

Migration 2030: Governing migration in a globalising world

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Abstract

International migration is arguably an important challenge and opportunity for the world today. In these two first decades of the 21st century, we are witnessing important changes in the direction of flows, the motivations of people on the move and the complex patterns of human migration. In addition, 2020 has brought an extraordinary and unexpected pandemic crisis, that has temporarily brought international migration to a standstill while further exacerbating inequalities and vulnerabilities of migrants and their families. This special issue finds its origins in the inaugural conference of the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration programme at Ryerson University in Toronto which took place in February 2020, while the COVID-19 epidemic was being felt in China but was still believed to remain a regional and short-lived challenge. As we developed our writing, COVID-19 turned into a global pandemic pushing us also to rethink some of our considerations and arguments. The first set of papers aims to unsettle the main migration policy narratives and to critically engage with dominant views of international migration governance. The second set of papers focuses on the new complex realities of temporary migration, investigating critically policies and practices in different world regions, and how they compound vulnerabilities for migrants while failing to offer a sustainable way forward.

INTRODUCTION

International migration is arguably an important challenge and opportunity for the world today. Even though international migrants represent under 4% of the world's population, it is high on the policy agenda for political, social and economic reasons. In these two first decades of the 21st century, we are witnessing important changes in the direction of flows (new countries of origin and destination, not following historical ties or post-colonial channels), the motivations of the people on the move (mixed economic and political/security motivations), and the patterns of mobility (increasingly non-linear paths from origin to first and then second or third destination, proliferation of temporary and circular migration, yet little explored connections between intra-regional and international migration) (Triandafyllidou, 2018). Not least 2020 has brought an extraordinary and unexpected pandemic crisis, that has forced many to leave, others to stay and others yet to be trapped in limbo, in a world with increased inequalities (Triandafyllidou, 2022).

This special issue finds its origins in the inaugural conference of the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration programme at London Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) which took place in February 2020, in Toronto, while the COVID-19 epidemic was being felt in China but was still believed to remain a regional and short-lived challenge. As we developed our writing, COVID-19 turned into a global pandemic pushing us also to rethink some of our considerations and arguments. This Special Issue brings together eight contributions organized around two important research and policy “conversations” with regard to international migration governance today. The first set of papers aim to unsettle the main migration policy narratives and to critically engage with dominant views of international migration governance. It seeks to decentralize our understanding of migration and its governance and to question the role that migration partnerships can play in managing international migration in the 21st century. The second set of papers focuses on the new complex realities of temporary migration, investigating critically policies and practices in different world regions.

UNSETTLING THE DOMINANT MIGRATION POLICY NARRATIVES: DE-CENTRED APPROACHES

A coherent international institutional framework for the governance of migration is yet to emerge, even if important steps have been taken in this direction in the last decade, culminating in the signature of the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regulated Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees (Newland, 2018). While states have been reluctant to regulate and liberalize international migration through multilaterally binding rules, there is an increasing array of multi-lateral, bi-lateral, regional and inter-regional institutions emerging, enabling different forms of formal and informal cooperation among state authorities, as well as the private sector and civil society.

In this context, there is a need for more systematic and critical engagement with the countries of origin and transit and their own policies, policy and public discourses on migration. Such engagement needs to emancipate itself from deterministic views of migration and development postulating that migration is the result of underdevelopment and that migrants should help their countries of origin by their financial and social remittances. This is the argument developed by Raul Delgado Wise in his paper on *Unsettling the Migration and Development Narrative. A Latin American Critical Perspective*. Departing from the Latin American Critical School of thought and focusing on the current capitalist and imperialist context, the paper addresses several key aspects of the dialectical relationship between migration and development against the mainstream narrative: the re-launching of imperialism (policies of global domination) in search of cheap and flexible labour, as well as natural resources from the Global South; the growing asymmetries among and within countries and regions; the increase and intensification of social inequalities; the configuration of a gigantic global reserve army of labour associated with the emergence of severe forms of labour precarisation and exploitation; and, finally, the predominance of forced migration as the primary mode of human mobility under conditions of extreme vulnerability. The paper deconstructs the dominant narrative on international migration and offers a diametrically opposite narrative of migration, development and human rights.

A critical approach to the future of migration requires us also to acknowledge the specific dynamics of regional realities. The contribution by Joseph Teye on *Critical Migration Policy Narratives from West Africa* fills precisely this gap by questioning the dominant representation of West African migration as one mainly geared towards Europe or North America and instead critically engaging with intra-regional dynamics. While population mobility has historically been an integral part of livelihoods in West Africa, there are contesting views on how to maximize the developmental impacts of migration from the sub-region, argues Teye. Although it is generally acknowledged that a deeper understanding of the interests and perspectives of various policy actors can help identify potential areas of engagement with different stakeholders, there is little understanding of the migration policy narratives of different actors in West Africa. Relying on a desk review of key migration policy documents and data collected from migrants and recruitment agents, this paper examines the competing interests and narratives shaping migration management in West Africa. The findings indicate that while various stakeholders have championed divergent narratives on the drivers and impacts of migration, many of the migration management initiatives adopted by both countries of origin and destination are based on narratives of powerful policy actors, especially the media and politicians, although there were situations where these narratives were not supported by any strong evidence.

The perspective of countries of origin and transit has come also under focus in recent years as a result of the heavy engagement of the European Union with African countries in the context of (rather imbalanced and unequal) “migration partnerships” (Collett & Ahad, 2017) or in relation to Central American asylum seeker flows as people have been travelling through Mexico to reach the United States or in relation to the Venezuelan refugee crisis (Freier & Parent, 2019). Albeit there too critical research has focused on the relevant European or North American policies and their outcomes (Baldwin-Edwards et al., 2019; Carrera et al., 2016; Reslow, 2019; Scalettaris & Gubert, 2019) rather than on the perspectives of the countries of origin and transit which have received limited attention (Venturi, 2017; Winters & Iaguirre, 2019).

While scholars (ibid) note the discrepancy between the evidence produced by academic research and the policies adopted by governments, a Eurocentric view remains hegemonic, failing to fully engage with realities and perspectives in the origin and transit countries. In this special issue, Olakpe and Papagianni offer different approaches to this debate with a special focus on the opportunities and challenges offered by the EU-Africa “migration partnerships,” while Triandafyllidou analyses critically the migration governance narrative posited by the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

In her paper on *Views on Migration Partnerships from the Ground: Lessons from Nigeria's Case*, Orevia Olakpe discusses the “partnerships” as a mode of transnational governance of migration from the point of view of the origin/transit countries. The paper seeks to understand the current status of migration partnerships looking at Nigeria as a more specific case study. EU-Africa partnerships are entering a new phase with the EU's new pact on migration and asylum, while the COVID-19 pandemic has affected return and reintegration activities, giving the EU and other stakeholders time to rethink and re-conceptualize migration governance cooperation. The paper takes a southern perspective to migration governance inspired by the work of Adam et al. (2020), Zanker et al. (2019), Bisong (2019) and Martins and Strange (2019) that shift the focus from the EU's policy objectives and actions to the interests, objectives and experiences of African stakeholders in the processes of migration governance. Following Adam et al. (2020) who argue that non-EU countries that cooperate with the EU are not merely passive recipients of EU policies; rather, they actively react to, interpret, and adapt the EU policy agenda to their own domestic contexts, this paper further develops this line of inquiry by using Nigeria as a case study. Olakpe in this special issue examines how Nigeria is positioned in its partnership with the EU, the factors shaping how negotiations are handled and how strategic interests are protected. The paper thus unravels the asymmetrical relationships between countries of origin or transit and countries of destination, while though showing how these are not passive actors in the “migration partnerships.”

Following this analysis, discussing *The Challenges and Opportunities of the EU-Migration Partnerships: A North African Perspective* Georgia Papagianni offers a European governance viewpoint. Papagianni proposes a possible way forward

in the EU's cooperation with North African countries on the basis of lessons learnt. Her paper looks, on the one hand, into the historical, institutional and policy dynamics of the EU's Migration Partnership Approach, and on the other hand, of the sensitivities of partners and the geopolitical dynamics in the North African region. In its first part, the paper discusses the key elements of the new approach as well as its policy and institutional impact. The paper offers a brief overview of the positive and negative lessons that could be drawn as to the opportunities the Partnership Framework approach offers and the challenges that its implementation has been faced with until now. The second part of the paper looks into the geopolitical framework, the challenges as well as the opportunities in working more closely with the North African countries, a region of indisputable importance for the EU's overall external migration policy.

Rounding up this first set of papers, Triandafyllidou argues for a "messy" approach in the global governance of migration. She analyses critically the emergence of a global migration governance regime today, particularly through the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration. The paper questions why and how the global governance of migration is following a blueprint that emphasizes orderly, safe, regular flows when the reality is that most flows are disorderly, unsafe, and partly regular or indeed largely unauthorized. Triandafyllidou argues that the global governance of migration is inscribed in the paradigm of risk society and suggests that it would be more appropriate and more effective to acknowledge complexity and uncertainty and adopt a "messy" approach to migration governance.

Temporary migration: Concepts and policies

The second set of papers that contribute to this Special Issue investigate the policies and realities of temporary migration in southeast Asia, the Asia Pacific and Canada looking at the dynamism of realities on the ground and at the hurdles and secondary effects of tightly regulated temporary migration policies. In her paper entitled *Temporary Labour Migration in Asia: the Transnationality-Precarity Nexus*, Nicola Piper notes that much of intra-Asian labour migration is regulated on the basis of a cross-border movement of workers approach, on a strictly temporary, employer-tied basis. Piper suggests that the key elements of this governance approach are recruitment, remittances and return; these three "Rs" are also central to global policy discussions around the migration-development nexus. The core premise of this paper is that this strict framework results in a particular form of migrant precarity which in turn shapes migrant transnationality, leaving migrants with severely circumscribed labour agency in relation to enhancing development. The temporary migration paradigm as practised in much of Asia constitutes a form of transnationalism which is inherently involuntary. The paper ends by arguing that based on proactive migrant rights activism, the involuntary character of transnationalism is being challenged by bringing a different set of "Rs" into the discussion derived from global social policy and global justice perspectives: regulation, redistribution and rights.

Adopting also a critical regional focus, Claudia Tazreiter and Andrew BurrIDGE, take a closer look at the case of Australia in their paper entitled: *Fault-lines in Temporary Migration Schemes: the case of Australia and the legacies of settler-colonial mentalities in the exploitation of temporary non-citizens*. Their study evaluates the complexity of Australian temporary migration schemes in contrast to the longstanding approach to immigration as a key aspect of nation-building in settler societies. The authors argue that while up to the 1990s predominantly one-way, permanent immigration schemes were preferred in settler societies such as Australia, (where migrants were encouraged into a citizenship pathway) things have changed since. Changes in migration patterns, and the increase in temporary rather than permanent migration, have impacted individuals and communities, as well as countries of origin and destination. The authors note though that in an increasingly fluid global context, temporary migrants are today more susceptible to forms of abuse and exploitation in the country where they live (and work or study) and have fewer forms of redress due to their status as non-citizens and non-permanent residents. Taking a specific focus upon Australia, the paper contextualizes the experiences of temporary migrants both prior to and under COVID-19. The main argument is that temporary migration

schemes are organized and structured deliberately in way that restrict and reduce the migrants' rights making them malleable subjects to the whims of those policies.

In a similar vein, Marsha Akbar asks *Who are Canada's Temporary Migrants?* and notes that since the late-2000s, an increasing number of foreign workers have been admitted in Canada with a wide range of temporary work permits to meet local labour shortages and growing labour market demands. Unlike permanent residents, temporary residents are subjected to restricted work authorizations and social citizenship rights. In addition, Canadian policies distinguish different groups of temporary foreign workers based on skill level and work permit type which determine their eligibility for employment, social rights and permanent residency. Reviewing Canadian literature and government policies, this paper contributes to highlighting the key policy changes that have shaped the diverse streams of temporary labour migration and influenced the inequalities experienced by various categories of temporary foreign workers in Canada. The paper concludes by assessing these inequalities within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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