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Migration and Development some critical reflections

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Transatlantic Dialogues on Migration and Development Issues
Mexico-US and Morocco-EU Experiences

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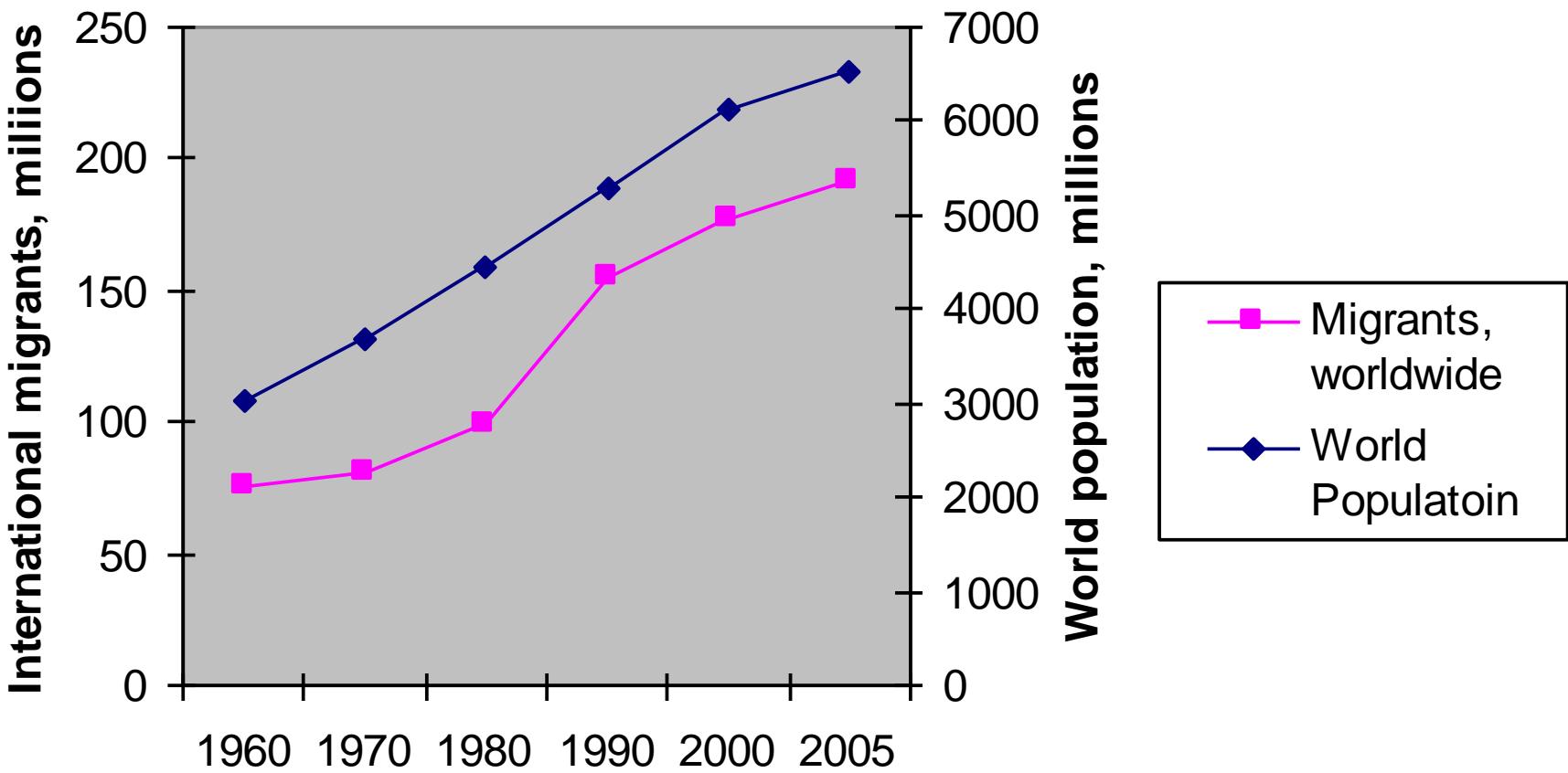
Migration optimists vs. pessimists

Migration optimists		Migration pessimists
Neo-classical	↔	Neo-Marxist
Modernisation	↔	Disintegration/uprooting
Net North-South transfer	↔	Net South-North transfer
Brain gain	↔	Brain drain
More equality	↔	More inequality
Remittance investment	↔	Consumption
Development	↔	Dependency
Less migration	↔	More migration

The migration and development pendulum

- 1950s-1973: International migration as driver of industrialisation and capitalist development in sending and receiving countries
- 1973-2000: Dominant pessimism. Migration does not stimulate, but undermines development in sending countries (brain drain, remittance dependency, “Dutch disease”)
“migration and development – nobody believes that anymore” (Massey, et al. 1998, p. 260).
- Since 2000: Rapid turnaround of views under influence of surging remittances and key actors in ‘development community’ (GCIM, World Bank, DfID)

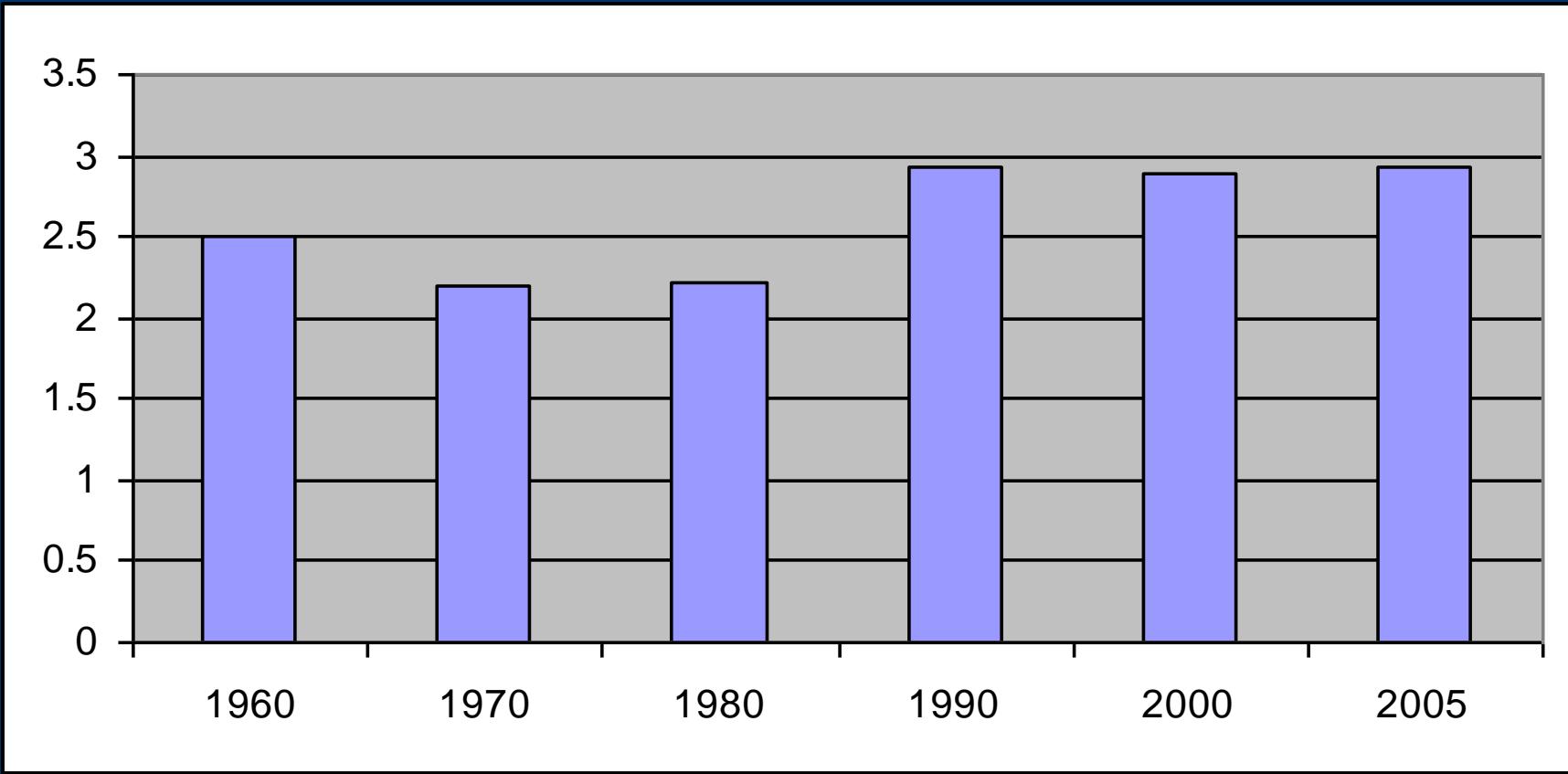
Global migration trends



Source: United Nations Population Division



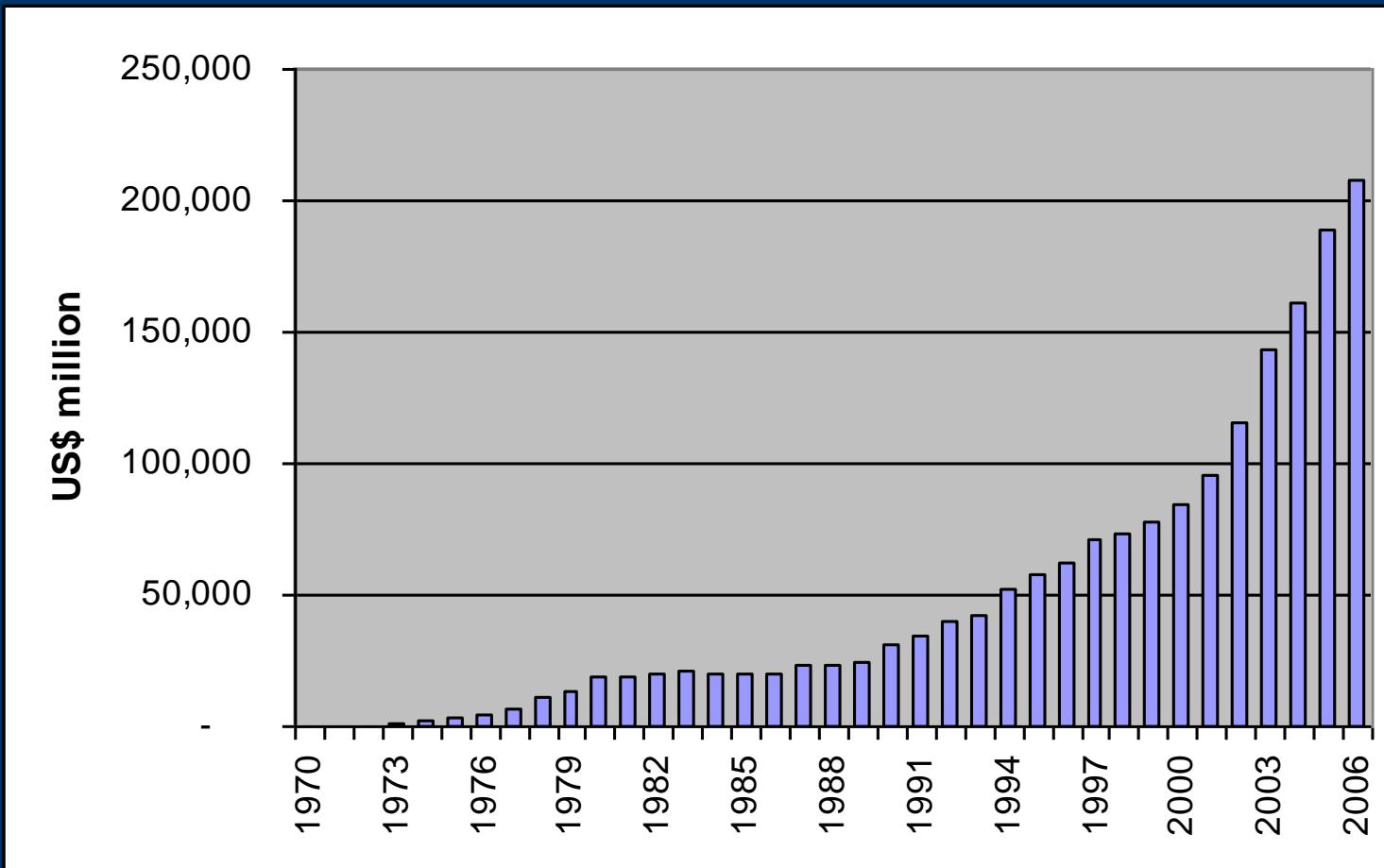
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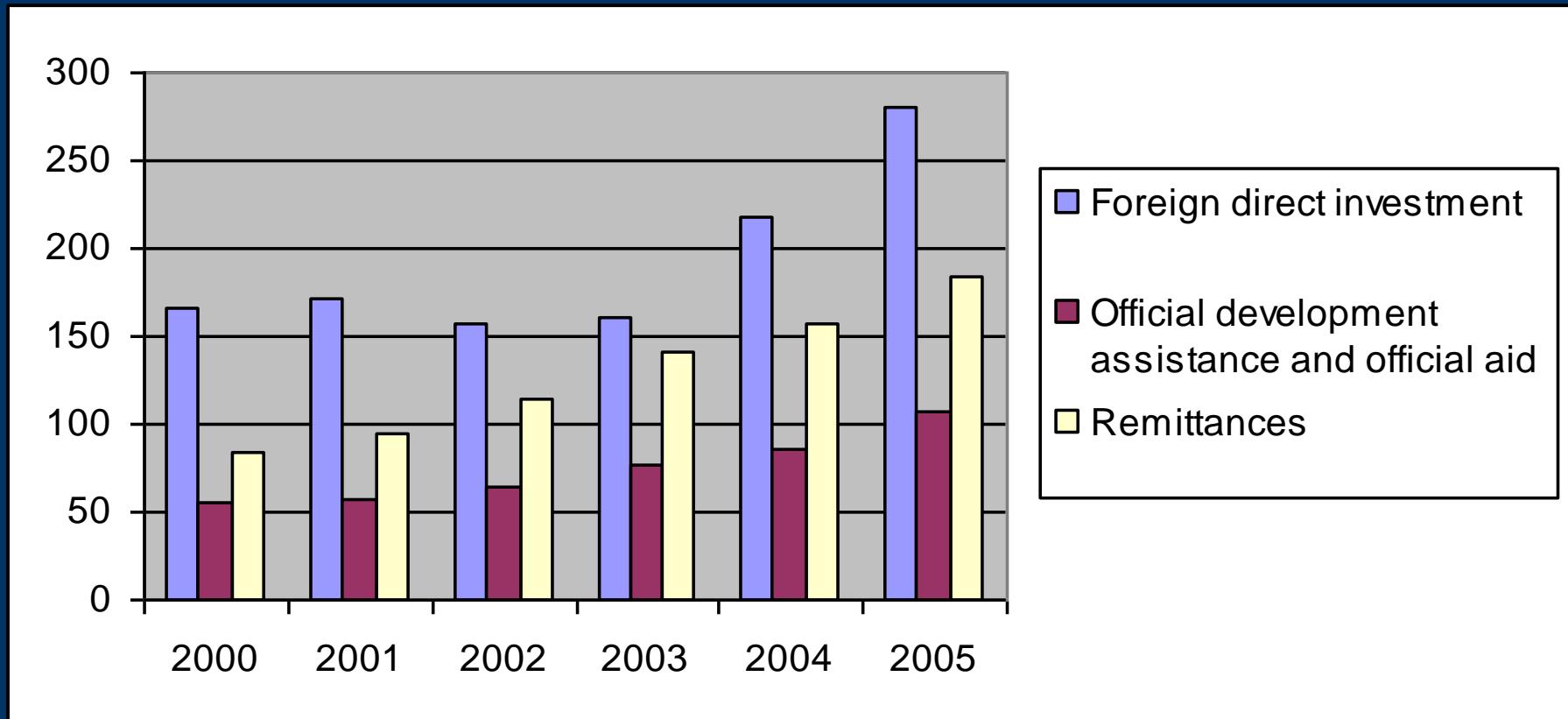
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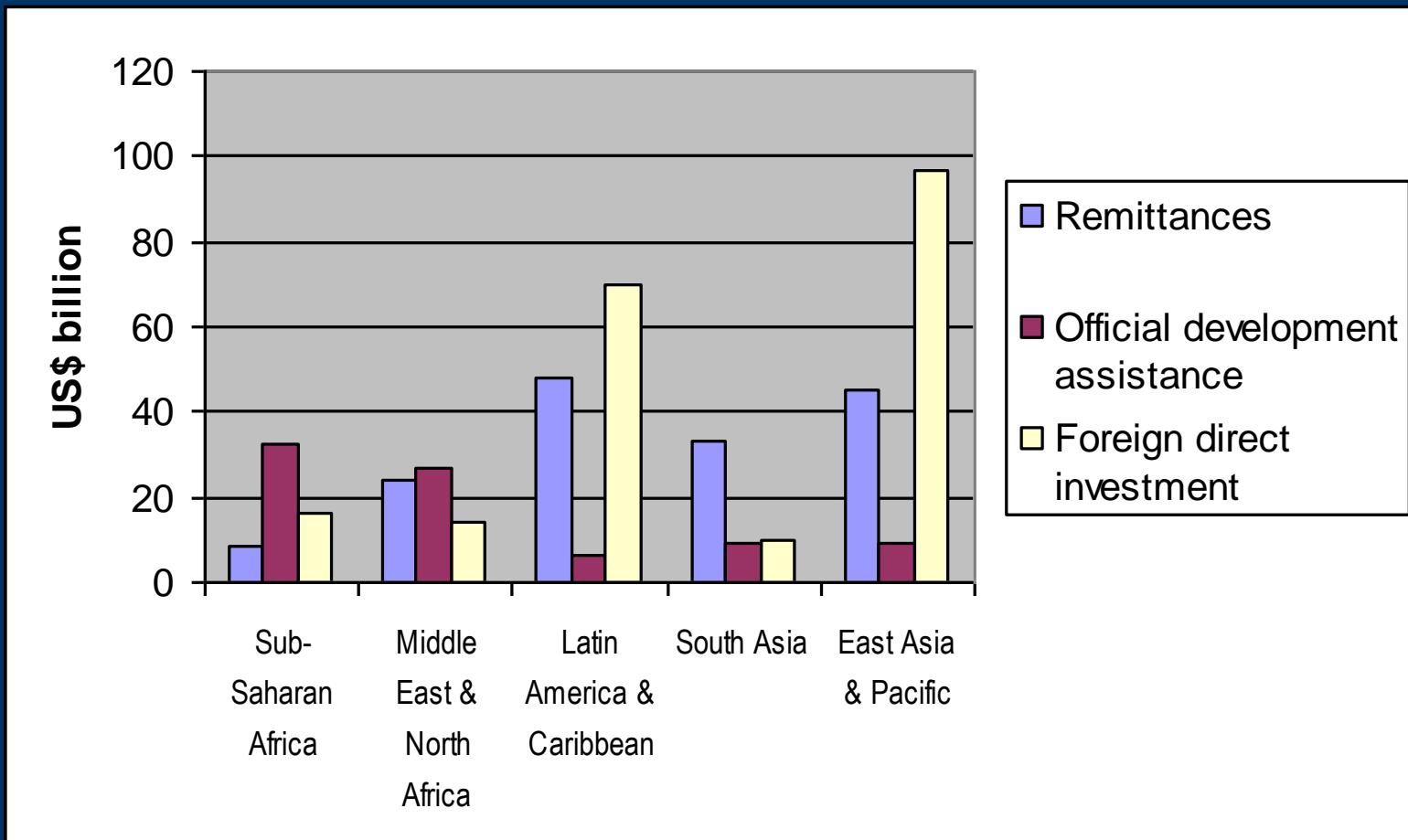
Remittances to developing countries (1970-2006)



FDI, ODA and remittances to developing countries



FDI, ODA and remittances to developing countries (2005)



Migration as the new 'development mantra'

- Increasing recognition of the development potential of international migration → focus on remittances
- Remittances as the new development mantra (Kapur 2003)
- Is this 'euphoria' justified?

The ideological roots of migration optimism

- *Fundamental question:* does the shift towards optimistic views reflect
 - a veritable change in migration-development interactions
 - the use of other methodological and analytical tools
 - an echo of a general paradigm shift in research and policy away from dependency and state-centrist to neo-classical and neoliberal views, respectively.
- Migration as self-help, bottom up development
- Focus on agency, relative neglect of structural constraints
- Diverting attention away from governments' responsibilities?

Migration and development

- *Aim:* Review benefits and costs of labour migration for migrant sending communities and societies in the global ‘South’
- Going beyond dichotomous “benefits vs. costs” and “optimistic vs. pessimistic” framework of analysis
- Understanding *heterogeneity* in migration impacts through
 - Distinguishing levels of analysis (what kind of development, for whom, and when)
 - Contextualising: how do the general development context and institutional environment affect the development impact of migration?

Beyond remittances

- Conventional focus on remittances neglects other ways in which migrants affect development in origin countries:
 - Living conditions and wellbeing
 - Human capital formation (brain drain/brain gain)
 - Entrepreneurial climate
 - Civil society, political debate and democratisation
 - Social and cultural change (social remittances)
 - Organised contributions (e.g. hometown associations)

Migration and development: A review

1. Risk spreading, income and wellbeing (capabilities)
2. Remittances, consumption/investment and regional development
3. Poverty and inequality
4. Community structures, services and care arrangements
5. Migration and human capital formation: brain drain vs. brain gain
6. Political impacts of migration
7. Remittances and national economic growth

Migration and development: A review

- Migration is sometimes associated with rapid growth and human development, sometimes with stagnation and maintenance of the political-economic status quo (migration as safety valve)
- *Heterogeneity:* Empirical findings differ across dimensions of development, levels of analysis and, above all, development contexts
- *Major contextual factors affecting the development potential of migration:* quality of governance (legal security, corruption, bureaucracy), social policies (health, welfare, redistribution of wealth), accessibility of markets to non-elite groups, overall trust in government)
- Restrictive immigration policies and border controls harm the development potential of migration

Migration is no panacea for development

- *Danger of naïve, de-contextualised optimism:* Despite their often considerable benefits for individuals and communities, migration alone cannot remove more structural development constraints.
- *Migration and capabilities:* Migration generally increases capabilities of migrants and their families – so also their freedom to either invest as much as to disengage from social and economic life in origin countries.
- *Success or failure?:* ‘Positive’ impacts (e.g., poverty, living standards, education, health) can be celebrated as ‘self-help’ development but also point at states’ failure.
- *Paradox:* Broad-based human development in migrant-sending countries is a condition for social and economic investments by migrants rather than a consequence of migration.

The importance of general reform

- *Key point:* migrants and remittances can neither be blamed for a lack of development nor be expected to trigger take-off development in generally unattractive investment environments.
- However, if conditions in origin countries takes a positive turn, migrants are likely to be among the first to recognize new opportunities, and may reinforce these positive general trends through investing in origin countries (e.g., Taiwan, South Korea, Spain, Turkey)
- *Thus,* targeted ‘migration, remittances and development’ policies are unlikely to succeed if not accompanied by more general processes of structural political and economic reform.

Rethinking development

- Migration may make a contribution to development – we can look for policies that aim to maximise this potential
- But migration also raises more fundamental questions about nature of development
- *Is our current conception of ‘development’ appropriate for an increasingly mobile world?*

Roots of ‘development’

- Development institutionalised in mid 20th century – but deeper roots
- Classical ideas of endless cycles of civilisations’ growth, maturity and decay
- Industrial revolution in 18th century Europe – rapid technological, social and economic change
- Notion of ongoing progress towards desired end state emerged as a way of addressing perceived chaos
 - *to create order out of the social disorder of rapid urbanization, poverty and unemployment*’ (Cowen and Shenton 1995)
- JS Mill – need societies based on tolerance and rationality rather than primitive custom to become ‘well-developed human beings’
 - Underpinning colonial doctrine of ‘trusteeship’

Colonial control of mobility

- Control of population mobility major concern of European colonial powers – for example, in Africa
 - Slavery
 - Expropriating land
 - Labour for production mines and plantations
 - Colonial administration, police, military
- Policies to force people into the cash economy – taxes, expulsion from land, provision of services
- Need for large concentrations of workers – but avoiding permanent settlement
- Concern to maintain ‘traditional’ way of life – assumed to be sedentary

Rural-urban migration

Growing concern about impact of rural-urban migration

- In rural areas:
 - Break down of traditional life, separation of families
 - Loss of agricultural production
 - Use of remittances
 - Return migration – retirement, reintegration
- In urban areas
 - Expanding populations overwhelming embryonic urban infrastructure
 - Family reunification bringing more people to cities
 - Exploitation of women
 - De-tribalism and growth of permanent urbanites
- Acceptance that cities were to stay but how to stop uncontrolled growth?
 - Investment in modernisation and industrialisation – urban bias
 - Need to maintain agricultural production to feed cities

Rural development and migration

- Rural development as a means to improve conditions in rural areas and reduce attraction of cities
- Development aid policies focused on rural areas
- Initially large-scale programmes led by government – Integrated Rural Development Programmes, Area Development Programmes
- In 1980s, donors moved to private sector and NGOs as primary development actors
- Development organisations slow to engage with urban poverty
- Underlying sedentary bias continues
- Attempts to reduce rural-urban migration have been futile

From rural-urban to international migration

- Old concepts reapplied
 - ‘developing countries’ are the new ‘villages’
 - ‘industrialised states’ are the new ‘cities’
 - ‘poverty alleviation and MDGs’ are the new ‘rural development’
- Impact of development on migration
 - Push and pull factors: inequality, expected income, spreading risk, demand for labour in industrialised states
 - Conflict, instability → forced migration
- Impact of migration on development
 - Remittances – generally used for consumption, unproductive
 - Brain drain
 - Transfer of skills
 - Transnational linkages – businesses, networks

Challenges to development in a mobile world

Different conceptions of the good life

- ‘development professionals’ improved quality of life at ‘home’
- people in developing countries freedom to follow opportunities – at ‘home’ or ‘abroad’
- Poorest can’t move – but when their income increases they will
- Migration is an essential part of people’s livelihoods
- Migration is rarely accepted as satisfactory answer to development challenges – always seen as an option of last resort



Challenges to development in a mobile world

National models of development

- Creating artificial incentives and barriers (borders) to keep people in their place
- Given the choice people may vote for a country or a lifestyle with their feet
- Is migration ever the ‘best’ option?
- Privileges the nation-state as the unit of analysis for assessing development progress

Challenges to development in a mobile world

Paternalistic paradigm

- migrants are presented as victims – exploited by traffickers, forced out by conflict
- safe option is to stay at ‘home,’ choosing to leave is irresponsible, illegal, criminal – moralising overtones of discourse
- assumption of traditional life needing protection
- agency of migrants neglected

Conclusion

- Need to re-examine underlying sedentary assumptions of development policy and practice
- Better understanding of the changing aspirations of poor people – which may include migration
- New geographies of development – relating people, economies and places