

# Social mediation – working towards inclusion from amidst exclusion

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*The aim of this paper is to analyze to what extent social mediation can be regarded as a productive means of solving disputes between migrant communities bearing in mind the often structural roots of these conflicts. The analysis of social mediation and its relevance is further carried out in the explicit light of the concepts of inclusion and exclusion. What this paper is intended to show is that it is in the housing neighborhoods that the primary experience of inclusion can take place. No political right is enough if the people are deprived of their right to live in peace in their local communities. Being accepted as a full worthy agent in the local level can give migrants a sense of belonging and empower them also on other levels of the society. Also, as social mediation involves a direct encounter of the two parties the underlying differences can be taken into account yet making way for a shared understanding of the past conflict and of how to prevent them in the future.*

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## The practice of exclusion

Reasons for migration are multiple.<sup>1</sup> In many cases they have to do with various ways of excluding the other. But as theologian Miroslav Volf claims “the practice of exclusion is not just something that the evil and barbaric others do out there; exclusion is also what we, the good and civilized people, do right here where we are”.<sup>2</sup> We ignore and undervalue those around us daily. This becomes even more clear if the other has e.g. a different ethnic origin from ours. The problems related to exclusion follow migrants<sup>3</sup> even in

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of cases of migration have to do with poverty, famine and persecution on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, language, gender and sexual orientation, as well as ethnocide, genocide and civil wars. Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others. Aliens, Residents and Citizens*, Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Miroslav Volf, “A Theology of Embrace for a World of Exclusion”, in: David Tombs, Joseph Liechty (ed.), *Explorations in Reconciliation. New Directions in Theology*, Ashgate 2006, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> I want to underline that the term *migrant* usually refers to the movement of people from one place to another, both across national borders and within a national territory. Therefore the term covers many kinds of people in a variety of situations, those who move voluntarily and those moving involuntarily. In this paper a migrant refers to both these categories, though bearing in mind that the kinds of problems and situations I describe here usually do not apply for certain groups of voluntary migrants, such as personnel of multinational companies