

Life plans, the principle of accommodation and temporary migrants

Valeria Ottonelli, Università di Genova

Tiziana Torresi, University of Adelaide

Introduction

- One of the main tenets of the liberal conception of justice is that people should be regarded as purposeful agents
- Liberal institutions are meant to establish the conditions in which people can pursue their life plans and their conception of the good
- Distinguishing between voluntary and non-voluntary choices is of importance because only voluntary choices count as genuine expressions of people's agency

- We argue that migrants, including those who engage in temporary migration projects, should be seen as bearers of life plans worthy of accommodation;
- We seek to analyse and clarify the normative considerations that make voluntariness and agency relevant for a liberal theory of migration, and to draw some important normative implications that follow for the specific case of temporary migration projects.

Life Plans

- Distinctive features of liberalism is the idea that people should not be merely treated as passive bearers of needs and interests, but as bearers of a "life plan"
- Idea of a life plan highlights a fundamental dimension of the liberal view of individuals, namely that not only they have a conception of the good, but they care to pursue it in the first person through deliberation and action.
- The notion of a life plan essentially refers to *agency* as a fundamental dimension of our lives.

- Temporality and complexity, trans-temporal dimension of our lives and our interest in being able to pursue not only single goals, but sets of "compossible" goals

- We need to assume that people's life plans are valuable and should be accommodated by liberal political institutions even if they are devised and pursued in non-ideal conditions and are affected by the unjust conditions of the present world.
- If this were the case, no life plan in the history of humankind would pass the test.
- Furthermore, it would follow that the life plans who would be most burdened by this test would be those of the people most affected by injustice, which is perversely unfair

- Importance of voluntariness; There are circumstances in which people do not voluntarily choose their plans, because they are coerced by the lack of better alternatives, they are misguided by false information or fall prey of self-deception.

The Principle of Accommodation

- General principle calls for the setting up a system of rights that creates and protects the conditions in which people can actively pursue their projects and their conception of the good
- which goals should be considered as legitimate objects of concern and how far the principle must go in order to take people's plans into account?

- The very idea of a life plan sets important limits to which specific activities and goals can be the subject of a legitimate claim of accommodation by political institutions.
- Hobbies, short-lived or idiosyncratic passions and whimsical preferences do not fall within the compass of the principle of accommodation.
- Another clear constraint is the harm principle.

- Does this mean that all life plans, barred those that fail the harm principle, should be *equally* accommodated?
- At the very least the principle of accommodation must imply that as a consequence of pursuing their legitimate life plans people should not suffer serious deprivations in fundamental dimensions of their lives, i.e. those very dimensions that are protected by citizenship rights, which hold unconditionally and are to be secured independently of the lifestyle one has chosen

Migrants as bearers of life plans

- We propose that one of the grounds of the duties owed to migrants by the liberal state is the need to recognise them as bearers of life plans
- To the extent that migrants are subject to, and impacted upon by, the institutions of the state, these institutions should be shaped, as far as possible, to accommodate their life plans

Temporary Migrants

- This applies also to migrants who are present within the territory temporarily but for whom the institutional set-up of the receiving state can nevertheless be of crucial importance in supporting or undermining their life plans.