

# Migration and development in Latin America

## The emergence of a southern perspective

*Raúl Delgado-Wise*

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Reflections on migration and development in Latin America have a long history that goes back to the immediate post-World War II period. This particular reflection is stimulated by prolific intellectual production in the field of critical development studies that has taken place in the region. It refers to a unique body of thought, barely known in the Anglo-Saxon literature, that has contributed to opening the 'box' within which most of the discussion has been confined, and to foresee new analytical horizons for disentangling the complex linkages underlying the relationship between migration and development, from a contextualised critical standpoint.

The purpose of this chapter is to acknowledge some of the most important contributions to the understanding of this problem in the region, with special emphasis on the contemporary debate. We focus on a particular approach that is deeply embedded in a Latin American critical development school of thought and that focuses on the root causes of the expanded reproduction of uneven capitalist development and forced migration that takes place under neoliberal globalisation.

### **The debate on migration and development in Latin America**

As underlined by Cristóbal Kay (1989: 10) Latin American structuralism constitutes the '...first original body of development theory to emanate from the Third World' and stands in stark contrast to the neoclassical framework that prevailed outside the region. Initiated by Raúl Prebisch and like-minded researchers at the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), this school of thought focused on the inequalities inherent in a world capitalist system, giving rise to a radical critique in the Marxist tradition, which was crystallised in the form of a 'dependency theory' regarding the centre-periphery structure of this system. As Kay (1989: 26) has pointed out, 'the originality of the structuralist paradigm lies in its proposition that the process of development and underdevelopment is a single process; as the centre and periphery are closely interrelated, forming part of a single world economy'. This perspective questioned the existing regime of international trade, arguing that it was characterised by unequal relationships of exchange that undermined rather than promoted development in peripheral or underdeveloped countries and regions.

Rather than trade liberalisation, ECLAC structuralism promoted a strategy of import substitution industrialisation (ISI), a development model in which the state erected barriers to imported manufactured goods and channelled investment towards national firms, often state-owned, which produced goods that were formerly imported. In principle this strategy, which defined the development practice in the region from the post-WWII period to the eruption of neoliberalism (late 1970 to early 1980), enabled peripheral countries to shift from an outward-oriented development process toward a 'development from within' model focused on production for domestic markets.

The implementation of ISI was marked by rapid urbanisation and geographically unbalanced economic growth, developments that were particularly relevant to the analysis of an internal migration process in Latin America, which unfolded mainly on a rural to urban axis (Rodríguez and Busso 2009). In this endeavour, analysis of the migration and development nexus privileged the discussion of internal migration and, in the case of the dependency approach, key aspects surrounding the specificity of the labour question, such as the strong imbalances prevailing in the labour markets. In effect,

...the regional labour market would generate a workforce surplus ready for capital exploitation..., [one] far exceeding the formation of an industrial reserve army (as happened in developed countries), [and that] expelled the labour force from the production system to form a marginal mass.

*(Rodríguez and Busso 2009: 57)*

The proletarianised peasants migrated to the urban periphery where they relied on informal labour – working on their own account rather than exchanging their labour power for a living wage – and social networks to survive. Concepts such as 'internal colonialism' aimed at capturing the prevalence of colonial relationships of domination affecting marginalised indigenous and peasant groups were introduced in order to unravel the nature and specificity of Latin American 'peripheral' capitalism (González Casanova 1963; Stavenhagen 1969).

Since the late 1970s, the ISI model experienced structural barriers and political obstacles in advancing towards the substitution of intermediate and capital goods, leading to a growing deficit in the trade balance crowned with a progressive and overloaded accumulated external debt. These deficits and debts ultimately led to a liquidity crisis and financial collapse, ushering in the 'lost decade' of the 1980s.

In this context, a dramatic turn towards neoliberalism in the region took place through the enforcement of structural adjustment programmes. These programmes – based on neoliberal policies of liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation – forged a drastic reorientation of the economies towards the world market. The shift resulted in the dismantling of production systems oriented towards the internal market, the shrinking and flexibilisation of labour markets and the emergence of new (urban) forms of poverty. These features led to a new scenario characterised by a spectacular increase in international migration. The number of Latin American international migrants quintupled between 1980 and 2010, reaching 30.2 million in 2010, and remittances grew at an even greater rate, rising from US\$ 13.3 million in 1995 to US\$ 58.1 million in 2010 (World Bank 2012). The upsurge in international migration was not uniform, however, with substantial differences in rates of emigration between and within Latin American countries.

In these circumstances, notwithstanding that migration continued to be important and brought about significant transformations, the main focus of the debate on migration and development in the region shifted from internal migration towards international migration.

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In this context, three diverging positions emerged. The first, which we can describe as the dominant or northern perspective, is based on a positive or sanguine view of the migration–development nexus that essentially responds to the corporate interests of the main migrant-receiving countries. It is based on the idea that the growing flow of migrants’ remittances can become an instrument or a catalyst for development in the countries and communities of origin. Conceptually, this involves a one-way flow between two variables: migration (seen as an independent variable) and development (seen as a dependent variable).

This approach, which is deeply embedded in the contours of the national security doctrine, disregards the situation of discrimination, criminalisation, social exclusion and super labour exploitation to which most migrants and their families are subjected. Within the framework of this approach, the context in which migration takes place, as well as its root causes, are overlooked, on the assumption that human mobility is essentially a free and voluntary act. Moreover, the multiple economic, demographic, social and cultural contributions made by migrants to the destination countries are often ignored, hidden and even distorted to the degree of portraying migrants as a socioeconomic burden and, particularly in times of crisis, as public enemies. In addition, this view frequently ignores the costs and negative consequences that migration entails for the countries of origin – costs and consequences that go far beyond the positive impacts of remittances (Delgado-Wise *et al.* 2013).

From a radically opposite standpoint that, as previously mentioned, is firmly rooted in the Latin American critical development school of thought, the ‘southern perspective’ emerged. Before addressing this perspective, which will be dealt with in depth in the next section, we will briefly comment on an intermediate approach that has gained a significant presence in Latin American scholarship on the subject: the transnational approach. This approach emphasises transnationalism ‘from below’ (Portes 2005) and focuses on what has been labelled as ‘alternative development’ or ‘community-based development’. To some extent it is an eclectic approach that does not entail a radical challenge to neoliberal globalisation. Transnationalism recognises that migrants, regardless of their degree of incorporation into the receiving society, maintain strong ties with their society of origin. Authors who support this view argue that migrants maintain bonds to their place of origin in order to deal with racial inequality and other hurdles in the country of destination (Faist 2008). They hold that migration is caused by global processes that supersede the nation–state and, in turn, generate a global civil society that threatens the political monopoly exercised by the state. It is also maintained that transnationalism gives way to a ‘third space’ that locates migrants between their origin and destination societies.

Working from the complexity of migratory processes, transnationalism attempts to (i) uncover the dialectic interaction among migrant identities and the complex processes of belonging and exclusion that are generated through the migratory dynamic; and (ii) overcome the dualist conceptions involved in the spatiality of the migratory phenomenon: origin/destination, place of work/residence and rural/urban, as well as other binary representations of place in migration.

### **A Latin American contribution: the southern perspective**

This perspective has become increasingly popular since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Rather than a simple negation of the northern perspective, it implies a negation of the negation in dialectical terms, with the aim of erecting a comprehensive, inclusive, emancipatory and libertarian approach to the nexus between migration and development. This alternative perspective, promoted by the International Network on Migration and

Development (INMD), is based on a reassessment of the Latin American critical development school of thought in the light of a deep understanding of the nature and characteristics of neoliberal globalisation (Delgado-Wise and Márquez 2009; Delgado-Wise *et al.* 2013). In this regard, the link between migration and development is characterised as dialectical rather than unidirectional and approached from a multidimensional framework that comprises economic, political, social, environmental, cultural, racial, ethnic, gender-related, geographical and demographic factors (Castles and Delgado-Wise 2008).

This alternative approach is represented in Figure 31.1. While the northern approach only focuses on the horizontal axis from a decontextualised, ahistorical, reductionist and unilateral standpoint, the southern perspective attempts to cover the whole spectrum of dialectical relationships shown in the chart. It also considers the ample spectrum of impacts along countries of origin, transit and destination, and incorporating, as a key analytical dimension, the vertical axis. This axis – intentionally hidden by the northern, dominant approach – incorporates two fundamental dimensions: (i) an analysis of the multiple violations of human and labour rights suffered by the migrants themselves and their families; and (ii) the root causes of the complex relationships underlying migration and development under neoliberal globalisation.

A deep understanding of the architecture of neoliberal globalisation is crucial in this regard. This implies acknowledging and disentangling the capital restructuring strategy promoted by large multinational corporations with the support of the northern, imperial states led by the United States. A key element of this capital restructuring strategy is the establishment of global networks of monopoly capital, which through outsourcing operations and subcontracting chains extend parts of the productive, commercial, financial and service processes of the large multinational corporations to the Global South in search of abundant and cheap labour as well as the extraction of natural resources (Delgado-Wise 2013). This strategy is exemplified by the export platforms that operate as enclave economies in peripheral countries.

A major and inescapable feature of neoliberal globalisation is unequal development. The global and national dynamics of capitalist development, the international division of labour, the imperialist system of international power relations and the conflicts that surround the capital-labour relation and the dynamics of extractivist capital have made economic, social,

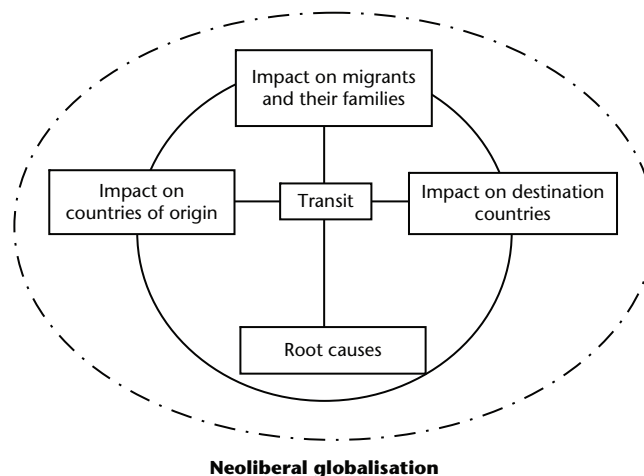


Figure 31.1 The southern perspective: key analytical dimensions

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political and cultural polarisation more extreme between geographical spaces and social classes than ever before in human history. In Latin America, a region with the biggest wealth disparity in the world, this is particularly true.

In fostering the above trend, global labour arbitrage has become a key pillar of the new global architecture. It refers to the advantage of pursuing lower wages abroad. This allows capital to grab enormous returns, or imperial rents, by taking advantage of the relative immobility of labour and the existence of subsistence (and below) wages in much of the Global South. Through the mechanism of global labour arbitrage, social and geographic asymmetries are reproduced on a global scale. Social inequalities are one of the most distressing aspects of this process, given the unprecedented concentration of capital, power and wealth in a few hands, while a growing segment of the population suffers from poverty, exploitation and exclusion. Increasing disparities are also expressed, ever more strongly, in terms of racial, ethnic and gender relations, reduced access to production and employment, a sharp decline in living and working conditions and the progressive dismantling of social safety nets.

A fundamental mechanism in the promotion of this new global architecture and its underlying trend toward unequal development has been the implementation, as previously mentioned, of structural adjustment programmes in much of the Global South. These programmes have been the vehicle for disarticulating the economic apparatus in Latin American economies and its re-articulation to serve the needs of core capitalist economies, basically the United States, under sharply asymmetric and subordinated conditions. In particular, these programmes served the needs of capital through the export of labour in two modalities: (i) the indirect or disembodied export of labour associated with the configuration of global networks of monopoly capital through outsourcing, offshoring and subcontracting operations and (ii) the direct export of labour through international labour migration (Cypher and Delgado-Wise 2011).

From this alternative standpoint, migration is not merely the product of individual or family decisions, but a phenomenon with its own patterns that is embedded in a set of social networks and transnational relations. The massive nature of migration under neoliberal globalisation and the bond between domestic and international flows are fundamentally determined by the contradictory and disorderly dynamics of uneven development. Migration thus adopts the particular mode of 'compulsive displacement', a new modality of forced migration, possessing the following two characteristics. First, migration is essentially an expulsion process resulting from a downward spiral of social regression triggered by the deprivation of means of production and subsistence, pillaging, violence and catastrophes that jeopardise the survival of large segments of the population in places of origin. This is not simply a cumulative or gradual process, but an actual breakdown of the social order brought about by structural adjustment policies and domination and wealth concentration strategies, which have attained extreme levels and are forcing massive contingents of the population to sell their labour power both nationally and internationally to guarantee their families' subsistence. Second, compulsive displacement imposes restrictions on the mobility of the migrant workforce, depreciates it and subjects it to conditions of high vulnerability, precariousness and extreme exploitation. If the process of expulsion is a reprisal of the original accumulation modes characteristic of the first historical stages of capitalism, the current liberalisation of the workforce is fated to face obstacles in the labour market internationally. Migrant-receiving states regulate immigrant entry with punitive and coercive instruments that devalue labour, in addition to violating human rights and criminalising migrants. Conditions for labour exploitation and social exclusion, as well as risks experienced at different stages of transit and settling, endanger the lives of migrants (Márquez and Delgado-Wise 2011).

The export of the workforce shapes a new international division of labour along a South–North axis. This, in turn, implies the advent of new and extreme modalities of unequal exchange. Regardless of the centrality that the concept of unequal exchange had in past decades, to explain the dynamics of unequal development, the nature of the ties between developed countries and emergent or peripheral countries (as conceived by ECLAC as well as dependency theorists) demands their inclusion in the analysis of contemporary capitalism. It is important to keep in mind that most of the debate on unequal exchange was and remains limited to an analysis of the international division of labour that places the periphery in the role of source for raw materials and the developed countries as the providers of industrialised goods. And although this division remains relevant for a significant number of peripheral countries, it is crucial to consider that beyond this classic mode of unequal exchange, a new factor has been added in the age of neoliberal globalisation: the direct and indirect export of the labour force.

To analyse these new modes of unequal exchange presents theoretical, methodological and empirical challenges, which require changes in the perception and characterisation of categories typically used to interpret contemporary capitalism. Without disregarding the significant contributions of ECLAC to advance the understanding of these new modes of unequal exchange, it is important to bring to bear Marxist theory of unequal exchange in its dual aspects: a strict and a broad sense (Emmanuel and Bettelheim 1972). On the one hand, unequal exchange in the strict sense places wage differentials (or differentials in surplus value) derived from barriers to population mobility at the centre of the analysis. On the other hand, unequal exchange in the wider sense expands those differentials to include value emanating from diverse compositions of capital, such as the differentials arising from scientific and technological progress. In this regard, we take into consideration that the internationalisation of capital in the context of neoliberal globalisation seeks to lower labour costs – including those relating to the highly skilled labour force – whilst maximising the transfer of surpluses generated from that labour from peripheral to developed countries, taking advantage of wage differentials.

Finally, it is important to mention that in the last decade there has been a turn to the left in the region, particularly in South America. This has led to an intense debate on the theory and practice of development. As a result, new development paradigms, such as *Vivir Bien* (Farah and Vasapollo 2011) or *Buen Vivir* (Gudynas 2014) and twenty-first century socialism (Borón 2009), have taken form and to some extent been implemented in the region. This, in turn, has led to a renewed trend towards South American integration, together with a new and progressive approach to the link between migration, development and human rights. Free human mobility regimes have been thoroughly established with the ultimate aim, posited by the South American Conference on Migration, of fully achieving South American citizenship. This new scenario opens new challenges and opportunities for advancing the theory and practice of development and migration in the region.

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# Migration within developing areas

## Some African perspectives on mobility

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### Introduction

Migration statistics are notoriously contentious, but by any reckoning, there is a mismatch between the volume of academic and policy attention and the scale of migration flowing in many migration corridors. In particular, there is a strong bias towards the analysis of migration directed towards the wealthy regions of the world, while movement between poorer regions is frequently neglected. In recent years, this has been recognised and there is a growing volume of work on migration between developing areas – often referred to as ‘South-South migration’ (Anich *et al.* 2014; [De Lombaerde \*et al.\* 2014](#)). This focus on neglected areas of the world is very welcome; however, I suggest that framing it as a distinctive form of migration to be contrasted to South-North movement can be misleading and counter-productive. Drawing on examples, primarily from the African continent, I argue that there are important lessons to be learnt from the exploration of movement between different low- and middle-income countries.

The chapter starts by critically reviewing the analytical separation of migration between developing areas under the rubric of ‘South-South migration’ and migration from developing to wealthier regions of the world (‘South-North migration’). Marking them out as separate analytical categories suggests it should be possible to identify common differences between the processes of migration in these two groups. The second part of the chapter looks at the various characteristics put forward in the literature as distinctive to ‘South-South migration’. Each of these has some validity in some contexts, but I argue they are better considered as characteristic of particular regional or inter-regional migration patterns rather than be conflated into the gross generalisation of South-South migration. In conclusion, I put forward some reasons why research into these neglected parts of the world is important and can yield valuable lessons that help improve our understanding of international migration, even within the ‘North’.

### Deconstructing South-South migration

Why should we consider the movement of people between developing countries to be any different from that towards – or between – Europe, North America (US and Canada) and other wealthy parts of the world? Is it useful to compare South-South migration with South-North



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migration (or North–North or North–South)? More particularly, does it make any sense to explore trends across these divides? Of course, we can look at trends in migration between particular corridors. It is illuminating to examine the changing patterns in movement from North Africa to Europe in contrast to those from Mexico to the US. However, if we use the blocs of North and South for our analysis, the aggregation obscures more than it illuminates for a number of reasons (for a more detailed discussion see Bakewell 2009).

First, there is the problem of defining developing areas or the South. Three different categorisations have been used by international organisations. The UN Statistics Division (UNSD) recognises five developing regions: Africa, Americas excluding Northern America, the Caribbean, Asia excluding Japan and Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the definitions used by the World Bank and the UN Development Programme rely on indicators of development. The World Bank differentiates based on income; it counts low and median income countries as developing. The UNDP uses the human development index (HDI), which takes into account not only income but also levels of education and health. In their analyses, the South includes all countries except those with a very high HDI. While there is considerable overlap with these different categorisations, there are also some striking differences. The African continent is considered as a developing area by any measure but things get less clear in some other regions. For example, Saudi Arabia was in the highest group in terms of income but UNDP's Human Development Report 2013 placed it in the second tier based on HDI; hence, for the World Bank it is in the 'North', whereas UNDP places it in the 'South'. Likewise the Russian Federation is in the World Bank's 'North' and UNDP's 'South'.

Most studies that focus on 'South–South' migration draw on the more dynamic UNDP and World Bank definitions, which take better account of the changing fortunes of countries as the value of their indexes change. For example, the World Bank 'South' reached a peak of 145 countries in 2003 and dropped back to 130 by 2011. This stands in contrast to the UNSD, which has left the basic division of the world into developed and developing for over 50 years, only changing to take account of the creation of new states. It leaves contemporary very high-income countries, such as Singapore and South Korea, in the developing country category. Changing the boundaries of the South over time, as the WB and UNDP indexes do, avoids such anachronisms, but it creates problems when one tries to analyse trends in migration in terms of 'South–South' and 'South–North' movements.

Comparing South–South and South–North migration of 30 years ago may have limited utility when the relationships between countries in each group may have changed dramatically over time. Making a claim that South–South migration is increasing or decreasing as a proportion of global migration tells us very little. If we hold constant the category of developing countries over the time period in question by including those in the contemporary category, we exclude all the past South–South migration for those countries that have 'graduated' to the North. However, if it is really possible to mark out South–South migration as distinctive, this exclusion matters, as we are undercounting the phenomenon, particularly if major origin or destination countries are involved. However, if we work with the changing categories of South and North, for example, comparing the scale of South–South migration in 1990 using the list of developing countries of 1990, with that of 2010 using the list of that year, our statement about growth in migration may simply reflect the changing number of developing countries rather than telling us anything about the movement of people.

Even if such problems can be resolved, there is no clear rationale for distinguishing migration between developing countries from any other movements. The category of developing countries has arisen from convention (albeit contested) rather than any clear analytical

distinction. It creates an agglomerate of such a huge range of countries with a vast array of characteristics that it is hard to see how it can possibly be useful for the analysis of migration. This raises two related questions. First, why should we assume any connection between the countries of the South or any commonalities in social processes, such as migration, by virtue of their being in the South? Even if we confine our attention to countries that are developing by all definitions, this still pitches together migration from the emerging global superpowers of Brazil, India and China alongside that of the poorest countries of the world. Second, we can ask why we should assume that there is any difference between the experiences of social processes in the South and North. There may be as much similarity between the movement of students from Botswana to South Africa (South–South) and that of Algerians to France (South–North) as with Canadians going to the US (North–North).

Despite its limited analytical value, the idea of South–South migration can serve a rhetorical purpose in drawing attention to the scale and significance of migration within the poorer regions of the world, which is largely neglected by researchers and policy makers. However, once it has achieved this rhetorical purpose of pointing out this lacuna in migration research, it would be better to put the notion of South–South migration to the side, focusing instead on more nuanced rationales for comparing migration patterns between countries. These may be derived from their shared characteristics – such as movement in agrarian societies, migration from small islands or land-locked nations, or perhaps, more refined assessments of the level of development – rather than their happening to be in the ‘South’. Alternatively, we can explore the changing patterns of migration arising in particular regions, where geographical, historical, social, cultural and economic factors spill over national boundaries creating many commonalities. This is the approach adopted in the rest of this chapter, which focuses on some of the factors that shape international migration in different parts of the African continent.

### **Some characteristics of African migration**

The UN Population Division estimates there were about 30 million people born in Africa living outside their county of birth in 2012, of which just over half have moved to other parts of the continent. Nearly 9 million of these migrants are from North Africa and most of these are found in the neighbouring regions of Europe and the Middle East. Of the other 20 million African migrants, three-quarters remain within the continent and over half have stayed within their sub-region of origin (calculated from UNPD 2012). This makes it clear that the stereotype of African migration depicting people – usually sub-Saharan Africans – attempting to cross to Europe by boat is far from the experience of the majority. The statistics can also debunk another common stereotype, of the African migrant as the refugee, fleeing war to take asylum in a neighbouring country. While refugees do make up a significant proportion of African international migrants (over 10 per cent), it is still a minority. In the space available, it is only possible to highlight some of the critical factors that shape African migration patterns. What follows is far from exhaustive and simply points out some of the issues that may be usefully borne in mind when considering African migrations.

#### *African borders*

It is widely recognised that the official statistics for international migration in Africa underestimate the scale of cross border migration within the continent. These figures can only capture those movements that people report – either at formal crossing points or by declarations on

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census forms. Two major reasons are put forward for this undercount: the nature of the borders and the limited capacity of states to control them.

The contemporary borders of African states are in many respects the outcome of their colonial history as the (mostly) European states carved out their empires during the nineteenth century. The infamous Berlin Conference of 1884–5 divided up the African continent between the colonialists and many of the borders established remain in place to this day. These lines were determined with limited regard for boundaries of language and culture and often cut across them, separating kin and bisecting traditional chieftainships. As a result, their legitimacy is questioned and it is often assumed that they have less significance to local people than borders between wealthy nations. Hence, in many cases, relocating across the border may not be seen as international migration, but rather, as simply moving within the traditional lands.

Nonetheless, a growing volume of scholarship on African borders has shown that, despite these origins, the borders have been incorporated within people's lives, shaping their livelihoods – whether acting as barriers to trade or opening up new opportunities for arbitrage – and their movements ([Nugent and Asiwaju 1996](#); [Raeymaekers 2009](#); [Doevenspeck 2011](#)). Even in remote corners, crossing the border can matter as it brings people into a new jurisdiction for tax, services and other state functions. For example, the border between Zambia and Angola was only demarcated in 1905 but within 20 years, local people were judiciously crossing the line to avoid British taxes or the Portuguese forced labour regime. Up to today, the border is still marked by a simple stream but people remain very aware of when they are crossing it. This may not change its legitimacy but it does make it a significant factor in shaping people's movements (Bakewell 2015).

In addition to questions raised about the legitimacy of borders, many African states lack the resources to routinely control the extremities of their territory. Their border infrastructure may be very limited with few formal crossing points or staff to manage them. This means large numbers of border crossings are not recorded by the state in any way, as people come and go freely. This calls into question not only the quality of migration statistics, which are almost certainly underestimated across regions with long land borders, but also, and more fundamentally, the meaning of international migration. A number of authors have suggested that such informal, unrecorded movement across land borders (neighbourhood migration as Skeldon calls it) is closer to internal migration rather than the international migration as seen in wealthier regions of the world (Skeldon 2006; Adepoju 2008; Deshingkar and Natali 2008).

It is not only the nature of the border that is different here, but also the nature of people's interactions with the state. In such poorer regions of the world, where public services are very limited and the state has very little capacity to levy personal taxes (such as income tax) or administer its population through registration or other bureaucratic measures, there may be little incentive or practical requirement for immigrants to make themselves known to the authorities. As a result, much immigration across land borders may be unrecorded.

## The colonial legacy

In addition to creating the international borders, colonial history has played an important role in shaping migration patterns. It is important to stress that there was considerable mobility across the continent before the incursion of Europeans, including a widespread practice of slavery overland and across the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Asia (Jayasuriya and Angenot 2008). The establishment of Atlantic trade by Europeans brought both a new scale and brutality to the practice of slavery. Those who were taken lost all direct contact with

Africa and these links are only being recreated many generations later through the initiatives of the African diaspora across the Atlantic. However, the African slave trade did not establish ongoing migration systems that continued after its abolition. In contrast, the impact of colonial attempts to control mobility within Africa can still be felt today.

This control of Africans' movements was important for colonial governments to ensure a sufficient supply of labour for enterprises – such as mining, plantations and commercial agriculture – military service and administration (Bakewell 2008). Some regimes established systems of compulsory labour services or forced labour for Africans, some of which were little removed from slavery, such as that used by the Portuguese in Angola (Henderson 1978). In many of its African colonies, Britain combined demands for 'hut taxes' levied on Africans' homes with the expropriation of the best land for settler agriculture. This forced Africans into offering their labour to obtain the required cash. Such policies stimulated the large-scale movement of people in different parts of Africa, in particular in west Africa, where there was significant labour migration from Benin, Niger, Mali and Togo to the plantations and mines of Ghana, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire (Schuerkens 2003). In southern Africa, the mines of South Africa and the Zambian Copperbelt drew in hundreds of thousands of labourers from across the region.

This colonial legacy strongly influenced the patterns of migration between independent African states. It was reinforced by the language divide between colonies, especially Anglophone and Francophone. Hence, there were large exchanges of populations between Ghana and Nigeria and the circulation of migrants in the Anglophone east Africa community of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, whereas Francophone migrants were more likely to move within Francophone west and central Africa.

However, this must not be overstated, there are major movements across these language divides, as people rely on lingua franca African languages (such as Kiswahili) or simply learn the relevant languages. Hence, it is easy to find Malians and Senegalese scattered across southern Africa, Anglophone West Africans in Morocco, and many crossing into Arab speaking territory. Moreover, these postcolonial divides appear to be breaking down (Bakewell and de Haas 2007) and there has been a diversification of migratory trajectories in the continent (Zlotnik 2006: 30). For example, the labour migration system established in South Africa as an important destination for migrants from neighbouring countries, but since the end of apartheid, it is now drawing in migrants from all over the continent. In the last two decades up to the Libyan revolution of 2011, thousands of migrants from across Anglophone and Francophone west Africa moved to Libya to work in its growing oil economy (Hamood 2008).

### Political instability, conflict and forced migration

The upheavals of African liberation struggles in the second half of the twentieth century, overlaid with the Cold War that was played out across east, central and southern Africa in the 1970s and 80s, and pervasive conflicts over resources and political power have resulted in many African countries being beset by political instability, war and violence at some time during the past 50 years. This has forced thousands of people to flee across the borders of neighbouring countries to seek safety. The numbers have fluctuated but today there are estimated to be about 3 million African refugees, most of whom have stayed in the continent. There are more refugees per head of populations in Africa than any other continent. Moreover, refugees make up a higher proportion of international migrants than for other continents.

Until the 1990s, many of the refugee movements were widely associated with liberation struggles and African states were generous in offering refugees asylum and from time-to-time

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access to land and other assistance. The heightened global geopolitical interest in these African conflicts engendered by the Cold War also created greater leverage for states receiving refugees to secure international aid to assist them. In the 1990s, the end of the Cold War and apartheid, the diversion of aid to the collapsing Soviet bloc (in particular for the refugee crises in the former Yugoslavia) and the challenge of enormous new refugee flows, most notably in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, all contributed to reduce global interest in African refugees and the capacity and willingness of African states to accept them. For example, Tanzania, which had long provided asylum to refugees in agricultural settlements and which was most affected by the Rwandan refugee flows, started a shift towards a more hostile policy, looking to become a 'refugee free country'. Despite the reluctance of African states to formally grant citizenship to refugees, many have found ways to establish themselves as permanent residents and routes into effective citizenship, at least for their children born in the country of asylum. For example, in Nairobi, exiled Somalis have established a significant residential and business district in the city ([Lindley 2007](#)); in rural north-west Zambia, Angolan refugees have been incorporated into Zambian villages over the last three decades (Bakewell 2015).

While the significance of African refugee flows must be acknowledged and their plight rightly has been the subject of a great volume of research and policy interventions, it is important to recall that they constitute only a minority of international migrants in Africa. In some regions, particularly east Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes, where countries such as Sudan, DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia have been in violent conflict or political turmoil for at least the last two decades, the everyday stories of people moving in search of livelihoods, education and improved quality of life have been eclipsed by narratives of displacement. There is no doubt that insecurity often suffuses people's migration decisions, but if it is taken as the only driver of movement it ignores the underlying migration processes that will keep people moving after the political and security conditions improve, and may also undermine any initiatives to return people to their place of origin (Bakewell and Bonfiglio 2013).

### Mundane migration factors

Alongside the distinctive factors that shape African migration processes, there are many that are more mundane that reflect migration found in all parts of the world. While it is often claimed that the income differentials between developing countries are lower than between developing and developed states (Gagnon and Khoudour-Castéras 2012: 22), there are very striking differences within Africa. According to World Bank data in 2007, the gross national income per head for Niger was US\$290 compared to US\$3,620 for neighbouring Algeria, over twelve times larger: this is a greater proportional difference than we find between Algeria and France or between Mexico and the United States<sup>2</sup>. As in other parts of the world, migration ebbs and flows with the economic conditions. New oil discoveries in Ghana and the opening of new mines in Zambia are attracting workers from all over the continent.

There is no doubt that far fewer resources are needed for people to migrate within the African continent compared to any attempts to travel farther afield. Not surprisingly, the average income, level of education and skills are lower for African migrants who move to other African countries. In contrast, the average levels of education among African immigrants to Europe and the US are higher than any other migrant group. That said, there is enormous variation between migratory trajectories across Africa. Many movements are between neighbouring countries by people in search of marginally better livelihoods or

employment in urban areas, commercial agriculture or industrial zones (especially mineral extraction). Some also move across international borders but remain with the ‘traditional’ territory of their language group. These relatively short distance movements, which may be undertaken quite cheaply by bus or train, make it much easier for migrants to visit home or return permanently.

In contrast, some of the continent’s large cities such as Johannesburg, Nairobi, Lagos and Cairo may attract Africans from any part of the continent and these long distance and more expensive movements include a growing number of graduates ([Oucho \*et al.\* 2013](#)). Some of these movements to African destinations are in lieu of the possibility of moving to wealthier regions but some also appear to be as a stepping-stone towards the ultimate migration destinations of Europe or North America. The term transit migration is often applied to such moves, especially for sub-Saharan Africans moving to north Africa but many people end up staying for long periods or permanently in these places, thereby creating new immigration zones ([Berriane \*et al.\* 2013](#); [Lututala 2014](#)).

Like international migrants in any other part of the world, there is a widespread practice among migrants within Africa of sending remittances to their country of origin. Not surprisingly, given lower level of their average income, the remittances sent per head are lower than for African migrants who move to wealthier continents. The World Bank has estimated that just 28 per cent of remittances to sub-Saharan Africa are sent from other developing countries ([Melde \*et al.\* 2014](#): 11) despite their constituting two-thirds of all international migrants from the continent (UNPD 2012). These figures are likely to be underestimated as so many transfers within the continent are made by informal routes, such as migrants sending cash back home with someone returning on the bus; these are not recorded.

## Conclusions

This brief survey of the migration of Africans can only give a partial impression of the complex patterns of movement and the many factors shaping them. It has only looked at the wide variety of international migration within Africa, ranging from the informal moves across poorly demarcated borders to the journeys by air of elite migrants to centres such as Johannesburg in search of jobs or education. There are also important and growing trends for migration from Africa to other developing regions, including Latin America and China ([Lututala 2014](#)) but these are not discussed here. These movements within Africa have been little studied and more research into African migration would be extremely valuable. This demand for further research is nothing new; as complaints about the lack of data to guide policy are commonplace. However, I would argue that there are more fundamental social scientific reasons to examine migration between developing areas with greater care.

First, looking into new empirical cases helps to develop our understanding of the human propensity for migration. At the most basic level, it can test and challenge many of the assumptions made about migration between poor countries, which are conducted in the absence of robust data.

Second, case studies make it possible to see what is distinctive about migration between contexts: is migration from west Africa to east Africa so very different from movements between eastern and western Europe? This chapter has discussed some of the features that are distinctive to African migration within the continent; many of them can be also seen in other regions and are not restricted to the Global South. European borders are porous, cut across language groups and they are shaped by longstanding historical connections. Language links and historical ties shape movement between the wealthy countries of the (British)



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Commonwealth. Political conflict and the flight of refugees, once thought to be the preserve of the developing world, have contributed to migration from the Balkans in the 1990s and more recently from Ukraine.

Third, by examining the same human process in a very different setting, it can raise important questions about the conceptualisations that are so readily applied in the current migration literature. This can be illustrated with the example of the boundaries between regular and irregular migration that are of such concern in Europe and North America. Much of the international migration within Africa may be seen as 'below the radar', where those moving do not need to make any special efforts to avoid state control and the state is not particularly concerned about them. They need no middlemen, smugglers or traffickers. They simply move, perhaps completely oblivious to the formalities required. This immigration is irregular but it presents no threat to the state (Bakewell 2015). In contrast, those who deliberately set out to avoid immigration regulations may be said to be 'avoiding the radar'. Potential migrants who do not have the right papers need actively to seek ways around the formal system, perhaps using forged documents or employing smugglers. This takes them into the realm of criminal behaviour. Attempts by many EU donor states and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to push forward 'migration management' appear to be in response to the latter form of irregularity but their interventions also attempt to contain the former. Perhaps it is not surprising, given that much of the irregular, 'below the radar' migration is not seen as problematic in many African contexts, there is little evidence that it is a clear priority area for policy makers across the continent. Many declarations are made but substantive progress is thin on the ground.

This brief example of African experiences challenging notions of informality, irregularity or illegality serves to show how the analysis of international migration in African contexts, perhaps far from the spotlight of the policy obsessions, can draw in from the shadows new insights and raise questions whose answers are too often taken for granted. Given that migration is a universal human experience, research into migration in Africa and between other developing areas may provide an important new 'laboratory' that can help suggest answers to puzzles about how and why people move and settle across the world, which may even apply to those moving in the wealthiest regions.

## Endnotes

- 1 Available online at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm> (accessed: 1 October 2014).
- 2 Available online at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD/countries/1W?display=default> (accessed: 20 November 2014).

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