

Javier de Lucas

A refugee has death at his heels and a wall in his face

The current paradox of civilisation is "to live in a world without borders that won't stop putting up walls", points out the professor from the University of Valencia

"We are migratory animals. If there is a human reality, that's it", says Javier de Lucas, an expert in migration policies and human rights

He is critical of the "deportation agreement" reached between the EU and Turkey and believes that inequality is the "fundamental cancer" of problems: "our crises are paradise for millions of human beings"

By

Juan Miguel Baquero. www.eldiario.es

"Confronted with over 60 million individuals' need for protection, according to ACNUR, how is Europe responding? Walls". The description is by Javier de Lucas, an expert in migration policies and human rights. A "context of civilisation crisis", he says, that leaves "little hope" reduced to a dialectical struggle: democracy against inequality.

While the "deportation agreement" is established between the European Union (EU) and Turkey, migrations follow their natural course. And that is where "our civilisation's greatest challenge" lies: the fact that human development is linked to human rights development. "Extending inclusive democracy", states the professor of Political Philosophy and Philosophy of Law at the University of Valencia.

"Refugees and migrants are not different people. The migration issue is not foreign and its protagonists are no different from us. We are all migratory animals. If there is a human reality, that's it", explains De Lucas at the conference entitled 'Proposal for another possible EU immigration and asylum policy' (Propuesta para otra política de inmigración y asilo posible en la Unión Europea). A meeting opened by the Mayor of Seville, Juan Espadas, and organised by the Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (Famsi) at the Biodiversity Foundation.

Inequality as a social "cancer"

"A city must have resources to work with the association movement", affirms Espadas. And the city council "and the city [have] a lot to say" about this point, he continues. Observing "the awful situations we are living through in the EU concerning the tragedy of refugees" mentioned by the Mayor of Seville, the municipalities have something to say: "settling in a local community", remarks Javier de Lucas. Providing refuge, integrating. "Contributing" to faulty migration policies with the "national and regional [commitments] of the EU", according to the professor from the Institute of Human Rights at the University of Valencia.



The professor of the University of Valencia, in Seville. JUAN MIGUEL BAQUERO

An example, agree Juan Espadas and De Lucas, is Famsi itself and the project '*Amitie Code. Migraciones y desarrollo*' (Amitie Code. Migrations and development). The initiative strives to interpret the link between both realities from awareness-raising to practice, with an approach based on human rights. It generates collective awareness about migratory processes and their connection with world development, citizens and local communities. The project boasts 14 partners in six EU countries, including the Foundation Sevilla Acoge and Famsi.

"The fundamental cancer of the problems we face is inequality", summarises Professor Javier de Lucas. And he specifies that: "human beings are being turned into merchandise with an expiration date. Like products moved through markets". It is a way of "lowering that minimum status that corresponds to humans to convert them into outcasts, into expendable beings that are also utilised as elements to destabilise the least-advantaged groups, compared to those used to discourage immigrants and, at the moment, refugees as well".

Exclusion walls in the EU

"Migrations are not a labour market phenomenon", he states. It is "undervaluing the migrant community by ignoring the fact that those migrations are global social phenomena". It is a self-interested vision that leads to results such as the agreement between the EU and Turkey. "It is human and political impertinence to present it as a solution to the question of the refugees". "It is nothing more than a shameful instrument of highly doubtful legality – it is a deportation agreement", defines De Lucas.



De Lucas next to the Mayor of Seville, Juan Espadas. JUAN MIGUEL BAQUERO

"How is it possible that in the largest area of justice and liberty in the world, the EU, exclusion walls are being put up and inequality is growing?" asks the professor and human rights expert. In Spain as well, with the borders of Ceuta and Melilla as places "where that legal nonsense we call 'hot returns' is carried out, i.e. illegal deportations". A country, furthermore, "where over

recent years the inequality indices have shown an astonishing increase as a result of the cut-back policies applied".

Where the treatment for that worry is "to increase plural and inclusive democracy, the investment in projects and resources that encourage human development". Development, he states, "that is not so much economic but rather an equal distribution of resources".

He gives a definition: "a refugee is the person who has death at his heels and a wall in his face". "Our crises are paradise, a desirable horizon for hundreds of millions of human beings", says De Lucas. Or, as explained in Political Science Professor Wendy Brown's (University of Berkeley, California, USA) thesis on the internal borders of democracy, and which was mentioned by Professor De Lucas and completes a paradox: "to live in a theoretically border-free world that won't stop putting up walls".