

Workshop Report: Immigration Experiences of Developing Countries

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Chair: Gunvor Jonsson
Attended by 10 participants

The speakers represented three different perspectives: academia, policy, and NGO. Their presentations were followed by a lengthy discussion (summarised below), and the workshop lasted over three hours.

The chair opened the discussion with a few questions and remarks: According to James C. Hollifield's (his point from the morning's plenary session), the modern state has a **migration function**, which entails a responsibility to manage migration for strategic gains. What does this entail for developing countries? How can they strategically gain from migration, considering their **lack of capacity and resources**? The speakers had pointed out that these states struggle to even meet the needs of their own citizens; in the South African case, poor communities had attacked foreigners in order to get the attention of their government. In terms of research, there is a **lack of data and understanding of migration in the global South** – and also, very little knowledge about developing countries' migration policies, if these exist. Many developing countries appear to **lack appropriate policies** for dealing with xenophobia and ensuring migrants' rights, and they don't address the integration of foreigners into their societies. Meanwhile, the presentations clearly showed that **migration is a global, human phenomenon**, and all parts of the world are experiencing processes and dynamics of in- and out-migration. Therefore, there are potentially **lessons to be learnt**, particularly for the global North, where policy makers and researchers could benefit from broadening their horizons by taking into account the wider international and historical experiences with migration.

Questions from audience:

- Why do these states not have immigration policies? Is there no need for them; or no means for implementation; or a denial of the need? Are we certain that they don't have immigration policies, and that there is a real policy vacuum in these states? – could it be that the relevant policies are just framed in different (non-Western) terms?
- Considering the example of repatriation from the Ivory Coast to Burkina Faso: many (African) countries have such vast borders that it is hard to fully control them
- A. Adepoju writes that there are no immigration policies in Africa; but a speaker had pointed out that many researchers focus on re-integration of migrants in Africa. Can we give some examples of re-integration policies in Africa?
- One participant was a representative from the UNDP preparing for the next human development report on migration, and they would like to link research to

policy making. In policy it is easiest to work with categories like sending and receiving countries, but this workshop had shown that those categories were misleading or inappropriate. Yet, would it be possible to get rid of the bipolarity and still maintain some sort of scheme? For example, by talking about migrants from the perspectives of departure, transit, arrival, and return?

Responses from speakers:

- We should distinguish between immigration *control* and actual policy. Managing the paperwork (eg. requiring visas) is different from having a policy on settlement and integration. The notion of migration management is problematic, because it is technical and ignores the socio-economic aspects and the complexity of migration. It implies that migration can be controlled, and disregards that it is a human thing and that you can never have a 100% effective migration management; people will continue to change their places of residence and move back and forth. A migration policy means that decision makers reflect on political questions like: do we need migrants, how many, whom, and what do we do with those who are already here? Many developing states don't seem to ask these policy questions and the laws that are being used are very old, which means the colonial systems are still there to an extent.
- Not having a migration policy is also a policy! But in the cases reviewed in the workshop, policies that are geared by some national objective seem to lack.
- Is the interest in controlling borders an African concern? Or is it being pushed by the EU? Now Europe is concerned about sub-Saharan settling in Morocco, while Africans are not necessarily concerned about this and therefore have no explicit stance on it or any relevant policies
- There is currently much talk and interest in re-integration (in Africa), but it is not clear what policies are there. However, discussions and research are more focused on North-South movements and not on migration within the continent.
- In South and Southeast Asia, reintegration policies can seem a bit unfair: why should people who have gone abroad and earned some money suddenly get special treatment when they come back, while local people who have stayed in the country do not receive special attention? The best return migration is *spontaneous* and not driven by policy – being deported or persuaded to return as part of a development programme is not a feasible return. However, return is not the main migration challenge for developing countries. The question is rather how to integrate foreign workers and secure their rights. Some states deny immigrants' rights by calling them temporary labourers rather than migrants.
- What is an “immigration country”? Is hard to define statistically, because that does not necessarily reflect the experiences or concerns of the states and the population. The label “transit migrant” is problematic, even absurd, because migrants' itineraries do not always follow their aspirations and it is only when a migrant dies that you can claim what his/her final destination was! But you can denote the process, ie transit migration.
- Terminology contains some bias. The notion of “labour sending and -receiving countries” construes migrants as a commodity. The term “economic migrant” is

- problematic; you cannot attribute one single motive to migrants. Also, we should avoid talking of the “unskilled” – all humans have skills!
- We might consider what is the benchmark for becoming an immigration country? When do we classify a country as sending/receiving? The theory of migration transition tries to define this...

Plenary discussion and examples from other countries:

- Many countries in the world today are both sending and receiving countries. It seems that globally we are moving more towards this complexity. The paradigms are changing as we start to consider the mixed character of migratory movements, for example questioning who is a refugee and who is a migrant.
- Turkey for example has become an immigration country – although there is still a lot of out-migration. In 2001 the citizen law was changed to prevent Russians arriving. But otherwise, the country does not attempt to manage migration. However, this policy vacuum probably has to be filled as Turkey wants to enter the EU.
- According to migration theory which talks of the ‘migration hump’, sending countries eventually become receiving as the economy improves and emigrants return. But theory says little about what happens if people don’t go home (such as the Turkish who have left the country during the guest worker era). Immigration (for example in Turkey) is not just people returning home; there are now foreigners entering while the emigrants remain abroad.
- Another example of immigration in the global South is Argentina. The country was characterised by 19th century immigration, where particularly immigration of Europeans was promoted. Now, to the contrary, the only people arriving from the EU are retired diplomats. Regional migration is easy, and Argentina and Brazil receive many migrants as these countries have the strongest regional economies. Many of these people were at first illegal immigrants but in 2006, the Argentinean government regularised 1 million South Americans just before the presidential election. This move probably contributed to the government being re-elected. Many Argentineans have moved to Spain, where they don’t need visas. There are a number of refugees, especially Africans, who are dealt with in a manner similar to the South African: they are given a form to fill in and then receive an ID card. Many of these refugees are traumatised. The country has no issue of xenophobia. Slavery was early abolished, so there is no old African diaspora.
- In the case of return migration from the Ivory Coast to Burkina Faso, the research talks much about ‘returning to the village of origin’. Meanwhile, most people choose rationally where they want to go and many don’t want to resettle in the village – there was a reason why they left it in the first place! A bias of many researchers is the prejudiced idea that people *want* to go home; many analysts struggle to understand that people create *new* homes.
- Problematic is also the idea that people of African descent should want to be African and should relate to Africa - even if they have moved to a different continent and possibly lived there for generations. It is essentialist to assume that people belong somewhere - for example that black people must relate to Africa as their home.

- There is a contradiction between integration and circular migration – you want to make people feel at home, but then make them go back! But still, circular migration is promoted in a broader way than the notion of temporary migration: it promotes *legal* avenues for migration thus providing a broader legal framework for temporary migration. Meanwhile, these intentions of circular migration might dissolve with the current financial crisis – for example, Spain may not need Senegalese seasonal workers and this will counter the initiatives of recently established job centres facilitating labour migration from Senegal to Spain. We must consider the difference between temporary and circular migration: Integration is an instrument of circular, not temporary migration.
- There are various ways of defining a sending or receiving country:
 1. Demographic definition: considers the balance between in- and outflows of people. This means that for example the Netherlands is an emigration country
 2. Policy definition: the orientation of political actions is mainly towards either in- or outflows of people, and this orientation indicates how policymakers define their country
 3. Social perception: the feeling among the public as to whether most people are leaving or arriving to their country. For example, the public might have a sense that all the students are leaving and therefore, that theirs is a country of emigration while statistically, the country is mainly receiving

Recommendations and more questions:

- What would be good for developing countries in terms of migration? For example, can temporary migration work for human development?
- In this respect, we must consider what real benefits developing countries will receive from circular migration. Some programmes assume that migrants will invest in Africa but in fact, the number of people who return and invest is miniscule
- Meanwhile, migration policies in developing countries ought to be strengthened. For example, South Korea has long denied its need for workers but in 2006, it set up an appropriate scheme for immigrant workers. There are many corrupt practices when you only have private recruitment agencies. Also, in Saudi Arabia, Bangladeshi migrant workers get very low salaries. There is a real segmentation of the labour market, and these migrants lack rights in the country where they are working
- Meanwhile, we should consider whether these countries need a migration policy. Maybe it is different policies - like regulating the job market - that is needed? More research is needed to understand how people migrate and settle. Clearly, countries need policies to avoid exploitation – but these often lack, probably due to other priorities of governments in developing countries
- How does the migrant helpdesk in Johannesburg function - do they engage with migrant policy, and what are their problems with national government? How in practice do you create an information centre for prospective migrants?
- The Jo'burg helpdesk is in consultation with all tiers of government, from local to national. But much more could be done at the desk, it does not meet peoples'

expectations, because it just refers migrants to other service providers. Instead, they should mobilise resources within the city, the local municipality *can* do something, but everyone keeps pushing the responsibility to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- From the perspective of South Africa – and more generally – who and how should we be integrating? There have been many corrupt practices to obtain citizenship; currently you must have been married to a South African for 5 years before citizenship may be granted. Unlike many western countries, there is no policy of camps for migrants when they arrive in South Africa. They just receive their papers and then they are free to go. But after the xenophobic attacks, it is not responsible to send them to settle in the townships, so where should we send the migrants? Meanwhile, even citizens don't have access to services; this is not just a problem for migrants
- A fundamental problem is that in practice in many developing countries, even citizens don't have access to basic human rights. As a new citizen, you are then integrated into the lowest common denominator of rights. How can you have integration if the society itself is not integrated?
- In Burkina Faso for example, every additional person is perceived as a threat because they increase the competition over resources, regardless of whether they are non-nationals or returning citizens
- In South Africa, the authorities have only been concerned with verifying peoples' status once xenophobia is reported. There is little action to determine peoples' status and legalising their situation. A related problem is then Zimbabweans who enter South Africa because of hunger, but who don't qualify for asylum because they are not being prosecuted. Meanwhile, you have shoppers and cross-border traders, who do not need residence, but maybe these people should be registered somehow.