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Rethinking Migration Studies for 2050

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ABSTRACT

Migration is a complex social process not simply a response to development imbalances, or a solution to problems like unemployment, poverty or population aging. As such migration and mobility are shaped by broader processes of globalization, development, technological transformation, urbanization and in turn contribute to shaping those. This collective paper raises and seeks to answer important research and policy questions about migration and social change in the next 20 years, reflecting on new forms of migration and mobility and their implications for identity, citizenship, and migration governance.

KEYWORDS

Migration governance; globalization; mobility; citizenship; identity; migrant agency; racial capitalism; migration narrative

1. Introduction

Migration is one of the most important opportunities and challenges in the twenty first century. The recent humanitarian emergencies in Afghanistan and the Ukraine, not least the outbreak of war in the Middle East; the ongoing crisis in Venezuela and Syria; the breakdown of mobility during the pandemic and the current frantic return of traveling for both business and leisure; the connection of families torn apart by war or because of employment through smart phones; and the transnational mobilization whether against vaccines (across North America or Europe) or in favor of democracy (e.g. to support democracy in Iran or Hong Kong) are all phenomena that implicate migration (including diasporas, labor migrants, refugees or digital nomads) in one form or another.

While global movements existed for thousands of years, advanced technologies and socio-political-economic dynamics within and across nations have contributed to intensified cross-border mobility of people—with different reasons and objectives (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2022). The rise of global mobility is both a global challenge as it is an opportunity; it fosters social and technological innovation but may also exacerbate social inequalities and socio-political tensions; there are also questions with regard to its environmental consequences, the potential for pandemics' spread, and the emergence of global systemic risks (Centeno et al., 2015).

Migration studies thus far have often been too migration-centric, failing to closely consider migration as an intrinsic part of broader processes of socio-economic, technological, political

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and demographic transformation (De Haas, 2021; Castles, 2010). Migration is a complex social process not simply a response to development imbalances, or a solution to problems like unemployment, poverty or population aging. As such migration and mobility are shaped by broader processes of globalization, development, technological transformation, urbanization and in turn contribute to shaping those.

This paper is the outcome of a Roundtable with the same title held at the IMISCOE annual conference in Warsaw in July 2023. The roundtable engaged into open ended thinking as to what are the main research questions that we should ask and seek to answer in the next 20 years about migration and overall social change. Thus this paper starts with an introductory set of arguments by the first author reflecting on new forms of migration and mobility and their implications for identity, citizenship, as well as looking at how these invite us to reflect on migration and asylum governance. The contributions of each coauthor follow as responses to the questions launched by Triandafyllidou and are organized as consecutive sections of this collective paper building onto one another.

2. New forms of migration and mobility

Anna Triandafyllidou

The future of being human is inextricably related to mobility or the lack thereof. The recent humanitarian emergencies in Afghanistan and the Ukraine; the ongoing crisis in Venezuela and Syria; the breakdown of mobility during the pandemic and the current frantic return of traveling for both business and leisure; the connection of families torn apart by war or because of employment through smart phones; and the transnational mobilization whether against vaccines (in Canada and across North America or Europe) or in favor of democracy (e.g. Canadian activism in favor of democracy in Hong Kong or to support farmers in Indian) are but different sides of the same process: human mobility.

While global movements existed for thousands of years, advanced technologies and socio-political-economic dynamics within and across nations have contributed to intensified cross-border mobility of people—with different reasons and objectives (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2022). The increase in the cross-border mobility of persons—with different reasons and objectives—is a hallmark of the current age of human history. In a recent study Recchi et al. (2019a) estimate global transnational mobility at 3 billion trips annually worldwide (in the period 2011–2016) compared to an estimated 10 million migration episodes annually in the early 2010s (Abel & Sander, 2014). The rise of global mobility is both a global challenge as it is an opportunity; it fosters social and technological innovation but may also exacerbate social inequalities and socio-political tensions; there are also questions regarding its environmental consequences, the potential for pandemics' spread, and the emergence of global systemic risks (Centeno et al., 2015).

In conceptualizing human migration and broader types of mobility we need to consider it as an intrinsic part of broader processes of socio-economic, technological, political, and demographic transformation (De Haas, 2021; Castles, 2010). We need to see it as a complex social process rather than as a response to development imbalances, or as a solution to problems like unemployment, poverty, or population aging. As such migration and mobility are shaped by broader processes of globalization, development, technological transformation, urbanization and in turn contribute to shaping those.

Human mobility today is acknowledged both as a right (the right to emigrate, to leave one's country), as a positive element in people's lives (the capacity and freedom to move) and as a crisis (when people are forced to move because of a natural disaster, a war or simply the search for a better future). People move for leisure, to visit family and friends, to search for better living and working conditions, but also to seek protection. Communities may also be displaced internally or across national borders (Sassen, 2014) both spatially and culturally (Tomiak, 2017; Dorries et al., 2022).

Mobility today and increasingly in the future, is not always nor necessarily spatial or physical, it can also be virtual/digital. Advanced digital technologies do not only facilitate connections and collaborations but are also promising a new level of virtual 'presence' soon (see the recent announcement of the Metaverse by Facebook). One may borrow the term 'saturated mobility' from the natural sciences and consider the case of young people who may be extremely virtually mobile but physically stay put. Their mobility experience is not spatial but social and inter-subjective: through virtual mobility and connectivity, they may be experiencing the breaking down and reorganization of social and kinship networks, as well as a level of political alienation or of anti-social radicalization as they may feel that they have lost connection with the national governments but have not found any other political actors or institutions to fill the vacuum except for online communities. On the other hand, we cannot ignore that there are many people who aspire to move physically but are not able to because they lack the resources or the right documents and additionally there are entire communities that may be forced to leave their traditional lands whether because of natural disasters, environmental deterioration, or conflict.

Taking stock of these observations, I am distinguishing among four types of mobility today:

> travel (people moving for business or leisure); migration (notably people moving in search of better living and working conditions or to reunite with family); asylum (people moving to seek international protection); and displacement (people or communities being forcibly moved). We consider these as separate but interconnected mobility spheres because of their different motivations, modalities, and legal/policy frameworks.

It was more than 20 years ago when commenting on globalization, the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1998) wrote about the emergence of two types of 'sans papiers' people traveling in the world today: the cosmopolitan 'nomads', moving across borders whether for work or leisure, seamlessly, without visas because in possession of the 'right' passports; and the 'vagabonds', those willing but unable to move or moving illegally because in possession of the 'wrong' passports or of no passports at all. In recent decades, mobility of the first group (for business or leisure) has grown exponentially as evidenced by the $4.7 trillion size (2020, pre-pandemic) of the current broader travel and tourism industry (including accommodation, transport, attractions and more) (Lock, 2021).

Migration has also grown significantly: international migrants account today for 3.6% of the global population or 381 million people (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2022, p.3) up from 173 million or 2.8% of the global population in 2000. Mobility for leisure and business has been facilitated by developments in global travel and the digitalization of many services. Migration has benefited from increased connectivity and cheaper transport too but has also faced increased restrictions as major destination countries have adopted sophisticated digital tools to regulate mobility (Triandafyllidou & Ambrosini, 2011, Kenwick & Simmons, 2020; McLeman, 2019). While Bauman's stratification remains timely, there has been little effort to analyze these two divergent types of mobility and how they will evolve given the important technological advances of today as well as the increased restrictions for the 'vagabonds' and evolving concerns about climate change and pandemics.

During the last decade there has been increasing recognition that migration is *mixed* in the sense that flows cannot be clearly classified as economic vs humanitarian and rather we need to account for combined drivers and mixed motivations which may even change during the migration project of an individual or household (Triandafyllidou, 2017; Kent, 2021; Mixed Migration Centre, 2019). The term of forced migration has been put forward by many also in criticizing how global governance tends to compartmentalize between refugees and migrants without accounting for the complex situations on the ground (Jubilut & Casagrande, 2019). It was nearly 10 years ago when Betts (2013) discussed 'survival migration,' pointing to people moving because their governments cannot guarantee their basic conditions of existence.

A comprehensive view of the future of human mobility requires us to take a closer look into community displacement—particularly the loss of habitat through forced evictions for market

purposes (because of acquisition of lands by foreign governments and investors or because of gentrification within large cities) or because of climate change (desertification, rising waters) or also because of changes in environmental conditions brought about through plantation agriculture, mining or manufacturing (Sassen, 2014). Community displacement has so far been analyzed separately from studies on economic or family migration. They have also not been sufficiently connected to the mobility of the cosmopolitan 'nomads' of Bauman or of the creative class as Richard Florida labeled them (Florida, 2019) who may follow opportunities arising in an interconnected global economy—opportunities that may be intimately connected with the displacement or migration processes that the 'vagabond' groups experience.

Speaking of 'nomads', it is worth delving into the ways in which nomadic pastoralists transform mobility into resilience. In a recent study, Maru, Scoones, Triandafyllidou and coauthors (Maru et al., 2022) critique global migration governance by bringing together the analysis of international migration with that of nomadic pastoralist communities. Pastoralists must engage dynamically with uncertainty and variability, and as a result they challenge linear, uniform, and predictable notions of mobility. Rarely do they move predictably from point A to B; a move from dry to wet areas or from home to host territories. Moving and stopping is part of a continuous and contingent flow, where ideas of mobility and immobility are not opposites, but part of the same experience (Maru, 2020). The lived experiences of mobility rupture the binaries of start and stop, source and destination, fixed and flexible, mobility and immobility as pastoralists seek to respond opportunistically to contextual dynamics. This is not so different from the ebb and flow of international migration but what is different is the way policy makers categorize economic or family migration and the way these communities manage their own patterns of annual migration, seasonal cycles, micro-mobility within and around their camps and for instance the ways in which they fulfill both livelihood-based and religious obligations while en route (Maru, 2020; Maru et al., 2022).

2.1. What are the implications of the above for theorizing (national) identity and citizenship?

Taking stock of these complex and multi-dimensional forms of mobility discussed in the previous section, the question arises of how will identities (of citizens, migrants, mobile people) be formed in the future and what kind of analytical tools do we need to make sense of these identities?

Focusing on the virtual transnational or national space that new advanced digital technologies and internet algorithms can create, I wonder whether Riva Kastoryano's (2018) notion of transnational nationalism would be a good conceptual starting point.

Kastoryano reflects on the phenomenon of nationalist exclusion through transnational exposure and openness. She notes that in a world of increased migration and inter-dependence, we witness the re-territorialisation of global identities through the backdoor. Communities and states, argues Kastoryano (2018, p. 7) strive to create new configurations of nations and nationalism that are relevant in a globalized context. One strategy for achieving this is to argue for transnational solidarity. Such transnational solidarity can be that of a global 'nation'—an irredentist nation, a global diaspora, such as, argues Kastoryano, a transnational European Muslim community. Kastoryano notes that this transnational nationalism can be aggressive and exclusionary as it reflects on the deficiencies of human rights and citizenship rights that are not fully actualized, and seeks to mobilize individuals against their territorial nation, in favor of a transnational virtual one. Kastoryano notes that this invented and imagined transnational national community, fueled by external events such as wars, conflict in other countries, and colonial relations, re-ethicises identities through its zero-sum, militant discourse.

Making sense of how people will develop their agency and negotiate their identities in this new environment, the conceptual reflections offered by theories of everyday nationhood can be useful too (see for instance Skey & Antonsich, 2017, Skey, 2011, Antonsich, 2016; Fox &

Miller-Idriss, 2008). These theories point to how nationalism and national identity become 'invisible' in everyday life because they are omnipresent. The question arises of whether people will transfer their national identity (and its complexities and ramifications) in their virtual reality and digital mobility or whether they will opt for creating new identities that are separate and autonomous from their 'real' identities. It would be necessary to engage into an analysis of how 'digital nomads' and digi-nauts will negotiate their identities in their remote work or digital citizenship communities and whether the identity processes activated there will (a) reformulate the interactive dynamics that I have tried to describe in my plural vs neo-tribal framework (Triandafyllidou, 2020) or that Tariq Modood has analyzed in his multicultural nationalism approach (Modood, 2019), (b) whether these identities will develop alongside dimensions of transnational nationalism of the kind that Kastoryano has analyzed, (c) whether we should conceptualize these two 'realities' as intertwined only through the individual as the locus of these different identities and what does this mean for our concepts of identity, citizenship, polity and so on.

2.2. How to govern migration in a post-pandemic world?

There has been significant discussion on the pandemic impact on the governance of migration and asylum from both theoretical and policy perspectives (see Triandafyllidou, 2022b) albeit such knowledge has not been sufficiently systematized. While apparently no two pandemics in history have been alike (Conniff, 2020), what is special about the current pandemic is that it happened in an age of increased, intensified and diversified human migration (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2022).

The call to 'build back better' has become resonant, particularly when it comes to the governance of international migration. The pandemic swept across the globe in weeks, bringing the world to a standstill, and leaving people stranded at origin, destination or in transit. The fragility and unsustainability of temporary migration systems was particularly visible as many workers were either forcefully returned to their countries of origin, often suffering wage theft, or stranded behind borders without access to health facilities, proper shelter and even food (Lin & Yeoh, 2021; Suhardiman et al., 2021). In other cases, national authorities resorted to chartering flights and making special arrangements to bring in migrant workers in the agri-food or care sector to ensure that such critical industries remained functional (Triandafyllidou, 2022b). The pandemic posed questions about what temporary migration status means (when people might effectively live a large part of their lives in a host country even though their migration status is not a long term one but rather a sequence of different temporary statuses) and what obligations and responsibilities states should have toward these vulnerable yet often essential migrant workers.

The pandemic has prompted governments to reconsider who is a desirable and essential migrant and how do we build resilience and sustainability in national migration governance systems whenc faced with a totally unexpected external shock.

I adopt here the definition of resilience offered by the OECD (2020b in Anderson et al), as a system's capacity to withstand, respond, adapt and recover from unpredicted external shocks. Resilience in fact tends to be measured in terms of the speed of reaction and adaptation to the external shock—hence the adjustment time; and in terms of the capacity of the system to recover, in other words to return to the previous situation. A system may bounce back to the previous situation or it may even bounce forward in the sense of find a new, more positive equilibrium thanks to the changes implemented (Anderson et al., 2021). It is not within the scope of this paper to define metrics that can assess the resilience for systems of migration governance; rather I argue that overall, countries showed a significant level of resilience albeit of a superficial nature, that was not sustainable in the medium or long run.

Looking closer at the concept of resilience, it is important to distinguish between situated, structural and systemic resilience (Macrae, 2019; Macrae & Wiig, 2019). Situated resilience concerns a particular local context and situation and involves measures that mainly readjust

things. A second level of resilience is structural and involves reorganizing the system. This type of resilience entails a change in the way things work, with a view to reorganizing, for instance, the processes of production. The third type of resilience which offers a comprehensive approach and more durable solutions to a problem is one that is systemic, that is, requiring reform of the system rather than simply reorganization. Systemic reform though takes time and while it may perform well in terms of minimizing the negative impact and actually even facilitate bouncing forward to a better situation, it performs less well in terms of adjustment time.

As Macrae (2019, p. 20) puts it, all three forms of resilience work in tandem as "resilience can be understood as happening both quickly and slowly, as a multi-layered set of processes enacted over different time periods and over different scales of activity".

Looking closer at these pandemic-inspired solutions that privilege systemic over situated or structural resilience, we realize that these solutions result in systems that are more sustainable in the long run. Systemic resilience has greater temporal reach as it focuses on improving the system's intrinsic quality to adjust to disruptive events *before* it spirals into major crisis, while also increasing its ability to recover and repair *after* the disruption happens (Macrae, 2019). Ito Peng (2021) discusses what systemic resilience in the global care sector would look like and points out that such resilience requires significant investments in human capital and social infrastructures, both in the medium and long term, that will 'help raise the quality of care and increase and diversify the supply of care workers, thus making the global care interlock more flexible in responding to future shocks' (Peng, 2021, p. 4). Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has made visible what the deeply entrenched issues are for both nation-states as well as migrants and their families, and migration governance need to move from short-term fixes to focusing on the longer-term sustainability of migration systems to create more viable and less precarious tools for human development.

In a recent paper, with Brenda Yeoh (Triandafyllidou & Yeoh, 2023) we discuss four areas where measures to improve systemic resilience would lead to more sustainable migration governance in the longer run: (a) Longer stays for a stable workforce with less churn; (b) Incorporating migrants into national safety nets; (c) Integrating migrants into receiving society as a safeguard against xenophobia; (d) Technological substitutes for low-skilled migrant workers as partial solutions.

2.3. How do we make sense and govern new forms of mixed mobility (digital and physical)?

Taking however into consideration the broader transformation processes outlined in the first section of this paper, one wonders whether the governance of migration needs both new conceptual frameworks and new institutions for its governance. For instance when we think of digital nomads, notably people whose work is placeless—it happens on the internet—but who are themselves 'placed' notably located in a country other than that of their country of citizenship, but only for a limited time (Dreher & Triandafyllidou, 2023). Are these the workers of tomorrow? And if yes how do we govern their work and welfare, access to rights but also obligations toward citizenship, impact on localities that host a number of people how are not stable community members?

If people are going to create companies, invest, and work on the Metaverse, through cryptocurrencies or transnational digital currencies, where will they still live, eat, have children, form friendships? What does this mean about the splitting of work and residence and how can we govern mobility and migration in such a space? How should state regulate work and welfare in such a situation?

Is such a new situation a potent development factor as it will do away with the division between 'strong' and 'weak' passports? As people will 'travel' digitally for work while stay put for other facets of their lives (forming a family, taking leisure time, participating as citizens)?

3. How can migration studies contribute to a more reflexive understanding of the complexities of migration?

Peter Scholten

We all know that migration is a topic marked by a high level of social complexity. Anna Triandafyllidou describes migration in the introduction as a 'complex social process.' This makes it into an intriguing topic for scholarly study, as reflected in the vast expansion of the field of migration studies since the 1980s (Pisarevskaya a.o. 2020). But it also makes it to a challenging topic of study, with many 'essentially contested concepts' (can we even agree on what a migrant is?), lots of things lost in translation (does 'integration' mean the same thing in the US and UK as in continental Europe?), frequent transdisciplinary struggles (do migration law and migration sociology even speak to each other?) and many external influences (not only evidence based policymaking but also policy based evidence-making).

But have migration studies been able to overcome such challenges and contribute to a reflexive understanding of the complexities of migration? The field seems to have a 'mixed balance sheet'. On the one hand, migration studies have been able to at least reveal some complexities. For instance, the field has made important steps beyond what has been described as the 'ethnic lens' of migration studies (Glick-Schiller et al., 2006), or the focus on ethnic differences in relation to the problems of participation and emancipation. To grasp the complexity of diversities, migration scholars have increasingly focused on understanding 'superdiversity' and intertwined differences notably intersecting intersectionalities rather than reducing complexity in ethnic categories that often defy complexity. Also, the field has manifested itself to be rather critical of its own involvement in the social construction of ethnic groups and the performative effect this construction has had on these groups.

Migration scholars have also increasingly come to understand migration as a complex set of 'mobilities' rather than as the traditional linear scheme of emigration-immigration-integration. As a key mark of complexity, the uncertainty of temporalities of migration is increasingly embraced by scholars who speak of the 'mobility turn' in migration studies. This approach to mobility also has consequences for the approach to processes of participation and emancipation, also labeled 'integration.' The field has largely defected from its own construction of a linear process toward integration, showing how processes of participation and segmentation can be highly varied, segmented and non-linear.

On the other hand, migration studies as a research field has not (yet) evolved in a way that enables the field itself to come to a full understanding of some of the complexities that it has revealed itself. Possibly due to the institutionalization, growth and popularity of the field, it has continued a strong focus on 'the migrant', the background and position of these migrants, the communities the migrant is part of, or the policies that are directly targeted at migrants. This has obfuscated broader social structures and political economies that shape the position of migrants, shape also the triggers of migration and shape the policies toward migrants. As such, the focus on migrants and migration per se has insulated our understanding of these phenomena from the broader societal complexities that shape them. This has also led to an underutilization of the field's great potential to contribute to conceptualization and theorization in mainstream disciplines as sociology, political science, law and geography.

A more reflexive approach to migration needs to grasp the complexities of migration interacts with broader societal structures. It should always be about migration *and* climate, migration *and* inequality, migration *and* social change, migration *and* geopolitics, etc. Here I echo the point made by Dahinden (2016) that migration studies need to contribute to a de-migranticization of many of the things we now (almost naturalizing) associate with migration and with migrants. What was often defined and understood as integration problems of migrants often has to do with processes of social exclusion, lack of accessibility of and discrimination by institutions, absence of spaces for interaction, lack of public safety, etc. Migration in itself is often not just a choice by individual migrants or their households but a structural consequence of international

economic politics; focusing on 'the migrant' obfuscates the fact that most migration is triggered by how our global economic system works and what developments or incidents we mitigate or ignore in our international politics.

Understanding these complex interactions between migration and broader structural transformations also helps understand why the field of migration governance appears to be so often in 'crisis-mode' (Scholten, 2020). The frequent reference to 'crises' in the field of migration and migration-related diversities reflects how there is friction between how societies understand and act upon migration on the one hand and the complexities of migration on the other hand. For instance, the alleged 'refugee crisis' has to do with much more than just border control or even decision making of the migrants per se. This 'crisis' was a consequence of a misfit between the beliefs behind the European asylum system and the complex realities of global political economics, inequalities and migration opportunities. In a similar way the 'integration crisis' was a misfit between a belief in societal engineering of participation and acculturation and the complexities of social interaction between migrants and non-migrants in everyday social life. Or the 'multicultural crisis' a discrepancy between the idea of relatively well demarcated and organize social communities on the one hand and the complexities of identification, intersectionalities and individualization on the other.

This de-migranticization and reappreciation of the broader structural importance and implications of migration and diversity, puts migration studies in a position of potentially great influence on various disciplines. Migration studies is a transdisciplinary research field defined by its object of study; but its findings, concepts and theories have potential to a variety of mainstream disciplines. In a similar way to what we have seen with gender studies and climate studies, migration studies can contribute much by not developing into the direction of a discipline but by engaging with mainstream disciplinary discussions, to bring 'migration' into mainstream understanding of international relations or economics and challenge classical economic or public policy theories.

4. What do we think of migration studies in the context of polycrisis? The need to reframe our focus

Sabrina Marchetti

In a recent book on care provision during the COVID-19 pandemic, poignantly entitled "From Crisis to Catastrophe" (Duffy et al., 2023), several authors confirm the simple fact that even when confronted with the same policy issue, governments' responses are not forcefully the same. For example, in Italy, we do not see any investment in health and care, but instead, a tendency to re-familiarize care commitments, pushing many Italian women to quit their jobs. Moreover, Italian migration policies do not seem to have 'learned a lesson' from the pandemic, setting zero or limited opportunities for new overseas recruitment in the care sector despite an estimated need for at least 23,000 new workers (Censis, 2023). Italian policy concerns, especially after the electoral victory of the far-right party Brothers of Italy, are indeed evidently more focused on constraining border crossings and intercepting irregular migrants at the Mediterranean Sea than on emphasizing migrant workers' contribution to our aging society in increasing need of care.

The picture becomes even more complicated when expanding the scope of the discussion beyond the pandemic legacy to ponder how much we are immersed in a context of poly-crisis, following Adam Tooze's definition (Tooze, 2021). We are indeed in a situation where multiple crises, such as pandemics, war, populism, climate change, forced displacement, and economic crises converge, amplifying their effects.

From this crisis perspective, the notion of resilience (as discussed in this paper by Triandafyllidou) and more specifically of systemic resilience, defined as the capacity to endure external shocks and complex changing conditions, gains traction, particularly against static

approaches of reaction to change. However, when we think about how resilience has worked in the pandemic setting, we cannot but sense a tension that brings back a recurrent theoretical question in migration studies to which we have not found a solution, namely, what is the relationship between external elements and the agency of migrant people?

I contend that the answer to this question is not in analyzing what governments have done (i.e., on the governance of the polycrisis) but in the migrants' embodied perspectives. The example of Ukrainian migrant women in Italy offers a suitable case in point. The focus here is not on recent arrivals, notably refugees seeking protection after the Russian invasion in February 2022, but on the long-term settled migrants; Ukrainian women who came to Italy over 20 years earlier. I am here suggesting their example as paradigmatic of what it means to adopt an embodied approach to migrants' agency amid the multiple crises affecting migration policies since the 1990s.

We can here briefly summarize how, during the last three decades, Ukrainian women of the same generation have witnessed the collapse of the URSS where they had grown up and have decided to emigrate to countries like Italy to do the menial job of domestic and care work. Here, they have remained undocumented for several years, waiting for the first regularization to apply for (which happened in significant numbers in 2002 and 2009). At the same time, they have witnessed often from abroad the Orange Revolution of 2004, as well as the Euromaidan protests and the beginning of the Donbas crisis in 2014. By then, some had applied for asylum in the EU but got massive rejections since Ukraine was considered a 'safe country' (Kalantaryan et al., 2016). They were still abroad during the 2015 'migration crisis', which meant restrictions on labor migrations. However, in 2017, they saw a liberalization of 3-month visas to enter the EU for Ukrainians in the approaching relationship between their home country and the European Union.

In 2020, they faced a new scenery change with the first COVID-19 wave, which was particularly fierce in Italy and has affected many migrant domestic workers with deprivation, illness, deaths, or loss of job and consequent repatriations (Marchetti & Boris, 2020). Nevertheless, the pandemic also meant a significant policy initiative for regularizing migrants' employment in two critical essential work sectors: agriculture and domestic work in home-based care. However, this measure has turned out to be very superficial since, after three years, more than half of the applicants (200,000) still have not received a response. While waiting for the outcome of their application, they could not change employers or travel, so they were left in a harrowing situation. Ukrainians had the most significant number of applicants, with 18,000 only for domestic work, yet only 6,500 accepted so far (Ero straniero, 2023).

Finally, we know of the Russian invasion of 2022, which meant, for those who had applied for the pandemic regularization, the impossibility of returning home to help their families escape until the Italian government decided to fast-track Ukrainians' applications. It also meant the arrival of displaced daughters and grandchildren -while their sons are going as soldiers- and the need to send remittances not for families but for war, given the strong support by the side of the Ukrainian diaspora to the warfighters. It also meant confronting a sudden reunification with their daughters. Many arrived under the EU Temporary Protection Directive 2001/55/E and rapidly decided they would not remain; they would not support their mothers working in the Italian domestic sector but preferred to move onwards toward other countries or even return to Ukraine.

In the story of this generation of Ukrainian women, we find one of the many examples of how migration is affected by multiple crises happening at multiple levels. Political, economic, and social turmoil is reflected in their mobility and life experiences. And yet, it would be essential to find ways of speaking about the nexus between migration and crises that go beyond a deterministic view of migrants as 'adjusting' and 'coping' with their effects while 'taking advantage' of some opportunities that crises might create. Moreover, it would be interesting to understand how these changing external factors intertwine with differences in gender, generation, age, social class, etc., that create tensions and inequalities within migrant groups.

We need to find new ways to describe how migrants' subjectivity has to do with endurance and building an identity that is not just an effect of what happens at the structural level. How commonalities and differences are experienced, understood, and accounted for from the perspective of migrant positions. In other words, considering the future of migration studies for 2050 and beyond, we need to account for transformations in migrants' identities and experiences without flattening them as dependent on changing external pressures at a time when these systemic crises are so powerful that they may risk overshadowing all other aspects of these complex stories.

5. (Out)sourcing social reproduction: Migration, racial capitalism and the nation

Parvati Raghuram

As we write these think pieces (in November 2023) we are witnessing rising tides of nationalism in many parts of the world. Discussions of globalization, which occupied much of the airwaves have become subdued; instead, we have returned to increasing barriers, most often manifest through growing ant-migrant sentiments. The call for independent, sovereign nations appears to strike a chord, especially when it also calls for increasing ethnic homogeneity. The nation is strongly back in popular imagination and politics. In this short essay, I will explore the relationship between social reproduction and the nation and the role of racial capitalism in producing the contemporary condition. I suggest that this relationship is going to play an increasing role and warrants far more attention than we are giving it currently in migration studies. While most theories of capital have focused on the value of labor and how it is abstracted for production, there is increasing attention on how social reproduction is the forgotten handmaiden in contemporary capitalism. In the paragraphs that follow I seek to tease these out through articulations of crisis and social reproduction and what they tell us about the nation, migration and racialized labor.

Crisis and social reproduction: The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the extent to which social reproduction is the most fundamental sector of the economy. In the UK, the location from which I write, post pandemic it appears that this was, however, quickly forgotten. Social reproduction has become subject to every kind of assault—defunding, casualization and extraction into capitalist labor circuits. As ever, the health crisis also showed the extent to which the risks of social reproduction were unequally felt by black bodies. In the UK the death rate amongst migrant workers was significantly higher. The simultaneous devaluation of racialized bodies and of certain kinds of social reproduction left these workers at much higher risk.

Crisis in social reproduction: Many of these racialized bodies were migrants but their economic contribution to social reproduction largely remains neglected, even as it is growing. In many countries, there is increased dependence on irregular labor, which is poorly paid, whose conditions of work are often deteriorating but whose work is central to producing the nation. There is also increasing dependence on migrants to run the social reproductive sectors in which the state is directly involved– teachers, care workers, nurses, doctors, those engaged in council work and so on. They provide essential labor in reproducing individuals, communities and nations.

For welfare states, these very sectors are key to the nationalist rhetoric. Delivering them well is the true mark of success, a key benchmark that is used to justify nationalism and forms the basis on which national boundaries are defended. Migrants are seen as economic dependents taking away national goods that citizens have worked hard to deserve, even though these very sectors draw heavily upon migrant workers. The scissor movement—depreciation of the value of social reproduction, alongside its' increasing rhetorical importance in nationalism is based on the unspoken labor of racialized bodies.

Crisis of social reproduction: At the same time, there is a crisis of social reproduction for black and minoritized people who are victims of capitalist accumulation. Contemporary capitalism is increasingly extracting value through colonizing social reproduction. Migrants work longer

and longer hours to somehow maintain their own social reproduction. Increasing inequalities, climate change, economic crises and warfare, are driving more and more people to migrate and to have their own bodies capitalized in the process. The range of intermediaries who make money on such mobility are often called human traffickers or smugglers, and vilified.

However, as I write this, I note that the UK has vastly increased how much it charges for work and student visas. It has increased visa applications for migrants by 20% and up to 66% for immigrant health surcharge, such that the very doctors and nurses who provide healthcare for 'free' have to pay much more for their own healthcare. Moreover, in a stunning piece of nationalist maneuvering, several trade unions have agreed to 5–7% pay rises which will be entirely funded through these increases. The unions too, as ever, have pacified their national base, forgetting that the sectors and workers they purportedly defend also include international staff. They have played off and paid off one part of their constituency—the citizen members by taxing another—the migrants. This shameful adjustment by the unions has largely remained unremarked.

The unequal effects of crises, the need to depend on those who are crisis affected while still treating them as outsiders is all based on a form of racial capitalism. Racial capitalism recognizes the role that embodied hierarchies—racialized, gendered and classed—play in capitalism. The rise of capitalism was based on marking bodies—black bodies—as objects of brutal degradation and devaluation of labor. It is this labor on which capital was built and circulated. Today we see new versions of such racialized capitalism where the internal relations between citizens—between the state and citizen, between employers and employees and different social classes is made possible through racializing migrant labor. Contemporary social structures have not just led to the emergence of racism, rather they are dependent on racial subjugation. Racism is the ordering sentiment, economic process and conditionality through which settlements between citizens are made. The conditions of migration should not therefore be thought through the migrant; it is the non-migrant story in which migrants are only bit players. The power of racialized capitalism defines and shapes migration.

Although my account is quite bleak, it is important to note that there are also many forms of alliances that aim to challenge such settlements. As researchers arguing for justice we must ask, what should we be doing to force open the power structures among citizens which are all dependent on the capitalization of migrant labor? What is the ethical imperative that migration scholars face in the context of this form of racialized capitalism? What should we research, how and why? How do we enact our political sentiments not only through what we research but how we research? Or, in the context of this crisis how should we think about the social reproduction of the academy and what changes do we need to make in how we organize our own life's work?

6. Citizenship and Rights in a Context of Shifting Mobility Dynamics: The Contours of a Research Agenda

Daniela Vintila

Over the past decades, a variety of studies from different disciplinary and methodological outlooks have enriched our knowledge of top-down and bottom-up policy processes and practices in areas of citizenship acquisition, the recognition of migrants' socio-economic, political or cultural rights, or the consequences of existing policies for migrants' lives. Yet, we have a long way to go for comprehensively understanding the complex design, drivers, and effects of citizenship and rights' recognition regimes globally. Apart from several gaps still to be addressed in future migration research, the emergence of new mobilities (driven by investment or entrepreneurial projects, digital nomadism, talent mobility, etc.) or shifting international migration trends (e.g. recent immigration to countries traditionally considered as emigration states and *vice versa*) also deserve our attention in the coming years.

The critical reflections presented here exemplify the need for further research on the specific facet of migrants' rights recognition, with a particular focus on policymaking. While there are many ways in which we could move this field forward, here I discuss only three broader directions that could guide future work.

6.1. Detaching migration studies from the 'immigration OR emigration' divide in policy research

There is a need for detaching migration scholarship from its conceptual embeddedness in the analytical dichotomization between *immigration or emigration* policymaking which also pushed us, for as long time, to empirically follow mobility trajectories from the so-called 'Global South' to the so-called 'Global North'. Acknowledging states' dual role toward both immigrant and emigrant communities (Bauböck, 2010; Waldinger, 2015; Pedroza, 2020; Vintila & Lafleur, 2020) would allow us to tackle interesting (yet largely unexplored) aspects regarding potential (dis) alignments in the citizenship and rights regimes that the same country designs for these groups, thus potentially prompting our reconceptualization of mobility governance. It would also allow us to shed light on the drivers and motivations behind the convergence/divergence of policy responses toward these two mobility facets that states experience simultaneously, but sometimes at different intensities.

As an illustration, while much emphasis was placed on understanding how and why Western European or North American countries regulate immigrants' access to citizenship and rights, less is known about their policy stances toward their own diasporic communities or (potential) returnees (Lafleur & Vintila, 2020). The relevance of such matters is further underlined by interesting demographic shifts (often of distinctive characteristics and motivations- for leisure, studies, retirement, or business), such as emigration from Western Europe to Central and Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Asia or Africa; or emigration from North America to Latin American, European or Asian countries. Similarly, while policy dynamics concerning emigration from Latin American, Eastern European, African or some Asian states have triggered scholars' interest, how these countries define access to rights and citizenship for immigrants (and the rationale behind it) remains rather unexplored (Acosta Arcarazo & Freier, 2015; Natter, 2018).

6.2. Understanding selectivity in rights recognition for increasingly diverse mobile populations

Migration scholarship has long documented significant cross-country variations in the regulation of citizenship and migrants' rights, often pointing toward different layers of selectivity and differentiation in the entitlements granted to different migrant communities (De Haas et al., 2018; Bonjour & Chauvin, 2018). Yet, the drivers and consequences of such selectivity in policymaking around migration must be further explored to better understand how, when, and why states opt for differentiated measures and how this affects migrants' lives.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic revealed as an illustrative episode of how selectivity operates in times of high risk, vulnerability, and uncertainty (see also Triandafyllidou 2022b). We've seen varying policy responses toward different groups of immigrants and emigrants, often reinforcing structural inequalities in accessing rights: from differentiated conditions of entry for cross-border workers to distinctive measures for essential workers, varying types and timings of interventions for undocumented or homeless migrants or a prioritization of 'deservingness' of nationals stranded abroad in need of assisted return.

Such examples trigger broader questions on the protection role(s) that states assume toward different groups of mobile individuals and how distinctively they handle mobility-related rights during unexpected hazards. Beyond crises, other forms of mobilities that emerged or intensified

in recent years must also be further scrutinized to grasp new selectivity layers in governance processes. Think about the regulation and use of rights of entry, residence, employment, social security, or taxation for digital nomads, workation migrants, or wealthier individuals benefiting from citizenship and residence-by-investment programs. Diversification of retirement, student or academic mobilities, cross-border commuting, transnational entrepreneurship, citizenship-for-talent or global talent visa schemes also ask for further analysis of how selectivity shapes citizenship and rights recognition regimes worldwide.

6.3. Acknowledging the role of time, space, and place in citizenship and migrant rights policymaking

We also need to delve deeper into the importance of time, space, and place in citizenship and rights recognition policies. Temporalities of mobility governance should be further considered to make sense of observed longitudinal shifts (or status quo) in the openness/restrictiveness of citizenship and migrant rights regimes worldwide. When do shifting/new mobilities actually drive changes in states' policy stances on migrants' rights? Why does path dependency shape policy resistances to demographic changes in some contexts more than in others? Are processes of policy diffusion incentivized by the specific features of new or changing mobilities emerging in specific time periods? Thinking about recent global shocks (e.g. pandemics, financial crises, conflicts, climate change displacements) or shifts in world politics (e.g. surge of populist radical right/left), one wonders if such critical junctures can really become transformative events for structural changes in how states (re)think migrants' rights- as opposed to only having shorter-term effects on public interventions.

Understanding how space and place constraint inclusion policies also requires further analysis. Impressive efforts were recently made for comparing states' inclusiveness in rights recognition based on residence or nationality- for a recent overview, see Solano and Huddleston (2021) and research projects, mostly EU-funded, such as GLOBALCIT, MIPEX, MiTSoPro, IMISEM or EMIX datasets, among others. Yet, a geographical widening of this existing evidence is much needed to cover countries (especially from Africa, Asia or Oceania) where data availability has restricted the research questions addressed so far on mobility rights regimes. Efforts toward a global reach must also be coupled with a rescaling of migration research beyond the state. Although such rescaling already started with the 'local turn' in integration policymaking (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017), its focus remains primarily centered around cities hosting large immigrant communities. Yet, we should ask ourselves more about the role that regions, provinces, smaller towns, or even supranational institutions (beyond the EU case) play in rights recognition processes. Further investigating these dynamics of sub-national/supranational policymaking are much need when it comes to immigration (see MIPEX-R as recent attempt for measuring regional policies) and, especially so, when related to emigration contexts.

In a nutshell, migration studies need to acknowledge the fluidity and contradictions of migration policy categories and use empirical and theoretical analysis boldly to highlight how migration dynamics are shifting and how we need to rethink our rights based approach to migration addressing these shifting conditions.

7. What role for new and big data in rethinking migration studies? And how can we come up with transdisciplinary approaches?

Justyna Salamońska

Migration is linked with technology advances that change the experience of migration, that can facilitate the moves, but that can also provide means of control of international movements. In particular, the AI revolution has already had impact on various spheres of life, migration included. In this piece my focus is on technology, although not in substantive terms, but as a tool and lens

that allows expanding our knowledge about migration processes. In particular the big data revolution has potentially opened new pathways to how we can research migration processes. Recently we saw the emergence of research on 'digital traces' (term coined by Latour, 2007), that is data sources generated by users that became subject to academic analyses also in migration field. Some of these studies focus on migration patterns, links between migration and mobility, migration sentiments, estimations ('nowcasting') of migration trends in response to dramatic events. But beyond these examples, what is the potential of big data for rethinking migration studies?

In quantitative terms with big data revolution mass data are available to study human mobility in different spatial and temporal scales than were achievable so far. New data can also bring a qualitative change. Just like with the grounded theory approach, studies involving big data reverse the theory-driven research logic, to data-driven one. It has important implications, as it is the datasets available and patterns identified that shape the kinds of research questions can be asked. Is it a drawback for migration studies? Not necessarily, if analyzed in context, data will be more 'natural', immersed in the ways that people move: in fact, digital traces are user (and not researcher) created. The inherent risks, as with big data more generally, are 'theory deficit' (Prewitt et al., 2013) and lack of philosophical and epistemological foundations and thus trivial or obvious findings (Muller et al., 2016).

Big data offer clear advantages: because of the sheer scale of data and their availability it is expected that they will drive new directions of research (Billari & Zagheni, 2017). We have already seen evidence of this, as new data allowed analyzing some of the relatively unexplored research avenues including how long and short term mobilities are related, where different temporal and spatial scales would be taken into account, relationship between internal and international migration, temporary and circular migration, people moving multiple times. Some of these topics were overlooked or were difficult to detect with more traditional data such as social surveys and official statistics. Thus there is a potential for digital data to identify generalizable patterns in migration knowledge niche areas.

There is also space for digital data to provide empirical evidence when there is a dearth of information. Digital sources give timely, more flexible data, and as such provide a 'barometer of movement' (Zagheni et al., 2014). So called 'nowcasting' of changes in mobility is especially key in crisis situations, such as abrupt and mass changes in mobility trends due to natural disasters or military conflicts. In addition, digital data are publicly available early (and well ahead of traditional migration data) and thus useful for early warning, forecasting of migration and policy interventions. At least some of these datasets can be accessed low cost and processed in real time with powerful software.

Digital data may well be an element of future of migration research but are they good quality data? The discussion around data quality is a valid one. Some argue that it is the combination of more traditional surveys and big data is a promising avenue. Zagheni and Weber (2015) expect migration modeling to take into account various data sources and learning about biases and uncertainty of estimations, nowcasting and predictions on migration. Demographers have long had ways to work with imperfect data, but the key element here is to understand the data quality and make necessary adjustments. For instance, selection bias is related to the fact that the Internet or social media users may not be representative of the whole population (which affects what types of generalizations can be made). Facebook or X (former Twitter) platform users necessarily differ from the whole population. In case of measurement error the researchers need to keep in mind why the users are on the Internet or social networking sites, and how they behave online. Geo-located data may be more available in places with more access to WiFi and mobile devices which is unequal across the world regions. What is more, big data often come without the demographic correlates thus without possibilities of multivariate approach and for comparisons among subgroups in the data.

I want to also highlight the ethical perspective on the big data use. While there are new possibilities zooming into masses of data, many subjects may not be aware of the amounts of traces that they leave online (when visiting websites, using social networking sites, using mobile phones

etc.) and which can be used for different purposes, research included. Ang et al. (2013, 42) recognize how people behind the big data perform 'unrecompensed labor to corporate and academic researchers'. This is all the more the case as usually big data that are used in migration but also other research are propriety of companies and have a commercial value. The community of researchers has to face a new type of corporate gatekeepers that control access to data, put price on it or create private-public partnerships around data analyses. Migration researchers using big data will need to consistently strive for transparency not only around how they arrived to findings based on big data analyses, but also transparency around data creation and data access.

While there is an enormous potential for use of big data in migration research in the years to come, it is key to accompany the emergence of digital data use with a due reflection on what can be achieved with this type of data, considerations around data quality and possible generalizations. Digital data analyses should be an interdisciplinary endeavor, bringing together data science along with demography, sociology, economy, anthropology, geography, among others. While data scientist are well able to analyze large datasets, they may lack the fine-grained insights to interpret the findings. For instance, migration researchers are better equipped to reflect on 'reverse operationalisation' and its implications, where the mobility definition is often derived from the measure used. In addition, interdisciplinary migration research is needed to put the new data in context, add the theoretical edge, build on juxtaposing different datasets. Yet the big data in migration research give promise to be a powerful tool to understand current and emerging patterns of mobility in contemporary world.

8. What are the new elements of migration governance in Europe and internationally and what do we learn from them for the future?

Zeynep Sahin Mencutek

To govern asylum and so-called 'irregular' migration at national, regional and international levels, actors increasingly tend to prioritize two elements: temporal protection schemes and weaponization of migration through opaque border and security practices and non-formal migration control cooperation practices. It seems that these features of migration governance gradually scale up in Europe, simultaneously spread internationally, and become the possible elements of governing migration, particularly 'unwanted' migration in the near future.

Ongoing and new conflicts have driven an increase in forced displacement across the globe. As of October 2023, the United Nations of High Commissioner for Refugees notes eight humanitarian emergencies, including in Afghanistan, DR Congo, Roginhya, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and DR Congo (UNHCR., 2023)—and this does not include the conflict between Israel and Palestine that erupted in October 2023. The number of displaced people impacted by these emergencies climbed up by millions in a short time and the spillover effects continue for years and decades. Although massive displacements occurred in four different continents, receiving states responded -at least four of them, Syria, Venezuela, Rohingya and Ukraine-, by introducing temporary protection schemes instead of delving into long-term policies. It is wise that receiving countries quickly decided to grant a formal or non-formal group-based temporary protection status without asking each displaced person to undergo a lengthy asylum process. While the earlier reception of neighboring countries toward fleeing people has often been welcoming, the assumption is that displaced person would return as soon as unrest or conflict in their country of origin ends.

Besides temporary protection status given in the mass refugee movements, it is also observed that since 2015 more countries in Europe tend to grant asylum seekers subsidiary forms of protection with fewer entitlements in terms of residence and family reunification which can also be identified as temporary schemes (Sahin-Mencutek et al., 2022). Under these conditions, "temporariness has become the norm in contemporary refugee protection" across the globe (Buxton, 2023, p. 51). As Triandafyllidou (2022a, 3847) notes, "a person is forced to leave their

country of origin because they need to seek protection elsewhere but where such protection is defined as temporary by the receiving country, hence the person is imposed forced "temporariness as a policy category, but this is not necessarily the intention of the asylum-seeker."

Thus, the international or national commitment to provide any permanent status or stable refugee status is clearly eroding, raising questions about whether it is the end of asylum and normalization of injustice or imposition of forced temporariness to those seeking asylum (Buxton, 2023; Schultz, 2020; Triandafyllidou 2022a). In the future, we may more frequently observe the proliferation of non-precarious legal status for refugees as well as the declines in responsibility sharing among countries, while this may cause many refugees to face prolonged waiting for permanent status and the risk of deportation without giving a chance for the local integration and third country settlement.

The second feature of migration governance is the growing usage of opaque border and security practices. Unfortunately, these go along with the rising militarization in Europe and elsewhere. Border walls, fences, reception/detention centers, maritime and border push back operations are cases in point for how migration governance embodies militarized and sophisticated infrastructure such as biometrics, artificial intelligence, databases, sensors, advanced satellites, naval assets and others. (Dijstelbloem, 2021; Stierl, 2023). The infrastructure is often operated by non-civilian agencies like police, defence forces, security agencies or even paramilitary forces and militias. Under the pretext of capacity building or fight against irregular migration and 'trafficking', the EU and the UK invest in or provide support for militarizing other countries, particularly those from which the migrants come or go transit.

These cooperation modes in grey areas are controversial because they lack full scale legality, legitimacy, accountability and transparency. We observe "increased surveillance, increased control and increased militarization" (Currion, 2016) both in the destination, transit and origin countries, turning movements into crisis narratives. Even if stricter border controls in transit countries may "reduce departures from the country, it is likely to make the route more deadly—pushing smugglers to resort to taking greater risks." (Sigona, 2023, p. 1). In turn, militarization of borders pave ways for the weaponization of migrants. More and more actors turn migrants and asylum seeker bargain chips for seeking financial, political or symbolic gains, especially to target the EU, raising concerns about the 'worrying future of coercive tactics" (Greenhill, 2022) and their implications for human rights of migrants.

This triangle—the militarization, weaponization and bargaining—does not help properly address the multiple and interconnected political and economic drivers behind the current mixed migration movements. People seek to mitigate political and economic uncertainty and ensure the safety for their families. For many, mobility is considered a resilience strategy against the crisis or risk situation since they feel with the interwoven impacts of pandemic, climate change, and regional geopolitical changes causing armed conflicts. Also, the humanitarian aid and refugee governance sector operated by United Nations' (UN) agencies, donors, governments, and (international) non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs) attributed positive value to the resilience of refugees and local hosts. However, the mainstreaming of the resilience concept carries the risk of depoliticizing the issues causing displacement, and a way of 'responsibilizing displaced people and host for their survival and prepared to any negative impact, in another words shifting responsibility to migrants seeking protection or hosts seeking responsibility sharing' (Sahin-Mencutek & Nashwan, 2023). As noted in the introductory section by Triandafyllidou, the systemic resilience for migration governance needs to be built on comprehensive solutions to the problem(s) rather than simply reorganization or introduction of temporary solutions.

9. Need for an empirically founded new and critical migration narrative?

Marta Bivand Erdal, Peace Research Institute Oslo

Reflecting on knowledge-production about migration with a forward-looking view, necessarily begs the question: Who wants to know about migration? But also, why? And for what purpose?

In this commentary I will argue for the need for a new narrative on migration, perhaps a new critical narrative on migration. This is a narrative on migration that is driven by empirical evidence in a radical sense. Therefore, such a migration narrative must be inherently plural.

Plural both in the sense that migration as a phenomenon is plural, but also plural in the sense of encompassing the conflicting interests of actors with a stake in migration (Erdal et al., 2018). These are actors, such as migrants themselves and their loved ones, but also nation-states and local communities, politicians and school teachers, based across societies varyingly shaped by people leaving and staying.

One might argue that this proposal amounts to kicking in an open door. For, within migration studies ongoing trends include a broadening of scope (Pisarevskaya et al., 2020). This also involves a necessary 'de-migranticization' (Dahinden 2016) whereby migration studies clearly is not 'about migrants' per se. The urgent need for 'decolonization' of migration studies (Mayblin & Turner, 2020), as part of reflexive work across the social sciences and humanities is another. Then, there is at least an emerging recognition of the serious problem which a persistent 'destination bias' presents (De Haas, 2021), not least in English-language published research, which continues to privilege the study of immigration into certain geographic contexts, over others.

There are thus important efforts to both recognize challenges in migration studies—in relation to scope and approach in a broad sense, and to seek paths toward better modes of co-creation of knowledge within migration studies in the 2020s and moving forward. However, I argue that the need for an empirically founded new and critical migration narrative remains.

I suggest there is one main reason why this continues to be the case. Thereafter I propose a possible approach for how we might continue to work on addressing the important challenge of show-casing migration as a plural reality in empirically founded ways, going forward.

Revisiting an important article written in the context of research on forced migration, I suggest, is instructive, and very relevant to migration studies broadly, in the early 2020s:

> policy relevance has encouraged researchers to take the categories, concepts and priorities of policy makers and practitioners as their initial frame of reference for identifying their areas of study and formulating research questions. This privileges the worldview of the policy makers in constructing the research, constraining the questions asked, the objects of study and the methodologies and analysis adopted. (Bakewell, 2008, p. 432).

Proponents of critical approaches to migration research would argue—partly rightly—that this is a well-known challenge, but that much research is already a result of awareness of these problems. However, even a cursory review of published work in migration studies—would indicate that mostly, research does not focus on internal mobilities within countries, or migration within regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, or parts of Asia. Similarly, the ways in which migration is not only hoped to be, but actually can be a means toward realizing goals of lives that are somewhat more livable, through social mobility within one or two generations, is much less focused on, than the inherent challenges that also of course exist.

A more critical narrative on migration, I propose, could be decoupled from state categories—as an analytically reasoned exercise, rather than as a political project against nation-states. This matters, as the vantage point for a radical openness thus stems from empirical and intellectual curiosity, rather than a normatively-based, political a priori rejection of policy-driven categories and narratives.

An empirically founded new and critical migration narrative, as mentioned, must necessarily be plural. This is both due to empirical realities simply being plural, but primarily about the conflicting interests and views on migration which exist and thus need to be faced. This includes a recognition of the various dilemmas that migration may pose, at different levels for different actors.

Such a critical migration narrative should adequately and proportionately reflect the good and the bad, so to speak. For migration is both, depending on what, how, whom, where and

when. There is thus a need for attention to the opportunities of migration and how migration is enabling, and has positive aspects. Simultaneously, there is also a need for close scrutiny of the other side of the coin—for all parties impacted.

So, an empirically founded new and critical migration narrative ought to be true to the empirical realities of migration as plural, rooted in the dynamic nature of how migration evolves and has an impact on individuals, families and communities, and as an integral part of social change in societies across the world.

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