

Social Immunology: Application in Research on Migration

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The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging the world for many months, drawing the public's attention to the field of epidemiology. Governments around the globe urgently call on the scientific community to provide guidelines for the treatment and prevention of coronavirus infections. Immunity protection (natural or man-made) is at the epicentre of state policies and public discussions. It is less known that the epidemiological discourse had been used beyond natural sciences in the domain of philosophy and social research. This paper introduces the concept of social immunology developed by Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito at the turn of the 20th century as part of the discussion of the notion of biopolitics. I re-read one of my previous research projects through the lens of Esposito's theory to show the potential of his theoretical constructs in studies on migration and integration.

Keywords: democracy, immunity, integration, thanatopolitics, vaccine

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the world's attention has been riveted on advances in epidemiology. Millions around the globe have been waiting for answers to pressing questions about the nature, danger and consequences of the coronavirus infection, and the scientific community is urged to provide guidelines on its treatment and prevention. The main battle is unfolding over efforts to achieve immunity in the global population through vaccination and by developing natural biological protection. Vaccination builds on the aspiration of attaining immunity to the coronavirus infection. The idea is to create an "immunologic memory" that helps to identify the pathogen and quickly mobilises the organism's defences (Ajana, 2021). The epidemiological discourse is, however, not limited to the field of medicine. During the last decades, it has been used beyond natural sciences in the domain of philosophy and social research. Roberto Esposito is one of the scholars developing this theoretical tradition. At the turn of the 20th century, Esposito introduced a theory of immunity that recasts the Foucauldian notion of biopolitics in line with the multifaceted European philosophical tradition (Campbell, 2008). The epidemiological rhetoric has been highly appreciated in current social-political debates. Esposito gave several interviews to explain the social-political transformations associated with the COVID pandemic (Christiaens, De Cauwer, 2020; Doğan, 2020).

Some initial attempts were made to apply Esposito's concepts to the analysis of ongoing civic and mobility restrictions in Europe (Ajana, 2021; Peters, Besley, 2020; Lorenzini, 2021). Moreover, the immunisation concept popularised by Esposito has been employed

in studies on migration and integration. Social researchers actively addressed the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe when the issue of national and cultural boundaries came to the forefront of political agendas across the region. Border management (Mavelli, 2017; Vaughan-Williams, 2015, 2016), obstacles to the social-cultural integration of migrants (Bird, Short, 2017; Chamberlain, 2016) and restricted access to local infrastructure (Namer et al., 2020) are some of the topics explored by researchers using the concept of immunity.

In this paper, the theory of immunity is used to explore the prospects for civic integration of immigrants in Sweden. In 2015, Sweden received the largest number of refugees in its contemporary history: 162.877 applications were submitted to the Swedish Migration Board in 2015 compared to 26.000 in the early 2000s and 12.991 in 2020 (Swedish Migration Board, 2021). A variety of special programs to integrate newcomers emerged in the country, both state-driven and civic initiatives, that attracted the critical attention of social researchers (Rodin, Rodin, 2016). The paper proceeds with an overview of Esposito's theory, followed by a re-reading of my previous study through the lens of social immunology. As follows from the analyses performed, an integration project "Cultural Friend" exhibited an immunity reaction to immigration and served the purpose of immunising the Swedish society. Moreover, participants' reflections upon their engagement in the project reflected an autoimmune response framed as an opposition to a perceived enemy within. However, interpersonal interactions with newcomers allowed some local residents to problematise the established divisions, which might become the first step towards the affirmative biopolitics propagated by Esposito. In distinction to culture-centred theories frequently used in studies on civic integration, the concept of social immunity helps to avoid the trap of essentialism and account for possibilities of change.

The Theory of Immunity

The notion of immunity has developed gradually in the last centuries in the fields of philosophy, sociology, and anthropology with and without direct references to medicine. Esposito built his theory on contributions from European scholarship, with a special attachment to the Italian theoretical tradition (Campbell, 2008).

The Notion of Immunity in Contemporary Social Theory

Among contemporary interpretations, Esposito takes up Niklas Luhmann's reflections on the law as an immunity apparatus that secures "the autopoiesis of society's communication system" (Luhmann in Esposito, 2011: 45–46). In fact, communication itself appears as immunisation. It ensures an "autopoietic closure" (Ibid.: 47), an interplay between the system's preservation of identity and openness towards the wider environment that eventually "includes all exclusions" (Ibid.). On the other side, the environment is both negated by any system as a challenge to own identity, and it is included in it as a general condition of existence. In this context, the law serves to protect "through negation against annihila-

tion” (Luhmann in *Ibid.*: 48); it ensures stability by favouring “better foreseeable uncertainties” over “insecure certainties” (*Ibid.*: 48). Law does not try to eliminate conflicts and contradictions. Rather, it seeks to make them automatically manageable. This is the moment where the traditional immunology discourse comes into play (Luhmann in *Ibid.*: 49): “Contradiction permits reaction *without cognition* . . . This is why one can invoke an immune system and coordinate the theory of contradictions with an immunology. Immune systems also operate without cognition, knowledge of the environment, or analysis of disturbing factors; they merely discriminate things as not belonging.” In this way, immunity appeared to Luhmann as stabilising management of emerging risks to the system, based on the anticipation of threats and the development of pre-programmed responses.

Another significant contribution to the field of social immunology came from Jacques Derrida (Campbell, 2008). In a series of publications and interviews in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Derrida developed a view on immunity as autoimmunity. Analysing the contemporary mode of western democracy Derrida identified it as an illusion. First, the power of the majority is never fully enacted in democratic countries, since there is always a risk that the majority may eventually prefer a non-democratic order. Second, the minority is inevitably excluded from decision-making (Campbell, 2008: xvi). In this respect, “democracy has always been suicidal” (Derrida in *Ibid.*: xvi): it rises against the very principles it declares. The immanent self-destructive tendency of democracy is nothing else for Derrida than an autoimmunity mechanism: “Democracy is never properly what it is, never *itself*. For what is lacking in democracy is proper meaning, the very . . . meaning of the selfsame . . . the it-self. . . , the selfsame, the properly selfsame of the itself” (Derrida in *Ibid.*: xvii). Democracy is also suicidal in the sense that it generates external threats to itself, as appeared in the 9/11 event. Derrida perceives the attack of religious fundamentalists on the World Trade Center to be a logical realisation of (auto) immunity mechanisms. Being homological to each other, religion and “tele-technoscience” unavoidably clash in autoimmunity (Campbell, 2008: xivff.). In a related interview, Derrida argued: “Immigrated, trained, prepared for their act in the United States by the United States, these hijackers incorporate so to speak, two suicides in one; their own . . . but also the suicide of those who welcomed, armed, and trained them” (Derrida in Campbell, 2008: xvii).

Finally, the notion of biopolitics has become an important point of departure for Esposito’s discussion of social immunity. Introduced by Michel Foucault in the 1970s, biopolitics is understood as managing the population in terms of health and wellbeing (Foucault, 1990; see also Esposito, 2008, Campbell, 2008). The biopolitical/governmental state continually reinvents frontiers of the public sphere and changes its responsibilities by acts of inclusion and exclusion (Foucault in Campbell, 2008: xii). Two Italian philosophers — Giorgio Agamben and Antonio Negri (in cooperation with Michael Hardt) — developed this line of argumentation in rather distinctive directions that provided a foundation for Esposito’s discussion (Campbell, 2008).

Reflecting upon the meaning of human life in modernity, Agamben (1998) identified a figure of a social outcast, *homo sacer*, whose life could be taken by anyone without

breaking the law. This life thus appears as “bare life”, a life denied any legal protection. It is included in the legal order only by its exclusion, and reveals the existing immunity mechanism. The modernist state exploits the condition of bare life in the so-called “state of exception” — legally justified enclaves of social life and/or territory where lawful protection is temporarily deactivated. The most telling example of this is a concentration camp where individuals are treated only as biological bodies that can be exposed to harm without consequences for the offenders. The camp model characterises, according to Agamben, the modernist society at large. It is built on the order of “inclusive exclusion” and thanatopolitics (the politics of death) that are thought to protect the system from undesirable disturbances (Agamben in Rodin, 2016: 279; see also Campbell, 2008).

While Agamben relates the salience of biological aspects in modernist society to the risk of falling into thanatopolitics, Hardt and Negri (2000) see the potential for liberation in the emerging global network of human bodies (see also Campbell, 2008). The ongoing totalisation of power and the transformation of labour towards its dematerialisation in the post-industrial world enable the production of new subjectivities (social singularities), new forms of communication and eventually an innovative collective resistance to the global order of domination (Hardt, Negri, 2000, 2013; see also Campbell, 2008). Life appears in this argument as having the potential to re-establish itself through the interconnected corporeal energy of individuals and groups. A related mode of sovereignty promises to emancipate the masses by open borders, universal income and democratisation of communication technologies (Hardt, Negri, 2000).

Esposito addresses both interpretations to develop a deeper understanding of prospects for “affirmative biopolitics” (Campbell, 2008: xl). For Foucault, biopolitics is about the modernist appropriation of the body by the State on both the individual and collective levels. Similar to Agamben, Esposito argues that the body has always been an essential element of political life. Sovereign power is impossible without individual bodies that constitute a population: “these bodies are now the large body, in the sense that the power of the State coincides literally with the survival of individuals who bear it in their bodies” (Esposito, 2013: 339–340). This explains for Esposito the role of medicine for reproducing modern society: “When the body of citizens became the real rather than metaphoric place where the exercise of power was concentrated, public health — understood in the widest and most general sense as the ‘welfare’ of the nation — clearly became the pivot around which the entire economic, administrative, and political affairs of the state revolved” (Esposito, 2013: 340). Medicine had become politicised and politics medicalized (Esposito, 2008; see also Campbell, 2008; Peters, Besley, 2020).

Esposito's Theory of Immunity

Esposito developed the theory of immunity in a series of books published in Italian and translated into English in the early 2000s: *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (2004), *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (2008), and *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life* (2011). The theory builds on an interplay between notions of “com-

munity” and “immunity”. Community presupposes sharing, belonging and universality while immunity refers to separation, identity, and particularity (Esposito, 2010; see also Campbell, 2008). Esposito (2010) carefully reviews the Latin origin of the term community (*communitas*) to identify its fundamental feature: community is held together not by shared material goods but by a shared duty (*munus*). “[C]ommunitas is the totality of persons united not by a ‘property’ but precisely by an obligation or a debt; not by an ‘addition’ . . . but by a ‘subtraction’. . . : by a lack, a limit that is configured as an onus, or even as a defective modality for him who is ‘affected’; unlike for him who is instead ‘exempt’ . . . or ‘exempted’” (Esposito, 2010: 6). What individuals associated with *communitas* share and lack simultaneously is a *gift* that no one can possess but must transfer to others (Esposito, 2010; see also Campbell, 2008). As a result, community members “don’t find anything else except that void, that distance, that extraneousness that constitutes them as being missing from themselves; ‘givers to’ inasmuch as they themselves are ‘given by’ . . . a circuit of mutual gift-giving that finds its own specificity in its indirectness with respect to the frontal nature of the subject-object relation or to the ontological fullness of the person . . .” (Esposito, 2010: 7). Gift-circulation is constitutive for the community and the relationships within it. In the community, the subject is incomplete, disrupted and radically opened to the common interiority. Inserting oneself into the process of gift-giving leads to the partiality of any personal identity. It can no longer be separated from the collective (see also Campbell, 2008). The community then appears both welcoming and antagonistic. It “isn’t only to be identified with the *res publica*, with the common ‘thing’; but rather is the hole into which the common thing continually risks falling” (Esposito, 2010: 8).

Modernity challenged “this unacceptable *munus*” (Esposito, 2010: 12) by aspirations towards reason, science, and regulation. It evoked the notion of immunity as a dialectical counterpart to community. The word “immunity” has the same roots as “community”, but it presupposes negation, a relief from the duty of gift-circulation (Esposito, 2010; Campbell, 2008). Those who are immune do not need to insert themselves into common obligations, and they can more efficiently preserve their own identities (see also Campbell, 2008). Modern subjects enjoy a wide immunity that manifests itself in separateness and clear-cut boundaries from others. They specify the value for any service and therefore “can no longer bear the gratitude that the gift demands” (Esposito, 2010: 12). An early example of the modernist immunisation paradigm is Thomas Hobbes’s theory of social contract: community is fundamentally dangerous to the individual in terms of personal integrity, and it should be limited by regulatory mechanisms. In this context, the social contract is “that which is not a gift; it is the absence of *munus*, the neutralization of its poisonous fruits” (Esposito, 2010: 14). However, the results of immunisation are controversial: immunisation unavoidably leads to radical separation and it eventually threatens individual existence, “[I]f life is sacrificed to the preservation of life” (Esposito, 2010: 14). Thus, in Esposito’s thought, community and immunity overlap and stand in dialectical relations with one another. As summarised by Campbell (2008: xi):

Immunity connotes the means by which the individual is defended from the “expropriative effects” of the community, protecting the one who carries it from the risk of contact with those who do not (the risk being precisely the loss of individual identity). As a result, the borders separating what is one’s own from the communal are reinstated when the “substitution of private or individualistic models for communitarian forms of organization” takes place. It follows that the condition of immunity signifies both not to be and not to have in common. Seen from this perspective, immunity presupposes community but also negates it, so that rather than centered simply on reciprocity, community doubles upon itself, protecting itself from a presupposed excess of communal gift giving.

In this context, balance is crucial. A surplus of immunity increasingly registered in contemporary social-political life may lead to autoimmunity and self-destruction of the social body, as Derrida also signalled in his writings (Campbell, 2008).

While relations to the *gift* constitute a social-juridical meaning of immunity (Campbell, 2008), Esposito (2011) further evokes a biological connotation of immunity as an organismic response to external threats, including those associated with contagious diseases. The organism naturally, or with external facilitation from a vaccine, develops antibodies to combat viruses. Vaccination is of special importance for Esposito. It shows that safeguarding life may occasionally demand a controlled insertion of dangerous elements into a living body. The two functions of the immune system — a “militaristic defence against the foreign” and “hospitable relation to the other” — must be accounted for in the analysis and understanding of both bio-medical aspects and social-political life (Levis, 2015: 222). In medicine, the immunity response is typically presented in terms of combat between the organism and dangerous agents coming from outside (Esposito, 2011). The excess of defence unavoidably leads to autoimmunity, a situation in which immunity turns against the organism itself. As translated into social-political context by Levis (2015: 222): “This is the point at which immunisation, understood as the construction of a rigid barrier between self and other, turns against itself and starts to endanger the very identity which it was supposed to be securing”.

In the next part of this paper, I revisit one of my previous studies on migration and integration to show the potential of Esposito’s theoretical constructs. The quotations from the interview cited below are translated from Swedish and edited slightly to ensure readability.

The Notion of Immunity as Applied to Migration Research

My article “From Othering to Belonging: Integration Politics, Social Interventions and the Limits of Cultural Ideology” published in *The Journal of Social Policy Studies* in 2017 addressed the social integration of migrants in Sweden. It analysed an integration project “Cultural Friend” implemented in Western Sweden in 2015. The project was built on the idea of facilitating interactions between “established Swedes” and newly arrived Middle East migrants. The aim was to improve migrants’ familiarity with the national culture,

language, local infrastructure, and services. To ensure the success of the intervention project, leaders performed an initial “matching” or coupling of participants in line with certain social-cultural variables. Apart from private socialising between cultural friends, the program provided a series of larger social-cultural events (cultural festivals and various group activities) in which everyone could take part. The research focused on the dynamics of othering in self-reports of Swedish-born participants. Data collected according to the established ethical guidelines were left available for further analysis.

Immunity, Immunization and Autoimmunity

At one interview, I noticed what appeared to be an epidemiological analogy. A respondent, a 50-year-old Swedish man who worked in primary education, reported frustration over his cultural friend’s intensive and unstructured interactional approach. This experience motivated the respondent to demand a formalization of meetings.

He invited me for coffee, for example, and suddenly the whole apartment was full of his other friends that come and also drank coffee. **It’s their way to be** and I don’t have any problem with that. But **the risk** is that when one comes here as a migrant then one **tries to transmit** one’s own cultural habits or forms of social interactions. And there, I understood, people very much come and go. This we don’t do so often here in Sweden. Only if people are real friends they can come and go, but in their [migrants’] tradition one comes and goes anyway. (IP1; emphasis added)

A clear discourse of estrangement appears in this extract: “us–them” language of separation and alienation, essentialising cultural differences, with ethnicity being unproblematically coupled to behaviour. Moreover, an experience of threat coming from an alien culture, fear of contamination and attempts to identify inclusion/exclusion criteria in a form of familiarity with specific cultural codes reveal immunity rhetoric. Earlier in the interview, the same respondent suggested that Swedes possess specific psychological knowledge that allows them to observe “what they (migrants) can and cannot do” (IP) and to read newcomers in detail. Migrants in these rhetorical moves appeared as underdeveloped — disorderly, lacking recognition of social distance, short in social knowledge and less capable of self-reflexivity — and therefore proper objects of surveillance, control, and discipline.

According to Esposito (2008), protecting one’s group from interferences and undesirable change is a core of immunity. In 20th century Europe, an “immunity apparatus” was called into being to artificially correct societal transformations through eugenics, euthanasia, and genocide. Esposito (Ibid.: 112–113) elaborates on Foucault’s interpretation of racism in Nazi Germany as an extreme example of an attempt to protect a specific ethnic community. Biology had become politicized: “What before had always been a vitalistic metaphor becomes a reality in Nazism, not in the sense that political power passed directly into the hands of biologists, but in the sense that politicians used biological processes as criteria with which to guide their own actions”. The established “biocracy”

(Ibid.: 113) represented thanatopolitics implemented under Hitler's regime. "The medical class" obtained the central role and exclusive power in the thanatopolitical order: doctors constructed crematoriums, administrated death to millions in concentration camps and performed risky experiments on human subjects. All these actions were justified by "therapeutic" and "hygienic" reasons: "It is only by killing as many people as possible that one could heal . . . those who represented the true Germany" (Ibid.: 115). In this way, immunization manifested itself by taking care of the German race by exterminating others who were perceived as a threat: "Paradoxically, death was considered the only medicine able to safeguard life" (Ibid.: 116). The exterminated "others" were typically dehumanized, associated with "pathogens" ("viruses" or "microbes") to be effectively isolated and/or cleaned away (Ibid.). Esposito highlights an immunological discourse in the project of the Warsaw ghetto that was thought to prevent "contamination" by the "Jewish virus" (Ibid.: 117).

Repression and physical violence are no longer used to deal with "others" in the contemporary western world, though Sweden is known for eugenic programs that ran between the 1930s and 1970s (Broberg, Tyden, 1999). During this period, there were politically approved attempts to manage the population both in terms of size and "quality". Scientific institutions, such as the Swedish State Institute for Racial Biology at Uppsala University, worked on promoting a "Nordic race", combining an anthropological approach with genetics. Later, the focus shifted to broader social issues including poverty, ill-health, and low involvement in the industrial labour force. Several sterilization laws approved by the Swedish parliament between 1938 and 1951 aimed at reducing the number of individuals considered to be a threat or a burden to society (Ibid.). Esposito (2008: 132) identifies sterilization as "the most radical modality of immunization because it intervenes at the root, at the originary point in which life is spread . . . It blocks life not in any moment of its development as its killer but in its own rising up — impeding its genesis, prohibiting life from giving life, devitalizing life in advance".

Today discourses about tolerance, inclusion and respect of differences dominate the political landscape in Sweden (Viegas, 2007). Sterilization is no longer used to solve social problems. In this context discipline (education and training) becomes the primary tool for managing social-cultural borders. Esposito (2011), however, sees no opposition between sovereign power and discipline found typically in Foucault's writings. Both aim at social management even if methods may differ, both attempt to anticipate deviations and correct them. Esposito (2011: 142) summarises: "What unites them, though in inverted form, is the negative connotation that both establish between the singularity of the living being and the preservation of life: the conditions of preservation, or reproduction, of life are located outside and before the living being's natural line of development". According to this line of thought, the "Cultural Friend" project can be seen as a disciplinary intervention to facilitate an immunity response to immigration.

Therefore, it is not surprising that most "established Swedes" in the project perceived their assignment as a form of mentorship with the primary goal of helping newcomers become familiar with the national way of life and infrastructure. The national culture of

the hosting society typically turned into a master frame into which immigrants had to fit. This essentialization and hierarchization of cultures manifested itself in the participants' reflections on alternative group activities, such as cultural festivals:

For example, a festival, not big maybe a small festival, with dance, music. And we can show and tell more about our cultures, maybe folk music or costumes, clothes or food. It is fun to learn more about special food in Swedish or Syrian-Arab culture, it is different in different countries. Many have said that they want to know more about special Swedish food such as cinnamon buns, which are delicious with coffee. From what I understand, there are many who bake bread. And of course, language is important to practice. **I mean, if you want to continue in Sweden, you have to know more about culture and society.** (IP10; emphasis added)

The respondent, a senior Swedish-born woman, started by acknowledging the plurality of cultures involved in a festival, but she finished by highlighting the legitimate dominance of the Swedish culture and a need to foster the immigrants' fluency in it. National food, clothes, ceremonies and language are presented as central cultural signifiers. Learning cultural codes is viewed as a crucial condition for migrants' integration into the hosting society. Those codes could be interpreted in line with Esposito's theory as tools in a "personalized surveillance system": all cells of a living body have particular encryption that allows "the human body's police corps" to recognize legitimate and illegitimate agents immediately (Esposito, 2011: 157). Much like an ID card, exhibiting cultural literacy ensures automatic discrimination between those who belong to the community and those who do not. In this context, cultural events initiated by the program worked as a vaccine: alien cultures were made visible, knowledgeable, and therefore controllable. They were included by exclusion.

The immunity paradigm appeared in the matching procedures performed at the start of the project. Based on the participants' applications, project managers coupled individuals and families of local residents on one side and immigrants on the other side in regard to gender, family situation, professional interests and hobbies. Based on the program documents (project logbooks and advertisements) and interviews with the participants, it can be argued that matching procedures were thought to immunize Swedish society at large and individuals who took part in the project. First, it restricted pulling together younger people of different genders to exclude prospects for "intermarriage", a common strategy of entering the hosting society (Rodríguez-García, 2015). Thus, coupling a young immigrant man with a young local woman was restricted. The age difference between cultural friends was typically quite significant, up to 40 years. This approach has drawn a parallel with breeding policies that are not new to the Swedish context; they preceded sterilizations of the early 20th century (Broberg, Tyden, 1999). In Esposito's (2008) terms, breeding, along with sterilization, should be considered one of the central immunity *dispositifs*.

Second, at the individual level, matching protected Swedish-born participants from encountering pronounced differences, such as extreme religious adherence, psychologi-

cal traumas or disturbing customs. Firm believers or individuals with traumatic experiences had fewer chances to be matched with an “established Swede”. It appears that the level of differences had to be convenient to ensure smooth socialization. Radicalism of any kind was perceived as a potential obstacle. As explained by a local resident regarding a weekend trip:

And since he [a newcomer] is not (pause). He is a Muslim, but he is not, so he is not such a devoted Muslim. He has no problems like when we went to [a local church] which is on the way to a stone exhibition. Then we stopped [near the church] on the way home. It’s a fantastic church (pause) eh (pause) which **you might think he would have a hard time being at because he does not have that faith.** But he is very interested in everything, so he thought it was very interesting to see that church. We can do basically anything. (IP4; emphasis added)

This extract presents the respondent’s anticipation that a newcomer might reject the local culture. It signals an (automatic) response of immunity: cultural aliens by definition are opposed to the national social body, so relationships with them require precaution. Pauses in the talk reveal an ongoing cognitive process. The interviewee was rethinking his presuppositions. To ensure non-conflict communication, “Cultural Friends” agreed from the start on a shared agenda and excluding difficult topics such as religion or politics.

Immunity always carries the risk of autoimmunity: it may occasionally turn into its own hazard, directing protective mechanisms against itself (Esposito, 2008). During one interview, Interview Person 1 (IP1) acknowledged that he got involved in the project to counteract the influence of Swedish Democrats, a right-wing political party highly criticized at the time for undermining democratic principles. This comment represents an autoimmune reaction: it is not only that B-cells should be activated to combat an external threat and T-cells to exterminate already damaged elements of the organism (which, according to Ajana, 2021, is a classical immune response), but more global societal transformations (towards a non-democratic development) should be counteracted. In the historical perspective presented by Esposito, this attitude is associated with policies towards “public enemies” and “degenerates”.

Building on the idea of a steady accumulation of negative features in the population — a “*process* of dissolution” — early medical anthropology defined the degenerate as a carrier of pathologies transmitted and intensified from one generation to another and across social classes (Esposito, 2008: 118). Beyond science, Esposito finds the theme of degenerates in literature. Stevenson’s Doctor Jekyll and Wilde’s Dorian Gray attempt to protect themselves from corrupt impulses by alienating part of the self or self-image. Personal multiplication, however, does not provide security to the protagonists. Esposito (Ibid.: 126) argues regarding Dorian Gray’s knife attack on his portrait: “The killing of death — the autoimmunity dream of man — reveals itself once again to be illusory: it can’t do anything except reverse itself in the death of the same killer”. For IP1, participation in the project was a political mission, a legitimate and highly important duty worth the “sacrifice” of one’s own time and efforts.

Rethinking (Auto)immunity

Esposito (2011) argues against a solely militaristic interpretation of immunity typically found in medical literature. Defence for him is just one of the possible reactions of an organism to external conditions. Another important function of the immune system is *adaptation*. Re-imagining immunity involves recognising identity as a dynamic system enmeshed in constant reciprocal relations with the surrounding environment. Immunity, then, appears not as a negation of community but rather as a derivative of it. To support this idea, Esposito cites a phenomenon of immune tolerance that manifests itself in pregnancy. The child's body carries a distinctive genome, but it is not destroyed by the mother's immune system. The conflict between the two organisms does not necessarily lead to death, just in the opposite. They help to maintain each other's existence. Translating this biological discourse into politics would mean recognising that identity and environment are continuously dialectically co-produced (see also Levis, 2015). As summarized by Esposito (2011: 171): "Nothing remains of the incompatibility between self and other. The other is the form the self takes where inside intersects with outside, the proper with the common, immunity with community".

Since society is typically imagined as a nexus of individual bodies and the collective, one must start by deconstructing the notion of the body. Being politically inscribed, the body is a closed domain. Esposito (2013) draws instead on the idea of "flesh" borrowed from phenomenology. Flesh radically differs from the body, but it still stands in relation to it.

Flesh is nothing but the unitary wave of the difference between bodies. It is the non-belonging, or rather the intra-belonging, which allows what is different to not hermetically seal itself up within itself, but rather, to remain in contact with its outside. What we are talking about is not just an externalization of the body, but also the internal cleavage that prevents its absolute immanence . . . The originary relationship between the figure of the flesh and that of the *munus* suddenly leaps out at us. The flesh is neither another body nor the body's other: it is simply the way of being in common of that which seeks to be immune. (Esposito, 2013: 325)

We observed this positioning of "intra-belonging" in the interviews responses: "And since he [a newcomer] is not (pause). He is a Muslim, but he is not, so he is not such a devoted Muslim" (IP4). This might help to establish communication across social-cultural and political boundaries. Donna Haraway's analysis of prosthesis and body modifications that are widely spread in technologized society encourages Esposito (2011: 149) to elaborate: when subjects are no longer purely biological, they can be more open to alternative ontologies, including those that combine human and nonhuman features, subjects and objects. This recognition of complexity, mutability and fundamental openness of identity allows to overcome the established view on immunity exclusively in terms of combat.

As highlighted in the article, "From Othering to Belonging", various indirect outcomes were registered for the group of "established Swedes" during the project. This com-

prised recognition of structural obstacles to integration, reflexivity over one's stereotypical perception of migrants, problematising existing cultural hierarchies and occasionally re-discovering one's own country (Rodin, 2017). Previous personal encounters with different social-cultural environments might help to position "intra-belonging" (Esposito, 2013: 325). Thus, a Swedish-born participant reported being herself once upon a time subjected to an immunity reaction. Married to a man from a Central European country, she could observe difficulties with economic and cultural integration that immigrants could face. She moreover personally experienced the social disregard directed to migrants and their relatives:

We come here in 1997 [from the Netherlands where the family lived before] and Sweden was not that open as today. It was very tough (pause) especially here in a [small town]. It was difficult for him (her husband) to find a job. [He got refused] as soon as they saw his foreign name . . . My husband could not speak Swedish and we used English all the time. Once [we were out]. It was a bit late in the evening. Some people were drunk in the centre of the city. One person came to us and tried to hit us because we were speaking English and the person thought it's awful that this foreigner has got a Swedish girl. (IP5)

This experience of violence motivated the respondent's engagement with the "Cultural Friend" project, though the woman cited social/intersubjective rather than political motives for her participation.

To account for the possible ways to overcome othering in public initiatives represented by the project, I employed the notion of "interculturalism" suggested by Anthias (2013) even though the scholar was rather critical of the culturalization of debates on integration. This was because the notion of culture tends to be essentialized in both academic and public debates. Culture is typically imagined to be stable over time and an inherent feature of a particular ethnic or social group (Rodin, 2017). Esposito's theoretical framework permits recognising deeper societal roots of reactions to immigration in general and the current politics of integration in Sweden in particular. The othering of newcomers should be seen, according to Esposito, as a protective response of the hosting society, an attempt to preserve its own identity in the face of an external challenge. This is exactly how immunity works. However, even if the project itself was a manifestation of immunity, immunization and even autoimmunity, it provided possibilities for at least some participants to engage with intra-positioning. This might be seen as the first step towards positive forms of "common immunity" (Esposito, 2011: 165ff.). Placing bodies side by side and engaging oneself in embodied practices of interaction altered the initial script on biopolitical immunity and provided an opening for the co-adaptation and growth welcomed by Esposito.

Conclusion

Social immunology is an emerging theoretical and research domain that has become especially salient during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Based on Roberto Esposito's theory of social immunity, this article emphasized the theory's potential to understand migration and integration. As demonstrated in the analysis of secondary data, policies of civic integration in Sweden exhibited an immunity paradigm. This paradigm was described in the current study in terms of directions of manifestations (immunity, autoimmune reaction), nature of manifestations (identification, neutralization, stabilization), functions (protection and adaptation), and specific methods of immunization (e.g., personalized surveillance). It is concluded that one aim of the integration project "Cultural Friend" was a vaccine-like effect: immigrant cultures were included in controllable portions with the sole purpose to become recognizable and easily manageable. At the same time, local culture and social order more generally were considered as a master frame for the disciplinary socialization of migrants. According to Esposito, immunity is potentially self-destructive since it tends to slip into autoimmunity. This pattern appeared in the interviews as the themes of the "enemy within" and "degenerates", which had been a common feature of oppressive regimes in the 20th century (Esposito, 2011).

According to Esposito (Campbell, 2006), immunity is the central element of any modernist society, and the very rise of modernity can be linked to the recognition of the immunity principle. In times of globalization, immunity's primary focus on identity, rights and liberty is shifting towards increasingly apparent politicization of all aspects of life. That politicization further intensifies immunization, and it heightens the risk of autoimmunity because of the growing discourses and apparatus of security. War on terror is the last telling example of autoimmunity: "Just as in the most serious autoimmune illnesses, so too in the planetary conflict presently under way: it is excessive defence that ruinously turns on the same body that continues to activate and strengthen it. The result is an absolute identification of opposites: between peace and war, defense and attack, and life and death, they consume themselves without any kind of differential remainder" (Esposito, 2008: 148).

To counteract this development is to interrogate the logic and methods of immunity, followed by a reconceptualization of community and identity in more reciprocal terms. As summarized by Campbell (2008: xlii): "What we need to do is to understand and practice differently the unity of bios and politics in such a way that we no longer reinforce the politicization of life. . . , but instead, create the conditions for what he calls a 'vitalization of politics'" (Campbell, 2008: xlii). The current study has been an attempt to reflect upon the issues of migration and integration through the lens of social immunity theory. Further research is needed to understand how the logic of immunity unfolds in different social-cultural, geographic, and political contexts and what practices might socialize immunity to benefit both individuals and communal life.

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Социальная иммунология: применение в исследованиях миграции

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Пандемия Ковид-19 много месяцев будоражила мир, привлекая внимание общественности к области эпидемиологии. Правительства разных стран мобилизовали научное сообщество на скорейшую выработку рекомендаций по лечению и профилактике коронавирусной инфекции. Имунная защита (природная или искусственно полученная) находится в центре государственной политики и общественных дискуссий. Менее известно, что помимо естественных наук эпидемиологический дискурс используется в области философии и в социальных исследованиях. Данная статья знакомит читателя с концепцией социальной иммунологии, разработанной итальянским философом Роберто Эспозито на рубеже XX века в рамках дискуссии о понятии «биополитика». Для демонстрации потенциала теоретических построений Эспозито в изучении миграции и интеграции я пересматриваю с их помощью результаты одного из моих предыдущих исследований.

Ключевые слова: демократия, иммунитет, интеграция, танатополитика, вакцина