Migration in the context of Globalisation, Development and Inequality

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Key message

In a global context of rising inequality, development discrepancies, and environmental stress, a surprisingly small number of people are becoming migrants.
In the last 30 years, the share of world population in extreme poverty has increased.

- 55% increased
- 33% remained stable
- 12% decreased

Source: Gallup (UK)
World population in extreme poverty, 1820-2015

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Shifts in the global income distribution

Shifts in global income distribution and poverty, 2003/13

Population in extreme poverty has decreased by 200’000 daily

Source: Hellebrandt und Mauro (2015)
Findings

• The global poverty situation has improved significantly over past decades
• Global income inequality has not decreased to a similar extent, inequality within countries has (mostly) worsened
• Distribution policies (taxes, transfers) can be an effective tool in addressing economic inequality
• BUT: The extreme rich (top 1%, 0.1%) remain largely unaffected
• International migration and mobility may spur development and alleviate inequality
• Migration facilitation in combination with redistribution policies may contribute to ‘pro-poor growth’ and more balanced development.
Moving from the global median to the global mean, 2011

Source: Milanovic (2016)
Emigration propensity by level of development
(GDP per capita and migration rates)
2010

The diagram illustrates the emigration propensity by level of development, using GDP per capita (log scale). The countries are categorized into three classes: Upper middle class, Middle class, and Lower middle class. The graph shows the emigration rates for each category, with Brazil, China, Malaysia, and Cyprus representing the Middle class, and Ethiopia, Jordan, Ghana, and Pakistan representing the Lower middle class. The diagram also highlights the GDP per capita data for these countries.
Global migration between 1995 and 2015

1995

High income

15%

29%

3%

10%

1%

7%

Middle income

25%

Low income

3%

13%

7%

2015

High income

13%

7%

Middle income

10%

Low income

1%

↑40%

16%

↑11%

↓4%

Datenquelle: UNDESA (2016)
Scale of the global migration potential?

Cf. Gallup World Poll (2016)
- About 1.1 billion desire to move temporarily to another country (22% of world population)
- About 710 million desire to move permanently to another country within the next 5 years (14% world population)
- About 48 million are planning to make the move of next year (1% of world population)
- About 19 million are making concrete preparations to move (e.g. buying visas and tickets etc.) (0.4% of world population)
“Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move permanently to another country?”

Quelle: Carling/Schewel (2018)
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➤ About 500 million people think they may need to move because of environmental problems within the next five years (10% of world population)

**Mixed migration motivations:** Need vs. Desire
Proportion of population with access to basic drinking water services, 2015

Definition: Water stress as the ratio of total withdrawals to total renewable supply in a given area. A higher percentage means more water users are competing for limited water supplies.
Localised water stress is (if at all) mainly driving internal (i.e. short-distance) migration

Source: WIR (2019)
Water stress vs. Net migration (N=190)

Level of water stress (freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources)

Source: Based on World Bank data
Potential vs. actual migration

- Average proportion of people who aspire to move permanently abroad in 2013
- Average proportion of emigrants in the population of origin country in 2015

Quelle: OECD (2016)
(Non-)Migration as consequence of the aspiration-capability gap


A= Acquiescent Immobility
C= Involuntary Immobility and Precarious Mobility
B= Voluntary Mobility
D= Voluntary Immobility

Aspiration-capability gap

Development ("income p.c.")
Populations trapped in environmental stress situations

Source: Foresight (2011)
Trapped or voluntarily immobile: Reasons for staying put

1. No reason to migrate
   - High satisfaction 46%

2. Insufficient resources to migrate
   - Resource barriers 14%

3a. Positive attachment to place
    - Low mobility potential 40%

3b. Fear of, or disinterest in, alternative locations

3c. Negative attachment to place

Source: Adam (2016)
Why people do not migrate – despite having good reasons (critique of „rational choice“)

Role of decision heuristics and cognitive biases (Czaika 2015):

For instance:

1. **Status quo bias**
   People have a strong preference for the context and situation in which they currently live in

2. **Endowment effect**
   People usually value what they have higher than what they could have, even if both has objectively the same value.

3. **People do not ignore sunk costs**
   People with migration aspirations may hereby not migrate – or if migrated, do not return – because of past investments, for example in housing, social networks, or a business; or in non-transferable skills and knowledge such as language, some type of education, on-the-job training, etc.

4. **People try to avoid future regret** (higher for action than inaction!)
   Potential migrants tend to decide against the risks of migration, even if the overall prospects seem poorer if they were to stay than if they were to leave
Environmental stress and *in situ* adaptation

Source: Estrada (2013) Nature Climate Change
Migration as adaption to environmental change - some key dimensions

- Time scale
- Level of vulnerability
- Adaptation possibilities in situ
- Coping capabilities
- State capacity
- Reach of responses
Mobility (migration) barriers from a European perspective
...are reflecting broader global structural inequalities

Source: DG HOME (2019)
Inbound visa restrictiveness, 1973–82 vs. 2003–2013

Note: The four (quartile) intervals include an equal number of visa-issuing countries (of destination). Interval boundaries reflect level of (inbound) visa restrictiveness of 0th, 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile, which can and do change over time.

Source: Czaika et al (2018) based on DEMIG Visa database

Visa restrictiveness by level of development:
High-income destinations (GDP per capita > 4036 US$): 64.56 %
Low-income destinations (GDP per capita < 4036 US$): 81.38 %
Outbound visa restrictiveness towards OECD citizens, 1973–2013, by continent of destination

Source: Czaika et al (2018) based on DEMIG Visa database
Internal opening and external closure

Visa restrictiveness towards internal vs. external nationalities of regional economic blocs

Source: Czaika et al (2017)

The Impact of Mobility Barriers

- Restrictive visa (and migration) policies generate a number of unintended consequences:
  - often lead to *irregular migration* (‘deflection into irregularity’)
  - generate a *smuggling business*
  - push (temporary) migrants into *permanent settlement*
  - “interrupt” international mobility and *migration circulation*

- Costs of restrictive visa policy: Visa system cause considerable administrative costs which are not covered by the visa fees

- **Visa waivers** save on administrative costs and, much more importantly, *spur international tourism, business and scientific activities* by facilitating the cross-border mobility of people

- **Liberalized visa policies** can in particular enable poorer countries to benefit from economic integration and globalization
Concluding remarks

- The vast majority of people never migrate (despite having migration aspirations!).
- There is a **stark mis-match** between the **global demand for migration opportunities and its supply** which is constrained by broader structural obstacles (incl. restrictive policies).
- This mismatch is set to grow in the coming decades with rising inequalities, increasing youth cohorts in the Global South—especially in SSA—and tough immigration restrictions in much of the Global North.
- With many people wanting to migrate, yet never capable for moving, the question arises:

  **What are the implications and long-term consequences of a growing ‘trapped population’ (with unfulfilled migration/life aspirations)**

  - Implications for local (dis-)integration, engagement in home community, (lack of) investment in livelihoods, education etc.
  - Unfulfilled migration aspirations of larger number of people may hamper (human, economic, political) development and social cohesion of home societies.
Thank you very much for your interest!

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