and settlement process are definitely crucial in shaping newcomers' feelings and behaviors, as well as the evolution of interreligious relations. *Within the framework of a holistic approach in the reception of asylum seekers –that is the mostly envisaged approach by both academic experts and institutional statements–, religion and spirituality must be officially acknowledged as basic human needs, as well as a lever able to support the individual adaptation*, the respect for the other people, and the personal engagement in the common good. The insights emerged from the qualitative study on FBOs (Chapter 14) suggest, in this regard, the crucial importance of the operators' ability to establish with (forced) migrants reciprocal, trusting and stable relationships, based on a personalized approach and contiguous under the cultural and symbolic profile.

One last aspect to be mentioned concerns the relationship between the migration of believers persecuted because of their faith and the future of minority communities in various sending countries. Religious organizations sometimes play as push and pull actors, facilitating the transnational mobility of their affiliated (Chapter 10). However, sometimes they are also worried about the departure of their members, and engaged in the attempt to prevent their emigration, appealing to an effort of resilience. As a matter of fact, the

international dimension of the problem must be taken into serious account: all kinds of religious rights' violations must be covered by systems of protection (Chapter 15); but we must also be aware that the asylum system can become the instrument to facilitate the expulsion of religious minorities, thus paving the way to realize the criminal goal of a monoreligious society (Aiuto alla Chiesa che soffre, 2019). As it easy to grasp, we are dealing with a topic that solicits a stronger direct involvement of FBOs, following the very important steps already taken along the road of interreligious dialogue (see below), to aim at the construction of a society which, together with the equal dignity of every human being, also recognizes the right to freedom of faith in all its forms.

3.3 *Citizenship*

In the tradition of many European States, based on a principle of isomorphism between the people, the nation, and the territory in which sovereignty is exercised –in turn, delimited by state boundaries–, and belonging defined by citizenship (Wimmer, Glick Schiller, 2003), religion is one of the elements that contribute to defining the homogeneity of the population of a nation-State. Not by chance, as it has already been pointed out, migrants' "religious diversity" is one of the main factors used in the representation of immigration as an identity challenge (or even as an identity threat), although this implies the disavowal of religious pluralism as a constitutive trait of the European population, present well before the arrival of immigrants in the last decades. Still, this circumstance would be enough to understand how suggestive it is to investigate the relationship between immigration, religion and citizenship. Moreover, as it is well known today, the process of invention of the nation-States took advantage of the concept of "methodological nationalism", that is the tendency to assume national borders as the "natural" ones, within which to analyze societal phenomena. Thus disregarding both the existence of transnational processes and links and the various kinds of transnational belongings, particularly those connected with the membership to ethnic/religious groups and diasporic communities. As a matter of fact, as it is illustrated in Chapter 2, in the experience of (forced) migrants, citizenship is "naturally" not tied to rigid national territoriality, but includes fluidity of borders and multiple (religious) identities and loyalties. This point makes migrants a paradigmatic subject to rethink the concept of citizenship –by definition, a national and "closed" institution– in the context of contemporary globalized and interconnected society (see, among others: Carens, 2013; Kymlicka, 2001; Walzer, 1983; Zanfrini, 2007).

In general terms, it is easy to understand that religion, in the migrants' experience –and even more so for those who escaped for reasons related to their religious affiliations– often becomes a marker of demarcation and

distinction, sometimes in a racialized and antagonistic way, sometimes in a dialectical and potentially cooperative way (Chapter 2). Our research has actually provided examples of both outcomes. Interviewed (forced) migrants (Chapter 12) sometimes are able to transform their experience of sufferance and discrimination in a generative way, engaging themselves in the social, cultural and political life of the hosting society, according to a participative idea of the citizenship. Significantly, in some cases, it is exactly the spiritual rethinking of their experience that, by breaking down the logic of rancor, provides the (forced) migrants with the emotional and psychological resources useful to support their pro-active and altruistic engagement, and their feeling part of the hosting society – without this signifying the renunciation of other forms of affiliation and belonging, even of a transnational or universal type, as is typical of religious affiliations. However, it also happens that migrants cultivate a very negative attitude towards other religious groups, and they interpret the possibility of living in a democratic country as a sort of "compensation" for the wrongs suffered in the past, in any case a possibility not able to alleviate wounds that are still open, and which seem to prevent them from really feeling like citizens of the polis and citizens of the world.

In this regard, a very interesting case is offered by Copts coming from Egypt. As a mirror of their condition in the homeland –where suffering had become an "ordinary" character of their daily-life, the only possible destiny which relegate the Christians to this marginal minority status (Chapter 6)–, Coptic migrants risk to reproduce, also in Italy, a passive and sometimes rancorous posture. Their strong religious identity is self-portrayed as an indelible marker, and perfectly functions as an instrument of resilience and of intergroup cohesion; however, it does not endorse neither the sense of belonging to the Italian society, nor the motivation to get out of the boundaries of the ethnic community. At the opposite, their strong sense of belonging to a minoritarian community seems to work as boundary marker, thus reproducing the condition of (self) isolation experienced in Egypt (Ha, 2017). Unilaterally insisting on their condition of sufferance and exclusion in the home country, and of subalternity in the hosting one (where many of them have experienced downward mobility), Coptic migrants renounce to trespass the borders of their protective community. As discussed in Chapter 19, this option may become challenging for younger generations born in Italy, invested with a mandate which requires them to preserve their cultural and religious heritage, prioritizing the latter over the opening towards the new society. At the same time, it involves the risk of an introverted tendency and of displaying reactive solutions and behaviors.

We have already pointed out that the lack of preparation of Italians in recognizing the specificity of this religious tradition (and its full membership in

Christianity) is a factor that negatively influences Coptic migrants' sense of belonging to the Italian society. At the same time, we have to point out the critical role of the religious leaders and of the Coptic Church (both Orthodox and Catholic) in the hosting society. As a matter of fact, according to what emerged from the study (Chapter 20), the latter supports a form of transnationalism and selective acculturation, by keeping Egyptian and Coptic identity alive among the Diaspora's members (included the youngest) and facilitating the adaptation to the host society, perceived as very different in terms of values and customs. But current adaptation's outcomes –surely facilitated by the high adaptability of the first generation, who "sacrifice" themselves in order to offer their offspring the possibility to leave Egypt– would need to be re-examined – as suggested by the chapter's authors– after a long period of time, through third and fourth generations. Ultimately, this community, strongly linked to its *bounding* function, lacks a *bridging* function, that is of the ability to really support its members in "entering" the new society and feeling part of it.[6]

Actually, it is exactly through the "intrusion" of religious identities and practices within public space that we are solicited to shift our focus from citizenship as a legal status, to performances of citizenship, i.e. creative enactments that negotiate membership, re-inventing ways of living together (see again Chapter 2). This shift is today acknowledged also at institutional level. The same European Integration Agenda[7] has encouraged, since 2005, migrants' involvement in mainstream institutions through various kinds of "active citizenship" (Vogel, Triandafyllidou, 2006) intended to stimulate migrants to take part in the participative and deliberative processes (e.g.: Morales, Giugni, 2011). However, besides the legal provisions and the EU recommendations, the initiative promoted and supported by the civil society are of particular relevance. All across Europe, actors such as voluntary associations, Unions, and cultural organizations have been engaging in the promotion of a "generative" form of citizenship. The latter is intended as a participative citizenship, linking all those people living in the same *polis* –notwithstanding their nationality or their migratory status– meeting their desire of belonging, and enhancing their contribution for the common wellbeing.

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6 An interesting analysis of the relation between religious practices and group's identity is provided by Stroup, 2017. Here the author distinguishes among a universalizing role, a negotiating role, and a differentiating role. In the case of the Copts we studied, religion seems play a differentiaging role, by setting apart on ethno-religious group from an "outsider other".

7 Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *A Common Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union*, COM (2005) 389 final.

In this perspective, initiatives sustained by FBOs are particularly relevant. If not because they defy the idea that religious affiliations are likely to obstacle migrants' integration and social cohesion. Indeed, religious organizations are surely important agents in supporting migrants' inclusion in the new society, and in offering them the possibility to recover from the migration trauma and to "feel at home". What is more, in many occasions they have proved to be able to involve newcomers in common projects, emphasizing the mutual enrichment gained by reciprocity and cooperation. As has been repeatedly stated, the image of a secularized Europe –in which religion is relegated to the private sphere– and the same concern about the religious diversity embodied in immigration, have contributed to overshadowing the potential of the binomial "religion–integration". This has strengthened, on the one hand, the tendency to make (one's) religion (more or less practiced) a bulwark of identity for those who are "in-group" with respect to "others", whose religion constitutes a destabilizing threat; on the other hand, the tendency to consider religion as a secondary factor for the purposes of integration and "citizenship's construction". However, today there are signs that show a different attitude in considering the potential of this couple of concepts. They go in the direction of both containing fundamentalist thrusts, adopting measures not only to combat them, but also assisting migrants and promoting interreligious dialogue, and to highlight the positive aspects of the role of religion in the processes of integration of migrants (as emerges, for example, from various special programs adopted by some European countries and/or coordinated by the European Commission as well as by international bodies).

The qualitative study contained in the book (Chapter 14) –albeit in an embryonic/limited form and, however, significant for the processes indicated by the interested stakeholders themselves (whether they are migrants and refugees and/or referents of established organizations and groups)–, identify some paths along which the role of the FBOs unfolds disseminating actions that support social integration in the broad sense. In particular, their main and first task is that of taking care of the needs and problems migrants and refugees are facing in the new context. This action concerns both the answering to their material needs of first necessity and, together with them, the need for a more integral accompaniment of the person (to cure invisible wounds on a psychic and spiritual level), and the implementation of actions which concern support for religious freedom, especially when faced with forced migration which, among push factors, include religious persecutions. This last element is often intertwined with others, such as the existence of serious social and political conditions, the spread of violence and conflicts, existential precariousness, so that the religious factor becomes –as underlined by different operators– "an

additional factor". In any cases, among the needs of migrants, there is also the spiritual one (this point is deeply analyzed in Chapter 12). In this sense, the FBOs are also the context within which spiritual support is offered that allows migrants to continue to live their faith together with others, both compatriots and/or belonging to the same religion, and autochthonous where local religious communities start walking of encounter and mutual knowledge. In many cases, these places are characterized by a strong transnational configuration (maintaining close ties with the same diasporic communities). However, the long-term outcomes of these processes are influenced by the orientations of host societies: where migrations are seen as a merely transitory phenomenon and religion is considered as a parallel element with respect to personal experiences, vicious circles are triggered whose repercussions can lead to identity closures and to the instrumentalization of religion.

Here we meet a second basic task played by FBOs, that is that of providing capacity building for the integration and the acceptance of diversity. When they place the person of the migrant/refugee at the center of their actions, FBOs can facilitate their empowerment, by enabling the abilities of each one and awakening, in particular, the constructive orientation towards the destination society, thus contributing to triggering the processes of positive integration. At the same time, these organizations work on the reception field, in such a way as to broaden the meaning of "integration" well beyond its unilateral reading that only engages the immigrant component. The religious theme offers a particularly significant starting point in this regard, recalling, both on the side of migrants and on the side of those who are expected to welcome them, aspects of personal and social life that require everyone a renewed awareness of the role and contribution that religions can offer not only to the formation of personal identity, but also to the civil coexistence of a democratic country. In this way, they try to overcome emerging hostility and intolerance both from fundamentalist positions, often associated with immigrant religious groups (but, nevertheless, to closed indigenous groups), and from forms of "exclusive humanism" characterizing the secularized context of Western countries (Chapter 3).

More generally, the intervention on the front of personal capacity refers, on both fronts, to the work (wide-ranging cultural and educational) for the acceptance of the diversity of each person: in fact, the religious element often becomes the catalyst for other aspects considered problematic and less explicit. A suggestive illustration of all these processes –and of their both complex and "prophetical" nature– is provided in Chapter 16, through the analysis of the first steps of the "Synod from the people", launched in January 2018 by the Diocese of Milan – the largest Catholic Church world-wide. The aim of the

consultative phase described in the chapter was that of collecting suggestions in order to improve foreign migrants' inclusion in the everyday life of the local Church, together with the capacity of the latter to answer the needs of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population. Going well beyond these expectations, emerged results clearly show how this challenge mirrors many other critical issues involving the life of the Church and of the local society. According to a theological perspective, this challenge constitutes an extraordinary opportunity to test –and possibly achieve– the true meaning of the "catholicity", described in the Scriptures as "unity in diversity". But in this way, the Church can contribute to provide the *lexicon*, the semantic framework, and the procedures through which redefining the concept of citizenship –in its multiple dimensions– in a more and more pluralistic society, while maintaining a strong attachment to those basic values which define this concept as it has been forged in the European democracies.

In the end, our study confirms *the need to rethink, besides the current citizenship regimes –in most cases still based on an ethnic conception of the membership–, the very idea of citizenship*, going beyond the "contractualistic" approach followed by many countries through different kinds of "integration agreements" (Joppke, 2007) and according to a new prospective that gives particular emphasis to its participatory dimension. All this in order to valorize the contribution of each person to the construction of citizenship "from below", through the confrontation of different –cultural, ideological, religious, experiential– perspectives, giving new life to the basic principles of European civilization: the principle of the indissoluble dignity of each human being and the principle of institutionalized solidarity, intended also as an expression of the human anthropological vocation to build relations of reciprocity and solidarity (Zanfrini, 2013).

In this framework, one of the basic issues concerns the safeguarding and support of pluralism which constitutes a social value within Western democratic societies. Moreover, pluralism in its more specific declination of the "religious", on the one hand belies the classical hypotheses of an extinction of religion in secularized contexts, on the other it constitutes a challenge for the religions themselves, with respect to their vocation to the encounter with the other. In this regard, among some other topics, our research has deeply explored (Chapter 22) how the Italian school copes with religious plurality, and finds strategies to deals the challenge that it poses to the school day life, curriculum, and family-school relationships: to protect the freedom of expression with regards to religious plurality, in compliance with the school's "*laïcité*" and the rules (and limits) of the democratic, liberal society. Here again, beyond the description of the legislative and institutional framework and of its

ambivalences (Chapters 9 and 21), our study has mainly focused on the direct experience of migrants', migrants' offspring, and the (Italian) people they meet in the everyday life, according to the prospect of returning them their own subjectivity. One of the most relevant issues emerged from the analysis concerns the blurring borders between the private and the public spheres at school, due to the students', families' and teachers' daily behaviors and choices. The legal protection of religious freedom assured by the Italian (and European) laws and citizenships rights, while providing a crucial leverage for social integration, triggers claims for the recognition of the legitimacy of each religious belief and practice within the school life. Hence, religious and civic loyalties may come into conflict. The request from some students (and their families) to different treatments (in order to meet the values, the customs, and the practices relating to their religion affiliation) prove the inner "power dimension" of school relationships and the religion's role in shaping people's "world vision", that is an idea of what constitutes a good citizen, of how it should be the "right order" of society. Hence, it is difficult to establish, once and for all, the boundaries between different orders of law, and between beliefs and practices. In other words, the request for recognition of religious freedom (to *believe* and *practice* one's own faith) at school turns out to have, not only a cultural and religious dimension, but also a political one. Compelled to face these challenges, students, families, and teachers find a profitable way to overcome barriers and to build reciprocal trust through practices of dialogue, negotiations, argumentations: in so doing, their self-reflexivity and awareness of being part of a pluralistic scenario increases. What's more, the interreligious and intercultural dialogue developed within the school become a training ground for democratic citizenship, ensuring the school not to be a "neutral space", but a "safe space" for dialogue (Jackson, 2014), where inclusion and mutual respect are promoted within a given framework of rules, rights and duties. In this wake, religious education reveals an extraordinary "learning potential", for curriculum enrichment and for promoting constructive dialogue skills among pupils (Chapter 22).

3.4 *Common Good*

This final point introduces us to the fourth main line of research, represented by the common good, that is by the idea that migrants and refugees can contribute, through their competences, abilities, sensitiveness, and experiences, to build the social fabric of the communities in which they live. Here, again, the prospect is that of the emergence of a "new-generation" citizenship: a generative form of citizenship linking citizens as they live together within the *polis* intended as a shared space and a shared time which becomes, in turn, a place

of reciprocity of rights and duties (Martinelli, 2013). We are speaking about a type of "responsible" citizenship, which manifests itself within a scenario of freedom, the latter conceived according to a relational perspective, thus connecting the creativity and innovation potential of social actors with their aspiration to belong and feel included.

As a matter of fact, this prospect implies, first of all, a paradigmatic shift with respect to the economistic model on which the European approach has been traditionally based, in order to valorize the "Diversity Value" (Zanfrini, 2015) which migration bring with it. Instead of enhancing migrants' adjustment to European society and labor market (by means of selective migration schemes and of standardized procedures defined from the top), this new paradigm is focused on how to valorize migrants' competences and experiences in view of promoting European economic, social and institutional development – with a special focus on those skills acquired thanks to migratory trajectories and to the migrants' condition of dual belonging. In addition, according to this perspective, the emphasis on the dimension of self-realization and personal achievement –stressed by the current individualistic culture and targeted by most policies and programs–, must be complemented by a renewed attention to the dimension of individual responsibility for the construction of the common well-being. Furthermore, together with that of governments and local administrations, the role of civil society's actors must be acknowledged and valorized, since it is crucial in determining the "quality" of the integration processes and of interethnic cohabitation. Finally, this shift requires the willingness to recognize pluralism –including religious pluralism– as a constitutive character of contemporary and future European democracies, overcoming not only nationalistic narratives which pretend to affirm a strictly ethnic conception of the political community, but also a pro-migrant discourse which recur to arguments such as the low share of Muslim migrants (thus implicitly restating the problematic character of Muslims' presence) or "our" need for the migrants' cheap labor force (thus reaffirming the image of a dualistic society, which assign to migrants a subordinate position). As a matter of fact, according to this perspective, the real challenge is not to welcome migrants, but to portray them as full members of a pluralistic society in which the opportunity is acknowledged to keep transnational links and multiple identities and belongings.

Within this picture, in this study we have focused the attention on those migrants' contributions linked to their religious affiliations; that is, on their potential in terms of "religious agency" as part of (forced) migrants' public space making, here intended both as an individual resource and as a resource which can be activated through the mediation of associative bodies, in particular the FBOs.

Starting from the individual level (Chapter 12), interviewed migrants offer a lot of examples about the role of religion in providing the spiritual and psychological resources able to transform past sufferance into a generative behavior. Many migrants –particularly in the case of (forced) ones, strongly stained by their religious background–, often cultivate a form of transnational membership, and self-represent them as the members of an international (if not a universal) community; a community to which they are bound by obligations of mutual support (Bahá'i are a case in point). Therefore, the transnational or diasporic characters of many religious communities offer the migrants the possibility to experience a concept of brotherhood that translates into a form of mutual support and protection able to reproduce itself in every place, overcoming the barriers represented by socio-economic status, States' borders, geographic and time distance. Finally, the activating power of religion also operates through the testimonies of many believers that, through their involvement in migrants' reception and welcoming, instill in newcomers the motivation to engage themselves, in their turn, in helping other people in need and work for the common good (Chapter 12).

This point introduces as to the role of FBOs. As illustrated in Chapter 10, the social capital embedded into religious-based institutions and networks often turns out to be a driver of migration, permitting people to escape from intolerable conditions and gain the opportunity to achieve personal and family wellbeing – although its role sometimes feeds disputable migratory cultures and patterns. Furthermore, from our analysis it has emerged that, beyond the institutional apparatus in charge with the reception of asylum seekers and the evaluations of their claims, FBOs play a crucial role not only in welcoming new comers and support their adaptation, but also in preparing and accompanying them all along the official procedure. In so doing, they contribute to rehumanizing asylum seekers, and to humanizing the reception system, thus stimulating a positive attitude toward the new society. Spirituality can also have a "therapeutic" impact, when it comes to dealing with traumatized people; therefore, spiritual assistance can be of crucial importance in order to recover an emotional balance and a working capacity, to the point that spiritual and religious assistance is often mixed up with different forms of social assistance and empathetic sustain. Not only many FBOs have implemented, independently from the official reception system, various initiatives specifically addressed to (forced) migrants and refugees; what is more, every step of the migration journey is supported by FBOs that are engaged in answering migrants' basic everyday needs. Often, FBOs provide the possibility to attend the celebrations in the migrants' mother tongue, to meet and spend free time in spaces provided by their places of worship, and to implement initiatives to

support the inclusion process (language courses, matching with the labor demand, social assistance…). By taking care of migrants without any kind of selection or discrimination based on the religious affiliation, FBOs fuel their attitude to "give back" what one has been given for free –without expecting anything in return–, to "assist" instead of just "being assisted", and to commit to the common good. Finally, FBOs are involved in the building of a coordinated interreligious dialogue and cooperation. This line of action involves specific activities –particularly the support offered to the victims of religious intolerance–, as well as the promotion of religious freedom and of solidarity relations among communities of different religions – for example, through the provision of initiatives of civic education and peace.

This point deserves specific attention. As deeply discussed in Chapter 3, current global scenario provides unexpected conditions for a recovery of the presence of religion(s) in the public sphere, and the search of (transcendent) ethical norms that must be placed at the basis of socio-economic and political life. Following the fundamental contribution of J. Habermas (2005), the idea that religion is a *public good*, not just a private good (Modood, Sealy, 2019), is now increasingly acknowledged. Moreover, cooperation between religious groups and traditions has become increasingly common, so much so to speak of a "multi-religious approach to integration" (Lick-Bowen, Owen, 2019). As a matter of fact, the aforementioned contribution proves that multi-religious collaboration can help counter some of the problems associated with religion acting as a barrier to integration, by expanding social networks, countering negative stereotypes and perceptions through opportunities for engagement, and encouraging migrants to look beyond potentially exclusive religious and ethnic communities and identities. The pressures and fears on host societies and communities should also not be lightly dismissed; and there is good indication that multi-religious collaborations can also benefit existing inhabitants in many ways. Given this picture, our study has developed this suggestive perspective by investigating in particular the role of interreligious dialogue – intended as a confrontation among different conception of values, but also as the search of those principles which made up a heritage of values for all and for the common good, thus formulating a sort of "global ethics" (Chapter 15). In particular, among the principles largely shared by the different religions, the study has identified the following: the primacy of the common good towards the individual one; the universal destination of the hearth's resources, and consequently the duty of solidarity; the duty of welcoming foreigners and hosting them; the good administration of the planet and the environment's protection; the concept of a transnational citizenship. Contrasting the common tendency to neglect how any law and rule is always embedded in a given

structure of values –be the latter explicitated or not–, this approach identifies in different religions the custodians of the values that are most closely-related to human nature; at the same time, overcoming the ambiguities and prejudices that accompanied the secularization process, this approach recognizes how religiosity must become a qualifying component not only of the "human", but also of the "social" (Chapter 14). Finally, it envisages the rediscovery of the essence of the European Christian roots (Roy, 2019), by refocusing the attention on the issue of values, and on the need to inscribe them in the society and its main institutions.

In recent times, despite the aggravation of conflicting issues –such as the Ukrainian crises–, significant steps have been taken in the field of interreligious dialogue at institutional level, following the meeting (Havana, February 2016) between Pope Francis and the Patriarch of Moscow and all the Russias, Kiril. Just to cite an example, the European Orthodox-Catholic Forum involves representatives of both local Catholic Churches and Orthodox Churches with the aim of solving common social problems, such as poverty, the crisis of the family and the need to ethicize economic behaviors. Christians' persecution in the Middle East is one of the topics of common interest –as strongly emphasized by the final declarations of the Havana meeting–, which will be able to gain from this new era of cooperation: exactly this problem was the focus of the yearly conference organized in 2018, again following the Cuba event. As stressed in Chapter 7, another crucial divide is represented by the recent meeting (4 February 2019) between Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahamad al-Tayyib, which ended with the signing of the Document "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together", encouraging all persons who have faith in God to work together for promoting a culture of mutual respect, tolerance, coexistence and peace, and warn from any political manipulation of religion, particularly as a means to perpetrate violence, hostility, extremism, oppression. Following these institutional steps, we can expect a further development of the initiatives launched at both national and local level. As a matter of fact, well beyond its concrete outcomes and realizations, *interreligious dialogue offers a methodology useful for the identification of new ways of living together and for the construction of the well-being of the entire human family.* Finally, relegated to the private sphere by the secularization's narrative and the secularization's ideology, religion today reappears a resource that can be activated for the common good.

What we have discussed in this introductory chapter certainly cannot give reason for the richness of this wide and articulated research. However, we think it is sufficient to give evidence of how the religious dimension can play a crucial role not only in enriching the analysis of migratory and integration processes, but also in stimulating profound processes of social transformation,

through the provision of creative principles and an enriched awareness (Chapter 3). There is one last point which deserves our attention: recognizing and promoting the role that religiosity –in both its individual and community declinations– and religious organizations can play in the governance of human mobility and in planning paths of peaceful coexistence goes exactly in this same direction. As stressed in Chapter 2, the "intrusion" of religious identities and practices within public space –through the activism of different FBOS– stimulates us to shift our focus from citizenship as a legal status to "performances of citizenship", able to reinvent ways to live together while facing the major challenges that are unfolding on the horizon of European and Italian society. Among these challenges, there is certainly the search of sustainable ways to manage human mobility, in front of the strong and growing inequalities at global level.

As a matter of fact, as the refugee crisis has dramatically shown, this issue suffers from the lack of sufficiently shared and ethically founded criteria. Having reduced migration and border management to a technocratic task, measured in terms of economic costs and efficiency, and substantially aimed to restrain migration flows and reduce the number of refugee/asylum applications, Europe has discovered that it lacks convincing, persuasive and ethically based criteria through which to manage the complexity of contemporary human mobility (Chapter 11); that is for distinguishing between "authentic" and "fictitious" refugees. People with different national and religious backgrounds, together with FBOs, have to be involved in the debate, which is exactly a manifestation of a "performing" citizenship, anchored in participatory and negotiation practices, and aimed at giving shape to an inclusive and integrated society. As I have suggested elsewhere (Zanfrini, 2019), the need to identify new criteria and solutions through which to manage asylum seekers' reception, the exam of asylum applications, and the initiatives in support of their integration could represent a remarkable test-bench for experiencing this kind of participative *agora*. In a certain degree, this wish was endorsed also by the final text of the recent "Global Compact on Refugees",[8] which has included FBOs among the relevant stakeholders to be considered in the sharing of responsibilities. Not to mention that the shared moral values by different religious traditions provide strong arguments for the legal empowerment of migrants and asylum seekers. Despite all this, the reference to the religious and faith dimension in the major documents enacted by international organizations about migration policies and programs is quite scarce, if not inexistent. In this way, a substantial dimension of the migratory and integration processes is neglected, as well as a substantial dimension of human realization (Chapter 15), a significant

8 https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html.

ingredient for both personal and social life which should be included in all the policies and actions involved in the migration governance.

Religion has historically offered a valuable contribution to various civilizations, as demonstrated by the numerous achievements in the economic, cultural, educational and artistic fields, which arose precisely thanks to the values, ideals and religiously connoted actions of individuals and groups. However, contrary to the tendency to reduce religion to a cultural construct, it refers to something that distinguishes the human being: that is, his/her constitutive openness to the mystery, to the transcendent, to beyond what is immediately controllable. For this reason, the religious dimension cannot be excluded from the debate that intends to consider social life in its properly human dimension. Furthermore, as we have repeatedly remarked, religion is combined with freedom, which derives from the very high dignity with which every human being is endowed, who, despite being social, is never fully assimilable and/or deducible from the social context in which he/she is inserted (Martinelli, Magatti, 2016). Significantly, in many cases, the experience of migrating is linked precisely to the need to protect the openness of the man/woman to the transcendence from the possible absorption by the political, social, familial and sometimes even religious structures – when the latter pursue aims far from their own nature (Chapter 10). *Only by taking seriously the prospect of focusing on migrants, not on flows, it is possible to grasp the regenerative function that religion can play not only for the single believers, but also for society as a whole*. As it has clearly emerged from this study, the religious dimension, in fact, brings into play the crucial importance of the meaning of collective coexistence: the latter does not stand only on instrumentality and functionality, saturating every space of personal and social life by means of efficient technical devices and reassuring bureaucratic procedures – thus reinforcing the individualization and isolation of the subjects, on the one hand, and the absolutization of the techno-economic systems, on the other, and pushing for a merely technical integration at the expense of the social and cultural one (Martinelli, forthcoming). Repositioning at the center of attention the meanings (cultural, social, personal) that nurture collective coexistence is good for all, believers (of various religions) and non-believers, since this option safeguards the human and social values that constitute the heritage of every culture and set in motion the most vital dimension of the human flourishing. For this reason, the challenge that confronts local societies as well as the international community and its institutional bodies concerns the correct consideration of the religious dimension within the debates, documents and actions undertaken in relation to the migration phenomenon. Since the latter is not merely constituted by "flows", but by persons.