

Reflections on migration in the Global South



INTRODUCTION

by [Tobias Schwarz](#), [Andrea Hollington](#), [Oliver Tappe](#), [Tijo Salverda](#) (GSSC)

How can we achieve a better understanding of the variations in international migration to, from, and within the Global South? To facilitate a dialogue about this topic, we asked a number of contributors to write or to provide a video statement about their region of expertise. To some we explicitly posed the following question: Is it possible to distinguish current or historical experiences or patterns of migration in the Global South that differ from patterns in the Global North?

To affirm this central question implies a commonly shared migration experience in the Global South, at least in contrast to ostensibly different patterns in the North. Arguments in favor could rely on the assumption that international migration within/from the Global South was and continues to be the result of unequal distribution of economic resources and of the broader post-colonial power relations on a global scale. This draws on, among other things, histories of colonialism and exploitation, experiences of slavery and bonded labor, and also partly on ideological solidarities or political collaborations between countries within the Global South. The counterposition brings forward the argument that specifically Southern migration patterns are implausible, in light of either a great empiric diversity within the juxtaposed categories North and South, or because of the world's profound global connectedness, both historically and current, which renders such categories (next to) meaningless.

The statements assembled in this issue of *Voices from Around the World* strive to establish a better understanding of the different perspectives on international migration across the globe. To do so, we privilege perspectives on the Global South, as an attempt to counter the hegemony of research on the classic countries of international immigration – the USA, Canada, Australia, and Western Europe.

Even those who support the claim that patterns of migration in the Global South differ from those in the Global North are ambivalent about the implications of this statement. As an anthropologist devoted to in-depth case studies, Andrew Gardner is critical of making comparisons beyond one's own region of expertise, and also reluctant to speak of patterns typical for the Global South. The Arab Gulf States themselves, he points out, are not at all 'typical', but unique (just imagine: 90 percent of Qatar's inhabitants are foreign workers). He prefers to think instead of a broad diversity of contemporary migration systems. But still he sees much of that systemic diversity as being located in the Global South, while, in his view, Northern migration policies are more 'patterned' due to their longer history of mutual references and standardization.

This view is seconded by Michaela Pelican. When asked about specific features of migration in the Global South, she points to the informality of the practices of African emigrants. Many African traders move into and out of their international destinations in the Persian Gulf and in China without gaining the formal status of settled immigrants. More affordable ways to cross borders, greater informality, and increased flexibility seem to her to be particular characteristics of South-South migration.

Guita Hourani and Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous take for granted that profound differences between "Northern" and "Southern" parameters of immigration/asylum policy exist. They argue, however, against judging policies in the South from the perspective of the North. The International Labour Organization, the International Organization of Migration, and the Swiss Development Cooperation actively intervene, with their Northern concepts, in the Middle Eastern refugee crisis, but the institutions' suggestions are ill-equipped for the challenges at hand. Instead, as Hourany & Sensenig-Dabbous argue, it is precisely the "Global South approach to migration and asylum" that has enabled some countries in the MENA region to absorb disproportionately large numbers of refugees.

In his contribution, Adam K. Webb engages with an exemplary, distinctly non-Western pattern of immigration policy. He focusses on the often

explicitly racist exclusion from immigration that abounds in the legislation of many Asian states. While there are many studies of immigrant selection and exclusion by Western countries – most prominently of 19th and 20th century US immigration acts and the “White Australia” policy – few works are looking for patterns of such institutionalized forms of non-Western racism. Examining states in the Persian Gulf, and in East- and Southeast Asia, Webb argues that scholars can no longer neglect the fact that their immigration policies treat foreign immigrants as transient guests who should be grateful to be allowed in, if at all, and calls for a global debate about how to soften boundaries instead of hardening them.

Loren Landau reminds us not to see case studies on the South simply as “deviations” from an ostensible norm that has been modelled around “Northern” or “Western” cases. He points to the fact that scholars from the South are underrepresented when it comes to theory-building, and calls for “a conversation between Southern specificity and global theorizing”.

Indeed, Min Zhou gives an example of “gaps” in the current (Western-biased) theories about migration. She first points out that Asia is a large continent with very diverse experiences of migration, yet most countries in South and Southeast Asia are both receiving and sending societies, so the patterns with regards to the consequences of emigration and the way in which immigrants are incorporated are not the same as they are in the North. She mentions Singapore as an example: Contrary to the typical Western pattern where immigrants are required to assimilate to a “core group”, this society self-defines as “multiracial” and stresses that there is no such dominant culture. Some of the contributors argue that regional patterns are indeed distinguishable, but still stress their embeddedness within larger (or even global) configurations. Amarjit Kaur describes historical and contemporary migration flows in Southeast Asia and argues that this regional pattern even appears across historical periods. During the 19th century, Southeast Asia became integrated into a globalized system of production and trade, which also facilitated massive migration flows of mainly unskilled laborers from southern China and South India to Southeast Asia. From the 1970s on-

wards, less-skilled foreign workers (as well as highly educated migrants) again became of crucial importance to some Southeast Asian economies (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand).

Adapa Satyanarayana adds an Indian perspective to this. He looks at the linkages between South India and particularly Burma, Malaysia, and the Gulf States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He argues that in this period, Asian migration was comparable in scale to trans-Atlantic migration. In other words, the South Asian regional system has to be considered part of a globalizing migration pattern.

In an interview, Vincent Houben also reflects on the question of whether there is a shared migration experience in the Global South. From his perspective as a historian of Southeast Asia he presents strong arguments for approaching North and South as historically connected (mainly through the colonial organization of un-free labor migration), which makes it difficult to theorize two distinguishable patterns. On top of that, he notices an increasing blurring of this dividing line between North and South today.

Ibrahim Awad, who works on the Middle East, makes a similar point. From his perspective, each and every regional migration movement has to be understood as an element of a larger, and ultimately global, system. He points to the example of the emergence of nation states: the drawing of new state borders continues to cause much human displacement, and is often directly influenced by the interest of big international players.

Noting that European politicians (or more generally, those in the rich West) on the one hand praise mobility, while on the other hand seeing immigrants from Africa as a “predatory inconvenience”, Francis Nyamnjoh also argues that taking into account the history of (neo-) colonialism is crucial in order to understand today's pattern of migration in a deeply unequal world.

Finally, some answer our central question emphatically in the negative. Alejandro Grimson decidedly rejects a comparison between patterns of the South and the North, because to him these are overgeneralizing categories that obscure differences between migration processes all over the world. First, he says, there are some similarities across large regions that span the North-South divide. Second, there are differences within “the South” in some regions,

particularly when migration is concerned. In Latin America, for example, there would be various migration patterns rather than just one. Jorge Durand also outlines the existence of regional migration systems within the Americas, and stresses the diversity between migration patterns of nearby countries: some receive immigration, some experience complex configurations of emigration, others are primarily transit countries. But in his view, in the Americas the northern and southern parts must be seen as elements of an integrated system.

He therefore considers a conceptual distinction between North and South to be of little use.

Tobias Schwarz is puzzled by how statistics on international migration are often visualized, for instance when the total amount of “South-North” migration is presented in a diagram, or when continents are taken as the basic components of a bar chart. In his contribution he reflects upon the effects caused by the use of different ways of visualizing the statistics of migration, and rejects North/South as suitable units of comparison.

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE

Interview with Andrew Gardner ([Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Puget Sound](#)) about labor migration to the Arab Gulf states. The interview was conducted by Tobias Schwarz.

Tobias Schwarz: Prof. Gardner, you are an anthropologist working on transnational labor migrants from Asia, Africa, and other parts of the Middle East to the Gulf States. Could you briefly outline the main characteristics of (labor) migration to the Arabian Peninsula?

Andrew Gardner: I can try. First of all, there is a publication (<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/sdd-07-2.pdf>) I bumped into some years ago that suggests the Gulf States (that is, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman) comprise the third-largest transnational destination for labor migration in the contemporary world — after Europe and North America. While I'm not so interested in counting transnational migrants, I think this assertion really captures a fundamental fact about labor migration to the Arab Gulf states: For tens of millions of migrants and tens of millions of households, most of which are scattered across South Asia and Southeast Asia, the hydrocarbon-rich states of the Arabian Peninsula figure prominently in the limited economic options they face. And considering how cyclical these migrations often are, the number of impacted households is actually much larger — every year millions of migrants return home and millions more of new migrants stream to the region.

TS: Can you describe the typical experience of a labor migrant to the Gulf?

AG: Over years of ethnographic research, I've really had to embrace the diversity of pathways that migrants follow to the Arabian Peninsula. But typically, potential migrants pay US \$1000, US \$2000, and sometimes even more to a labor broker in the sending state. That money "purchases" an entry ticket into this transnational migration system, in the form of a two-year labor contract that secures the migrant's employment. The money paid for this contract often delves into household savings, and it often involves mortgaging the productive assets of

the migrant's household (imagine, for example, mortgages on agricultural land). The labor broker himself keeps some portion of that money. The remainder makes its way to the employer or his proxies in the Gulf States. As researchers, we have very little insight into this particular junction of the migration process. But importantly, those debts remain in place in the sending state.

When the transnational migrant arrives in the Gulf States, he or she might encounter all sorts of different situations, and no summary can really capture the diversity of those experiences. Indeed, my [own ethnographic work](#) has attempted to portray that variability, or at least fragments of it. At best, the migrant prospers in his or her work, repays the loan paid to a labor broker back home, remits monies with regularity, and secures a second employment contract for a lower cost. But all sorts of things can go wrong. In a [recent large-scale survey](#), we determined that the non-payment of promised wages, improper documentation, and passport confiscation were common features of these transnational migrants' experiences in Qatar. And while those problems are commonplace, more significant problems — and combinations of those problems — are also common.

TS: I assume that many of the hardships the migrants face are somehow related to the sponsorship system?

AG: Yes. Researchers and scholars (myself included) theorize that the extraordinary variability in migrants' experiences in the Gulf States results from the *kafala* — the sponsorship system that governs migration to the Arab Gulf states. In essence, the *kafala* distributes portions of the right and responsibility of governing foreign migrants to those migrants' employers. Employers are typically citizens, or those citizen-sponsors' proxies. As a result of this arrangement, the transnational labor migrant is locked to a particular job, and her or his fate depends heavily on the on the actions (or inactions) of that employer. From another angle, the states themselves have divested significant portions of the responsibility for governing their vast foreign workforces. The divestiture of this responsibility to citizen-sponsors explains why some migrants' experiences in the Gulf answer

their financial dreams, while, for others, migration results in horribly difficult years abroad and a financial cataclysm for their households back home.

TS: Is the kafala system really a suitable foundation for the immigration policy of a country so badly in need of many cheap laborers?

AG: This system is not static. After decades of existence, the unfree labor market structured by the *kafala* has been normalized throughout the region. Potential migrants expect to pay for their labor contracts, and employers expect to govern and control their workforce in ways that are somewhat unusual elsewhere in the contemporary world. It's also important not to lose sight of the extraordinary proportions of migrants in the Gulf States. In Qatar, for example, more than nine out of ten residents is a foreign worker. But assimilation is not really central in the broader migrant agenda in the Gulf States, and naturalization is not possible for migrants there (see [van Waas' recent paper](#) for an overview). The inflexibility of this unfree labor market is also a significant challenge for the development of the Gulf economies.

Responses, however, have emerged. Many transnational labor migrants are employed by "manpower agencies", an arrangement that preserves the control and governance of the foreign workforce, but allows that workforce to be rented to particular companies or concerns. There is also a substantial population of labor migrants operating under "free visas", an arrangement in which foreign migrants regularly pay a sponsor who allows them to pursue variable employment as they see fit. These are two avenues by which the inflexibility of the *kafala* is circumvented by labor and employers.

Perhaps that yields enough of a sketch of this migration system to compare it with other migrations systems in the contemporary world and in history. After years of ethnographic fieldwork, I really came to understand these migrations to Arabia as fragments of a *migration system*, with many interrelated pieces and parts distributed across the continents adjoining the Middle East. And after exploring this migration system for more than a decade, I've begun to describe it as a *migration industry*. [William Walters' work](#) led me to that idea. Terming it a *migration industry* draws attention to its systemic proper-

ties, to the presence of profit-seeking motives throughout that system, and to the (human) resources that system depends upon.

A few random notes in addition: It's best not to lose sight of the extraordinary proportions of migrants in these destinations. In Qatar, for example, more than nine out of ten residents are foreign workers. And it should be mentioned that naturalization and citizenship are not possible for migrants in the Gulf States, and that assimilation is not really central in the broader migrant agenda there. That yields a very interesting and unusual sociocultural brew. But that's another complicated and multifaceted topic!

TS: Would it be an exaggeration to call this current labor migration regime a unique system, compared to other regions of the world?

AG: As a researcher and scholar, I have been so immersed in exploring this particular migration system that I've devoted insufficient time to building a good foundation for the sort of comparison your question requests. I can make a couple of observations, however, that might illuminate such comparisons. As I mention in the last chapter of my book [City of Strangers](#), it was more than fifteen years ago that I first encountered a group of Indian transnational labor migrants abandoned by their employer. They dwelled in crowded rooms with beds pressed against all walls, they faced the non-payment of the salaries promised to them, and their families back at home suffered under the substantial debts they had incurred to send the migrant abroad in the first place. This is a scenario I would come to know well in the Gulf, but this first encounter occurred years before I set foot on the Arabian Peninsula. That first encounter was in a dog-eared motel on a highway in Southern Louisiana – in the heart of America's oilpatch. The simple message here, I think, is that these sorts of arrangements and exploitations are recurring features of contemporary migration and mobility, and are neither consigned to the Arabian Gulf States nor to the Global South.

I think these systemic and exploitative relations are also not consigned to the contemporary era. In our session concerning labor contracts at the recent [GSSC conference](#), the parallels between the contemporary migration system I described

and various colonial era forms of forced labor, slavery, and coolie conscription were striking – readily discernible in Oliver Tappe’s work on the history of coolie labor in New Caledonia, in Alexander Keese’s work on the history of forced labor in Southern Africa, and Vincent Huber’s work on historical labor relations in Java. To me, these parallels and continuities reveal the enduring and foundational nature of the forces at work. I think the geography of those forces and powers is less territorialized than in previous eras. Alternatively, I think many of us can see the global South in our own backyards, or infused into the commodities, products, and peoples that move about our world.

I do recognize that while these migrations and the forces that govern them reveal some universal and deterritorialized characteristics, they inevitably draw upon local customs, cultures, and histories. The universal qualities, tendencies and compulsions that pervade our world system are actualized in real places – in real and diverse social and cultural settings, each of which is partially organized and governed within the container of the nation-state. The patterns I see in the Gulf migration system point to these global and seemingly universal forces, but those forces are recognizably articulated and materialized in the very real circumstances of contemporary Arabia. But the infusion or evolution of any particular migration system, in dialectic with local norms, histories, and customs, is also counterbalanced by the agency woven into many contemporary mobilities: Malaysia, India, or Kuwait, consider a potential Nepalese migrant. Hong Kong or Kuwait, weigh a young potential migrant in the Philippines.

In conclusion, I think the empirical pursuit of an understanding of the diversity of contemporary migration systems is an invaluable academic task, and much of that systemic diversity can be found in the Global South.

Interestingly, however, my example from Louisiana was in the Global North. And the Arab Gulf States themselves certainly challenge the boundaries and thresholds of any geographical conception of the Global South. Patterns certainly adhere more to migrations in the Global North, a result, I think, of standardization, modernization, development, and interconnectedness.



Forthcoming/Imagined Modernity: An image on a fence in Doha, Qatar (2012). These computer-generated images of the future proliferate in Doha, and provide a window to the imagined social terrain of the forthcoming future.

TS: You’ve mentioned the enormous number of foreigners in the Gulf States, and pointed to the exclusive immigration policy there that differs widely from policies of immigrant incorporation in “Western” countries of immigration. I wonder if excluding immigrant workers almost entirely from access to the social and political life would not over time undermine social cohesion?

AG: I think it definitely does undermine social cohesion, and that observation is indeed central to the thesis I’ve crafted for the new manuscript I’m currently drafting. The more I think about the idea of social cohesion, however, the more wary I become. Perhaps it is the longstanding anthropological concern with ethnocentricity, but I’m wary of the valorization of social cohesion that permeates many contemporary scholarly conversations. The value of social cohesion amidst contemporary diversities is one that has been developed and articulated in western social science, the western public sphere, and in a western (and democratic) political context. What portion of our understanding of social cohesion – and our high estimation of its value – is a product of the predominant forms of migration that we’ve historically witnessed in Europe and North America?

With some exceptions (such as the Native American population that occupied my continent centuries ago), the migrations we’ve collectively digested almost ubiquitously consist of fragmentary immigrant minorities assimilated into a much larger majority society. So what portion of

the value we attribute to social cohesion is tied to that historical experience, the democratic foundations in which it evolved, and the particular arrangements of state, citizen, and nation that predominate in Western Europe and North America? This is not meant as a justification for the system that has emerged in the Arab Gulf States, but rather meant to exemplify the care we need to take in assessing diverse migrations.

TS: I agree that I was not sufficiently aware of the normative grounding of my last question. Let me ask more specifically about the immigration policies: Do you think they might become dysfunctional and hence less restrictive in the future? Or is this system stable enough to be maintained for generations to come?

AG: I think that this system is inevitably unstable. It is driven by the hydrocarbon wealth these nations possess (and contingent on that wealth, I think). Even amidst that wealth, however, other changes are afoot. Most of the GCC states are incrementally bringing themselves into alignment with the systemic norms and frameworks that shape migrations in Europe and North America. Attitudes about migrants, and about human rights more broadly, are also rapidly evolving on the Arabian Peninsula, with a noticeable generational shift in those attitudes. Employers, and the economies more broadly, would benefit from more labor mobility, although this attitude has yet to coalesce as a movement. The Gulf States continue to struggle with building the vast institutional framework to govern and regulate the status quo of migration in the region. Governing the detritus of the *kafala* is, perhaps, an impossible task. So while I think that change is inevitable, I also think social cohesion is a problematic goal, particularly when promoted by scholars and others in the long-developed world.

Interestingly, however, while naturalization and assimilation are never aspirations for the Gulf

States and their citizenries, there is a form of social cohesion that is visibly promoted. That social cohesion is foremost a class-based conceptualization of social cohesion, albeit inflected with ethnicity and nationality. Visitors and foreign residents to the Gulf States are familiar with the proliferation of billboards, dioramas, scale models, and architectural drawings that portray the future that will soon arrive. In these images of the future, local Arabs predominate, but they mix with a refined minority population of computer-generated foreigners. This fits with the overarching long-term plans by which these nations frame the present: labor migrants are a temporary demographic feature of the present. After their cities are constructed, this labor force will return home, and the post-oil cities will function as cosmopolitan hubs in a knowledge-based global economy.



Forthcoming/Imagined Modernity: This computer-generated image portrays Msheireb, an urban redevelopment of a historic district in the center of Doha.

For more than a decade, Andrew Gardner has worked on transnational migrants and the Gulf Arab societies that host them. His most recent publications include [“Tribalism, Identity and Citizenship in Contemporary Qatar”](#).

SPACE FOR INFORMAL ACTIVITIES

Interview with Michaela Pelican ([Junior Professor of Cultural and Social Anthropology, University of Cologne](#), Germany) on African Migrants to China and the Middle East. The interview was conducted by Tobias Schwarz.

Tobias Schwarz: Michaela, what is the main focus of your research?

Michaela Pelican: I'm working on migration from Cameroon to the Gulf States – in particular to Dubai – and to China – in particular to Guangzhou. Both cities, Dubai and Guangzhou, are centres for trade, and this attracts migrants from many parts of Africa. My focus is on Cameroonians who live in these two cities.

TS: South-South migration is not a new phenomenon, yet the migrants from Cameroon you are following to China and to the Gulf are in a particular new situation: China has not received many international immigrants in its past; also, Dubai has become a destination for migrants from Africa relatively recently. Can you briefly outline the basic characteristics of these two migration routes?

MP: That's true. Both migration routes started only in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to become more relevant as a result of the closing borders to Europe and the economic growth in the Gulf as well as in China. At the same time, many job opportunities disappeared in Cameroon due to economic recession and the effects of structural adjustment programs. Hence many people were looking to find other opportunities, often within Cameroon in the informal sector. But there was also a vision for going abroad, basically within Africa to other neighboring African countries, such as to Gabon or South Africa, or to other centers where they could find more economic opportunities.

As I pointed out in an earlier paper ([Pelican and Tatah 2009](#)), Dubai and China emerged as an extension of these economic opportunities abroad. So, most people who are going to either of these destinations are first and foremost looking for trade opportunities. The destinations in Asia are new for immigration from Africa, because beforehand only a few African traders would mostly go to Shanghai or Hong Kong,

Thailand, and Singapore. It was not that such routes did not exist before, but they were run by few, individual traders. The same applies to Dubai.

Only recently, the latter became a very attractive destination. In the 1990s, more people started to bring goods, such as mobile phones from Dubai, and it became known as a center for trade. Therefore, more and more people became interested in this trade route. On top of that, the immigration regulations there are much more liberal than they are in Europe. Basically you can go there on a tourist or short-term business visa and try your luck, either to buy goods and transport them home, or to find a job. This is what many young Cameroonians then started to do.

China emerged alongside as a similar destination for the same kinds of reasons. The huge difference is that in Dubai people can speak English, and this makes it easier in terms of finding your way around. China became attractive for those who have a lot of capital to invest and who would go directly to factories to command the production, and then export the goods back to Cameroon and neighboring African countries. So you find different types of migrant traders: those with limited capital and an interest in buying smaller quantities tend to go to Dubai, while those with more money and pre-arranged business contacts venture into China. This is the perspective from Cameroon.

TS: Can you describe more in detail the composition of the Cameroonian emigrant population in Dubai?

MP: I started doing fieldwork in Dubai in 2008 and I have been there three times – in 2008, 2011, and 2014 – and witnessed some developments. As compared to migrants from South and Southeast Asia, the number of Africans is relatively small; about two thousand Cameroonians live in Dubai on a more permanent basis. People travel in and out more frequently, but those who are there on a permanent basis are relatively few, because in Dubai you can get a work contract for no more than two years, then you have to renew it. As I have described in more detail in a recent article ([Pelican 2014](#)), many are working as intermediaries for traders,

helping them to buy their goods, finding hotels, making deals, acquiring their visas, sending money in and out. Also, over time, more and more people have got into the formal economy and some of them have employment in hospitals, malls, banks and so on. So you can see that something like an established labor migration route between the Gulf and Cameroon has been emerging. I also noticed more and more travel agencies that offer visa to Dubai at a relatively moderate price, even by Cameroonian standards, and even more so compared to the cost of a visa to Europe.

TS: And how large is the community in Guangzhou?

MP: I have visited Guangzhou in 2013, 2014, and 2015. The Cameroonian community in China is probably about the same size as in Dubai, but you can find three main categories: businesspeople, students (those with scholarships offered by the Chinese government, but also self-sponsored students), and English language teachers. The latter are professionals who were often also teachers back in Cameroon. They were recruited either by the Chinese government or the Confucius Institute, or arrived on their own initiative; that is, they just went to China and found schools to work in there. Hence this is a more diversified group, and their individual experiences are also somewhat different. I mentioned before the language difference: if you want to get along in China, especially in more rural areas and not only in the biggest cities, speaking Chinese is a must. This puts considerable stress on the Cameroonian migrants.

On top of that, the number of foreigners in China is very small, below 2 percent of the whole population, so you can imagine the kind of attention the African migrants attract. Also in the Gulf States, Africans are a minority. But in Dubai for example, the proportion of the population comprised by foreigners is 85 percent, so even while only a very small proportion are African, it still generates a different feeling of multiculturalism, internationality and so on, if you have people from India, Pakistan, the Philippines and many other parts of Asia, from Europe, etc. In contrast, the situation in China is totally different. Black Africans are very visible foreigners,

and they attract a lot of attention in public. In Guangzhou, the population has become somewhat used to having Africans there for quite some time now, because Guangzhou is a trade hub and because of the Canton fair which attracts foreigners from all over the world. There is also an Arab community, so they are in some ways more open to having foreigners than in the more rural parts of China. But still, the Africans attract a lot of attention – sometimes positive curiosity, but often they experience it negatively. So it is indeed quite challenging for them to be there. Some of these challenges have also been reflected in the [photo-exhibition that I have organized together with the Chinese photographer Li Dong](#) at the University of Cologne in autumn last year. Interestingly, however, I found that there are two major and quite different impressions Cameroonian migrants have outlined in their conversations with me: One is that China seems culturally and linguistically so different, and so difficult to adapt to, that you cannot feel at home there. On the other hand, there are also those who have learned Chinese and have found their way into Chinese society, and who much more appreciate being there and benefitting from the economic opportunities that are offered in China.

TS: Having talked about a specific experience of South-South migration: Do you think there are characteristics of migration in the South that stand out – and which are probably even typical of the Global South – compared to the Global North?

MP: I can only talk about migration by Africans to destinations in Asia – both located in the Global South. Yes, we can see a pattern, in that there is a stress on entrepreneurship. People are trying to find ways to establish themselves economically, which also includes the informal sector. In Europe or in the USA, the informal sector is much more regulated, and harder to enter. I have the impression that these destinations – like the Gulf States and China, but also other destinations in South East Asia – are now becoming more and more interesting for Cameroonians and others, precisely because these countries' immigration regulations are not yet very fixed or exclusionary, at least where entry as a trader or a "tourist" is concerned. So you

can find ways to go there on relatively easy ways in a sense that the visa is not as expensive and the restrictions are not as high as they are, for instance, for the EU. There is also more space for informal activities. From the perspective of African migrants, I think this is specific to the Global South, as compared to the Global North.

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MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH. THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA AS A REFLECTION OF POLICY ALTERNATIVES IN THE FIELDS OF SECURITY, LABOR MARKET, AND SOCIAL WELFARE PLANNING

by Guita Hourani & Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous
([Lebanese Emigration Research Center](#), Notre Dame University, Lebanon).

Is it possible to distinguish between patterns of migration in the Global South and in the Global North? If so, which indicators should we choose to compare the two? Are the presence of a Northern style active labor market policy, a multi-stakeholder dialogue process, and a comprehensive social welfare system the proper benchmarks for assessing the success or failure of policy makers in these two parts of the world?

Migration and refugee patterns have traditionally been explained by examining the impact of push and pull factors. More recently, a network approach has become prevalent, highlighting the roles played by diaspora communities and extended families, linking the Global South and Global North. Accordingly, migrants and asylum seekers are no longer seen as mere objects of economic, security-related, ecological, or cultural developments, encouraging them to leave one region and migrate or escape to another. They are also studied as the subjects of their own fate, at least to the extent that the respective context allows them to be so.

The societies of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are currently in a state of turmoil, which has accentuated the already existing deficits on the part of their governments with respect to tackling population flows. Whereas the states of the Arab Gulf have attempted to tighten their control over the large numbers of migrant workers in their region and some countries in the Maghreb are cooperating successfully with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in order to better coordinate migration to the EU, countries like Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, and Syria have become transit routes for – as well as the source of – unregulated migration to the North. In this context, Turkey plays a special role as an aspiring EU member state. Although it is an important country of origin for labor migration to the EU and –

more recently – has become a popular transit route for illegal migration to the West, its embeddedness within the European accession mechanism, the '*acquis communautaire*', places it squarely within the logic of Northern policy development and thus outside the context of this assessment of the Global South. Turkey does illustrate, however, that a Middle Eastern country can develop, given adequate support and the appropriate policy parameters, in the direction of a Northern society based on rule of law.

Following Northern logic, any analysis of migration patterns would assume they are strongly influenced by declared governmental policy goals, corresponding legislation, and transparent implementation. Accordingly, this would lead the casual observer to conclude that many MENA countries have lost control of population flows within and across their borders. From the perspective of the North, any government migration regime which cannot control its borders, register migrants and refugees in the labor market, adequately provide infrastructure services to foreigners living legally within the country, and repatriate those aliens it wishes to get rid of, must be assessed as being either weak or non-existent; one of the indicators of a failed state. From the perspective of the South, however, this is not the case.

Two attributes of policy development and implementation in the South often elude observers from the North. Firstly, taking the MENA region as a case in point, many governments have no intention of providing blanket social welfare services to their indigenous populations. The state is primarily concerned with security issues, i.e. with protecting itself against its own people. When available, quality public health care and education, reliable and affordable access to water, electricity, and waste management, and comprehensive unemployment and retirement benefits are utilized to secure the loyalty of specific segments of the population within the context of a patron-client relationship. A country that only selectively cares for its own people cannot be expected to provide benefits to the migrants and refugees in its midst. Secondly, the traditional assumption amongst policy analysts is that political systems develop policy by first initiating an agenda-setting process, followed by decision-making within the legislative

arena, and finally implementing the laws passed – for better or worse – by the executive branch of government. In the MENA region, as in many parts of the Global South, this scenario does not hold true. The weakest link in the chain of policy development is the actual execution of governmental decisions by state authorities. In countries with a semblance of democracy, such as Lebanon or Tunisia, the will of the people can be freely expressed in the marketplace of ideas. Legislature often follows up on these demands and codifies them into well-crafted laws, based on the French or Anglo-American legal traditions. However, once passed, this legislation is rarely implemented effectively, leading to the suspicion that there was no intention to properly implement it in the first place. A culture of impunity is the norm, rule of law the exception.

The net result of this situation is a *de facto* system in which a laissez-faire approach to migrant and refugee welfare is combined with a securitization of government policy towards its respective foreign populations. The challenges to many of the authoritarian regimes in the MENA during the Arab Spring as of 2011, combined with the protracted conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, facilitated the rise of the Islamic State or “Daesh”, as it is referred to in the MENA. The genuine security threats emanating from organized terrorism in the MENA have intensified the logic of state security considerations with respect to migration. There has been no proportional attempt to deal with the human security challenges facing foreigners in the region.

This Global South approach to migration and asylum has enabled the countries of the MENA region to absorb disproportionately large numbers of refugees, first from Sudan and Iraq and more recently from Syria. Whereas Turkey – as an EU accession state – and Jordan – as one of the few authoritarian regimes in the region which has gone unchallenged by the Arab Spring – have dealt with the influx of Syrians systematically through the use of mandatory camp settlements, the rest of the region has assumed a “free market” mentality. This is particularly evident in Lebanon, which has an indigenous population of 4 million and a refugee population of between 1.5 and 2 million. The secret of Lebanon’s success is the transfer of

responsibility for the refugees from the central government to the municipal level. However, local governments throughout the country have only been able to provide rudimentary services to their refugee populations because of a massive influx of foreign aid supplied directly to the local level by NGOs, international donors, and individual foreign governments. By pumping huge amounts of revenue into the economy to service the refugees’ emergency needs, international aid organizations have distorted the socio-economic balance in the country, leading to a uniquely Lebanese form of “Dutch disease”.

In conclusion, it would seem that the very absence of the Northern parameters governing migration and refugee policy in the Global South has enabled many countries in the MENA to cope with numbers of refugees which would have easily overwhelmed countries in the Global North. Currently, various international players, such as the International Labor Organization, the International Organization of Migration, and the Swiss Development Cooperation, are attempting to counter this trend. By encouraging the countries in the MENA region to adopt Northern policy paradigms, they hope to support an active approach to labor-market development, a comprehensive social welfare regime, and a multi-stakeholder approach to governance. One of the main goals of these well-intentioned Global North programs is to give the migrants themselves a say in policy development and implementation and thus promote social justice in the region. Should the initiatives of the ILO, IOM, and Swiss government in the MENA be successful, they might very well undermine the laissez-faire mentality which has enabled the region to cope successfully with otherwise overwhelming migration and refugee challenges up until now.

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BECOMING AN IMMIGRANT COUNTRY: DOUBLE STANDARDS, EAST AND WEST

by Adam K. Webb ([Resident Professor of Political Science at the Hopkins-Nanjing Center, Nanjing University, China](#))

What is an “immigrant country”? Places with a long history of large-scale settlement — America, Canada, Argentina, and Australia, for example — surely are. Others in Europe have also become so in recent decades, even though many of them, like Germany, begrudged admitting as much until not long ago.

When we look beyond the West and its offshoots, to Asia, the idea of not being an “immigrant country”, and not planning on becoming one, is deeply entrenched. As I noted in a recent article (“[Not an Immigrant Country?](#)”), countries in East Asia and the Persian Gulf insist that the standards of relative openness and multiculturalism that have gradually prevailed in the West — at least as an ideal — do not apply to them. Double standards abound. In Japan and China, business establishments matter-of-factly turn away foreigners (on Post-Mao China: [Sautman 1994](#); on Japan: Diène 2006). In the Emirates and Kuwait, generations of guest workers and their families are excluded from citizenship (on Gulf States’ illiberal policies: [Weiner 1990](#)). The chasm between the national and the foreign, and the cavalier comfort with which stereotypes are applied in policy and daily practice, are striking in much of Asia. One would have to go back to the early twentieth century in Europe to find anything comparable (on patterns of Asian racism in general: [Washington 1990](#)).

Asian societies get away with things that have become unacceptable in the late modern West. There are many reasons for this double standard. Asian countries’ recovery of confidence has often revolved around playing up their sovereignty and distinctness from the West. Nation-building has drawn bright lines between citizens and outsiders. Postcolonialism has also, in many cases, been not so much about universal equality as about securing the dominance of national élites and national majorities within their own space. Tribalism is taken for granted.

Many in the West typically either overlook non-Western racism or treat it with kid gloves. Well-meaning observers who favor cosmopolitanism, liberal equality, and open borders in the West tread lightly when they encounter problematic practices elsewhere. Either they suggest that the process of opening must run its course, however slowly, and that for outsiders prematurely to critique those who were once on the receiving end of European imperialism would be to pick on the underdog (on selective narratives about who commits racism and what duties are owed over its legacies: [Bhargava 2007](#)) or they hold the non-West to a permanently different standard (on supposed differences between e.g. Japanese exclusion of immigrants and Western racism: [Carens 1992](#)). Perhaps countries that do not pretend to be open are in a different league from those that do. Or perhaps the West’s colonial past imposes unique burdens: immigration might be the consequence of earlier empire-building. These fumbling distinctions unravel at the margins, of course. Sweden and Switzerland are expected to become immigrant countries even though they had no empires; and the majority of Asian countries that have ratified high-minded UN conventions against discrimination are forgiven for not really meaning it.

Perhaps it will be said that such double standards do not greatly matter. But with the rise of new Asian powers to more global influence, hard questions must be asked. Dismissive protestations that there is no racism in Asia can no longer be taken at face value. As economic and diplomatic influence shifts eastward, and more and more foreigners encounter Asian societies firsthand, practices on the ground gain attention. These societies already have immigrants — from Pakistani laborers in Dubai, to Nigerian traders in Guangzhou — who can no longer be treated as transient guests who should be grateful for short-term opportunities. The kind of scrutiny that the West has attracted in recent decades with regard to race and immigration inevitably must extend to Asia.

This scrutiny is also imperative because of the implications for global order. The ideas about national identity that Asian societies hold will spill over into the kind of world that they will

help shape in this century. When we scratch the surface, there are two competing images of world order taking shape.

One is a continued trend toward openness, a flattening of boundaries, and an emerging global citizenship. It would build on the best of experiments like the European Union and UN-ASUR. The hard boundaries of sovereignty, and migratory restrictions, would eventually look like an aberration in human history, as the world returns to the long-term pattern of diverse and fluid open space. It would look like the old cosmopolitan empires, but on a grander scale, flatter, and with rule of law.

The other vision would harden boundaries, and shore up the Westphalian state as the permanent organizing principle of the global landscape for generations to come. The West's shift to more inclusive ideas of citizenship lately would be a mere quirk in one area of the world. Human beings would be defined by their nationality. Our great-grandchildren would still live in a world of discrimination, visas, and deportations. And the shift of influence from some corners of the world to others would mean the rise and fall of collectivities, with all of the stereotyping and hierarchies that tend to follow. This is, among the more nationalistic currents of opinion in Asia, the meaning of the "Asian century". Dignity requires walls. Bide one's time and ride out openness, because those preaching it will not last.

In this contest of visions, how consciously the questions are asked matters a great deal. Ignoring non-Western racism does the world no favors in the long run. To indulge postcolonial

double standards for the sake of supposed gentleness would mean, as power shifts, sleepwalking into a much more hard-edged world quite at odds with what liberal idealists really prefer. Tougher and more consistent judgments – calling practices what they are, pressing for change, and binding these countries into an irreversible process of opening while they rise – would be a more genuine mark of respect. It is also a precondition for realizing any model of global citizenship.

Perhaps the most hopeful reality is demographic. The vast majority of the world's population were born after colonialism, so the instincts to tread lightly based on past guilt and past grievances may weaken. Moreover, non-Western racism is not a consistent problem throughout the Global South. Latin America and Africa are much more comfortable with messy diversity, and surveys show that their younger cohorts are quite cosmopolitan ([Furia 2005](#)). Much of the world's demographic and economic growth will be concentrated there in coming decades, and not in the likes of Japan, China, and the Emirates. There is good reason to hope, therefore, that world order can be shaped along lines of openness rather than closure.

By 2100, we are more likely than not to have an "immigrant world", with all the institutional structures to make it work. But getting there would be much surer, and quicker, if the debate about consistency started now in earnest.

Adam K. Webb has recently published an article titled "[Not an Immigrant Country? Non-Western Racism and the Duties of Global Citizenship](#)".

SOUTHERN SPECIFICITY OR SPECIOUS SEPARATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA

by Loren B. Landau ([South African Research Chair on Mobility and the Politics of Diversity, African Centre for Migration & Society, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg](#))

Research on Southern African mobility has generated a field rich in history and global scientific impact. Foundational works on modernization and urbanization stem from its complex processes of urbanization, segregation, and displacement (see, for example, [Mayer 1961](#), [Bozzoli 1988](#); [Colson and others](#)). Exile from apartheid-era South Africa, and the region's independence, civil, and proxy wars have similarly generated extraordinary levels of displacement and robust scholarship ([Lubkeman 2008](#)). Now a space of relative peace and prosperity – by African standards anyway – it is characterized by an unusual mix of declining opportunities in industry and mining coupled with ongoing movements and urbanization. Documenting the social and political products of these movements raises real-world practical concerns (see [Landau, et al, 2013](#)) while providing fodder for conceptually transformatory academic intervention ([Kihato 2013](#); [Ferguson 1999](#); [Landau 2014](#)).

At the most fundamental level, the driving factors for these movements – overlapping quests for protection, profit, or onward passage – do little to distinguish Southern African migration from that occurring elsewhere on the continent or in other regions of the world: the movements of people are predictable and patterned; the motives are mixed; and the consequences are economically, socially and spatially transformatory.

Despite these evident similarities, distinctions are visible in ways that should reshape our epistemological and conceptual approach to mobility. Indeed, across Southern Africa, new immigrants and the recently urbanized increasingly co-[occupy estuarial zones](#) loosely structured by state social policy and hegemonic cultural norms. As people urbanize for the first time in an era of de-industrialization, we are likely to see patterns of movement, solidarity, and exchange that may look familiar but are unlikely to

settle into the kinds of socio-political formations seen historically in “the North”. Looking closely at these areas reveals cracks in the conceptual foundations on which discussions of migrant rights and integration debates are normally premised. The first crack is the host-guest dichotomy, framed as a distinction between nationals and non-citizens. In these sites, few consider themselves local, and nationality is but one axis of difference. The second is the mechanisms for and the desirability of claiming political rights; particularly the centrality of state laws and institutions, and migrants' goals of political membership in a place-bound community. The state continues to matter, but it is one of many actors. To be sure, its primacy is anything but assured.

The question remains whether accepting the necessity of specialized, spatialized analysis warrants a field (or fields) of inquiry delimited by distinctions of “South-South” or “Southern” migration? While we must be wary of Southern cases simply being treated only as deviations from a “Northern” norm, or case studies in global comparative projects, the intellectual and political risks of scholarly ghettoization are too high to draw firm boundaries.

Given the specific question or concern to be addressed, it may well make sense to consider the relationship between labor and mobility in Benin and Brazil, or to compare the management of cultural diversity between Singapore and South Africa. Yet there may be equally or even more compelling reasons to consider the securitization of migration across Africa as part of global trends emerging through the interactions of aid, norms, and interests across regions. Missing these connections –either by treating the “South” on its own, or as a derivative of “Northern” processes, misses the chance to identify universal trends and patterns or to test universalized claims of “global” theory developed largely from a limited set of OECD cases. Given that migration is by definition multi-scalar, any pre-ordained or geographic boundary is ultimately unjustified. For example, as “Northern” states increasingly work beyond the law, or as forms of difference are negotiated in ever more diverse “host” communities, we may ultimately see that Africa has – as the [Comar- rofs](#) suggest – become the site in which to observe the West's future.

There are also significant political consequences of working in ways that distinguish between Northern/global and Southern research and processes. In geographic terms we are likely to constrain Southern researchers, encouraging (or effectively demanding) that they study local or Southern migration patterns, if only because they cannot afford to conduct the global scoping or theorization valued in 'Western' universities. While this might help to create a kind of counter- or autarchic hegemony, it also *de facto* denies them a seat at the table where global theory is discussed. Inasmuch as they engage transregionally, Southern partners will increasingly have to trade their most valuable international resources – legitimacy, "street cred", and local insight – for financial resources, travel opportunities, and prestigious associations with northern partners. In the process they become native informants while allowing those in prestigious, well-resourced universities in the North to synthesize, analyze, theorize, and set the global academic and even policy agendas (see [Zeleza 1996](#); [Chimni 2009](#)).

I take it as self-evident that this relative absence of "Southern" voices in global debates not only diminishes our understanding of the world but allows a relatively privileged, geographically concentrated group of scholars to set global academic agendas. So while we know that the majority of the world's refugees and migrants are located in the South, Southern-based scholars are hard to find in the leading (i.e. most broadly cited) scholarly journals on the topic. Where they appear, it is usually through country case studies or as secondary authors. Rarely do they proffer multi-sited comparative studies, especially ones including multiple countries or regions. So while Northern scholars may struggle to justify work in the global South, Southern- (particularly African-) based researchers often do little but conduct local case studies and policy reviews.

This compromises one of Southern scholars' most significant comparative advantages: the ability to identify what might be invisible or inexplicable to outsiders or to those doing global comparison. (That said, we must be suspicious of relatively elite Southern scholars who make exclusive claims to "local" knowledge). [Schweigman and van der Werf \(1994\)](#) outline one of the dilemmas this raises, a situation they term the Ganuza dilemma, where the absence of a strong, Southern intellectual agenda (or the presence of a highly fragmented one), often creates the space/necessity for Northern partners to dominate decision-making and research directions. At an immediate level this may satisfy all involved, but it does little to overthrow Northern dominance of global academic discourse.

My conclusions are anything but conclusive or definite. Rather, they call for the complementary development of a conversation between Southern specificity and global theorizing. This can provide scholars and activists with the information they need to positively reform policies at the local or national level where it matters most. It will also strengthen Southern scholars' hand in affording them both invaluable local knowledge and the capacity to challenge, and potentially shape, global academic debate. Such an approach will demand a reconsideration of pedagogy and research epistemology, and a willingness to be both deductive and inductive in our concepts and causal inferences. Doing otherwise risks the political and theoretical gains for which we strive.

Loren B. Landau is currently exploring comparative perspectives on how mobility is reshaping the politics of rapidly diversifying and expanding communities; see his [publications here](#).

UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY LABOR MIGRATION PATTERNS AND PROCESSES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

by Amarjit Kaur ([*Emeritus Professor of Economic History, University of New England, Armidale, Australia*](#))

Enduring patterns and processes in South East Asia

From a temporal viewpoint, current labor migration movements in Southeast Asia typically replicate past foreign labor migrations, while labor processes continue to mirror the significance of political-economic relationships in the region. Historically, international labor migration in Southeast Asia is best understood from the perspective of the region's natural resources, demographic situation, and incorporation into the global economy. European imperialism after the 1870s, and the growth of the Atlantic economy were consistent with capitalist expansion and colonization of Southeast Asian states. Subsequently, these states became suppliers of mineral and other natural resources, and were also transformed by substantial waves of labor immigration, primarily from China and India. It is commonly assumed that the Asian migrants comprised only men, who journeyed either as forced or indentured workers to toil in Southeast Asia. This supposition ignores the migration of free men and women into the region. Furthermore, a majority of historians have also taken for granted that Asian migrations, like the Atlantic migrations, ended in 1914, following the onset of World War One. In fact Asian "colonial" migrations continued into the 1940s and also afterwards.

The gap in historical understanding about the different types of labor movement further ignores the enduring patterns and processes connecting past and present migration movements. These observations have also influenced debates on contemporary economic migration in the region. In the 1970s and 1980s, sovereign Southeast Asian states embraced labor-intensive industrialization, and were pulled into the "new" international division of labor. Crucially, most states continue to depend on migrant workers, and their development pathways demonstrate the enduring socio-economic importance of migrant workers to their econo-

mies, as before. Currently, the more successful Southeast Asian states – Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand – actively pursue foreign investment by remaining competitive and promoting their low-waged labor pools and market-friendly policy environments. In order to augment their diminishing less-skilled labor pools, whether for production of labor-intensive goods, or for construction purposes, or to increase women's labor-force participation in the formal economy, these states depend greatly on foreign less-skilled Asian migrant men and women workers. Significantly, a vital change has been in the "Work of Care". The re-ordering of the gendered division of labor and the need to balance demands for care work with equal opportunity for women residents has also led to recruitment of women mainly from South Asia and poorer Southeast Asian states to shoulder the responsibility for the care of the elderly and children. Crucially, a major transnational change reflects the rising demand for professionals and skilled (or knowledge) workers in specific occupational categories. These changes, together with the creation of sub-regional labor markets, epitomize the new manifestations and diversity of migration movements in the region.

Labor Migration and Labor Processes, 1870s -1940s

Southeast Asia's greater integration into the new globalized system of production, trade, and investment flows in the second half of the 19th century resulted in the carving up and redrawing of the region's political map. Six major states were fashioned, namely British Burma, British Malaya, French Indochina, Dutch Indonesia, Spanish (later American) Philippines, and independent Thailand. All the states were mobilized for export production of foodstuffs, industrial crops, stimulants, and minerals to boost the fiscal resources of the home countries. The new economic corridors, which extended from southern China and South India to Southeast Asia, facilitated labor market integration and mass proletarian migrations to Southeast Asia.

The Chinese government did not support Chinese emigration, and consequently Chinese migration comprised two main networks: kinship-based migration, and the credit-ticket or steerage system. Labor brokers were also involved in the second migration network system.

Chinese migrants were predominantly from Fujian and Guangdong Provinces, and their journeys took place via Chinese colonies that had been annexed by the Europeans. These included Hong Kong and Macau and the other Chinese treaty ports that were opened to British and other Western traders, following China's defeat in Chinese-British trade conflicts known as the First and Second Opium Wars. According to McKeown ("Global Migration, 1846-1940", http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_world_history/v015/15.2mckeown.pdf), only a small percentage of Chinese migrants bound for Southeast Asia migrated under indenture contracts. Generally, the European colonizers and the Thai state placed no limits on Chinese migration, though there were a few residential restrictions, for example, in Java.

Organized (and regulated) labor migration generally took place between colonial territories under similar imperial administrations. Accordingly, the India Office and the Malayan administration jointly planned and administered recruitment programs for Indian labor bound for Malaya. This was done under the aegis of the Colonial Office in London. Both governments concentrated on recruitment practices, financing of travel, and transportation of workers to Malaya, where the workers were linked to plantations or public works departments. The British permitted some Indian labor migration to Sumatra (then under Dutch administration) while the Dutch allowed Javanese migration to Malaya. Burma represents a different category because it was governed by the British Indian government and considered part of British India. Thus Indian migration to Burma was within different provinces in British India and hence regarded as an internal movement. The Dutch and the French in the Netherlands Indies and Indochina respectively authorized movements of workers from overpopulated to underpopulated areas in their colonies. According to Huff and Caggiano ("Globalization and Labor Market Integration in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Asia", http://www.gallbladder-research.org/media/media_32242_en.pdf), Burma, Malaya, and Thailand received more than 15 million Chinese and Indian migrants within the period 1881 to 1939.

In the case of Indian migration, private labor brokers/intermediaries were entrusted with the job of facilitating and driving labor migration via two recruitment methods – the indenture system and its variant, the *kangani* system. The indenture recruitment method authorized employers to utilize enforceable, written labor contracts, and migrants were indentured for a fixed period, varying from three to five years (reduced to three years after 1904). Subsequently, rubber planters employed their trusted workers to recruit Indian labor; hence introducing a chain migration outcome based on specific recruitment areas in South India. This system, known as the *kangani* recruitment system, was essentially a personal or informal recruitment system, and it became the preferred recruitment method after 1910. The *kangani* also provided the vital connection between impoverished areas in rural south India and the plantation frontier in Malaya by facilitating Indian migration.

Some women's migration, originally associational, improved when men and women were positioned differently in colonial labor markets. Consequently, task- and gender differentiation roles made women workers a cheaper alternative. For example, in the rubber industry, workers engaged in weeding tasks were paid lower wages than tappers, and hence it was possible to turn this task into a women's task and pay lower wages for "less strenuous" work. Furthermore, the India Office had stipulated that a certain percentage of Indian women be included in the labor hires due to the isolation of plantations. Consequently, the colonial administration was able to overcome the problem of isolation for the men and also lower production costs. Afterwards some overseers/*kangani* functioned as intermediaries/marriage brokers on plantations. Nevertheless, the proportion of Indian women for every 1,000 men in the census years was as follows: 171 (1901); 308 (1911); 406 (1921); 482 (1931) and 637 (1947) (see Kaur, "[Crossing Frontiers: Race, Migration and Borders in Southeast Asia](#)").

Wage differentiation was also prevalent in the tin mining sector. Panning for tin (a recovery method) in the tin tailings mounds was viewed as a more suitable job for women, and facilitated their gainful employment particularly during slumps. (Women were not allowed to enter mines). Thus women's employment and wage-

labor rights were deemed subordinate to those of men. Moreover, this policy enabled the British to achieve their goal of stabilizing the migrant labor force in the two main industries without increasing male migrants' wages. Consequently, the additional family earnings played a central role in achieving the goal of settled communities (see Kaur, "[Indian migrant workers in Malaysia](#)"). This disparity in the pay scales of men and women migrant workers similarly contributed to the continuing gendered migration patterns during the colonial period. Nevertheless, the percentage of women involved was rather small, and did not exceed more than 25 percent of the migrant population. In Malaya for example, the Chinese sex ratio varied from a 70:30 ratio at the beginning of the 1880s to a 75:25 ratio by the end of the 1920s.

Transnational Work and the post-colonial geographies of migration in Southeast Asia

In the 1970s and 1980s international labor migration again became imperative for labor-force growth in Southeast Asia, analogous to the situation in Western industrial democracies. In the more developed Southeast Asian states – Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand – changing economic environments alongside declining fertility levels have underscored continuing dependence on skilled and less-skilled foreign workers (see Kaur, "[On the Move: International Migration in Southeast Asia since the 1980s](#)"). Against the backdrop of closer regional economic integration in the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN) through the ASEAN Economic Community, member states have also developed increasingly selective admission policies for professionals and highly skilled foreign workers and migrants' educational qualifications, skills and networks have become important factors in their movement within ASEAN.

Concurrently, for less-skilled migrants, their journey to Southeast Asia has become an ephemeral experience for them since they are needed, not wanted. Migration is also accepted in return for the money earned for migrants' impoverished families. All three states have instigated managed migration policies to give migrant workers legal status and protection from exploitative labor practices; there are im-

portant policy differences between the three countries.

In Singapore the government, which had initially established its sovereignty in 1960 by prohibiting dual nationality, modified its immigration legislation in 1966 (after independence in 1965). The government also concentrated on building the state's economic foundations and signed bilateral labor agreements for recruitment of temporary guest workers with neighboring South/Southeast Asian states. Concurrently, the state made it easier for professionals and skilled foreign migrants to get permanent residency (and later citizenship) under its "foreign talent" policy. These professionals are allowed to take their families along with them, and are not subject to levies.

Malaysia too utilized the temporary guest-worker migration scheme for employment of less-skilled workers, and signed bilateral agreements (Memoranda of Understanding) between Malaysia and destination countries. In both countries the guest worker programs are essentially two-tiered: they provide incentives for skilled workers, boost circular migration flows among low-skilled workers, and focus on border control regimes. Less-skilled workers are employed in occupations shunned by locals, including the construction, agricultural and fisheries, manufacturing, and service sectors. They are generally paid lower wages than national workers and are denied many of the rights of citizens. They also have to return home on the completion of their contracts; their employment pass is employer- and employment- specific, and they are not allowed to have their families accompany them. The guest worker program, which is dependent on networks, intermediaries and brokerage firms, reinforces wage disparities between host and home countries.

In Thailand, the state's development strategies similarly encouraged the entry of foreign labor migrants. Since foreign investors mainly bankrolled the manufacturing sector, the state allowed these investors to recruit both highly skilled and less-skilled workers. In the case of low-skilled workers, unlike Singapore and Malaysia, the Thai government does not have a comprehensive migration policy that allows for recurrent admissions and has granted work permits to selected countries only (Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos). A large number of these

workers become unregistered because they are restricted to particular provinces. The government also regularly employs a nationality verification (NV) scheme in order to sort out the illegal migration problem. Crucially, all three countries' migration policies and processes for less-skilled migrants have led to migrants' susceptibility to forced labor situations. Thus these states' restrictive migration policies that concentrate on managing and controlling migration, effectively disregard migrants' rights and agency. Consequently, less-skilled workers are often "captured" and held in to detention camps prior to deportation. In Singapore they are "apprehended" and forcibly repatriated by repatriation companies.

Finally, international labor migration in Southeast Asia in recent decades has taken on a new dimension that focuses on the link between

residency and labor needs alongside the relationship between rich and poor nations. The word "immigrant", which normally implies permanent or long-term residence, is no longer considered appropriate for all categories of migrants. It is now routine to use the word "migration" to describe the temporary movement or mobility of less-skilled workers, referred to as "migrants" while skilled migrants are classified as permanent residents or citizens.

Amarjit Kaur is author of "[Wage Labor in Southeast Asia since 1840: Globalisation, the International Division of Labor and Labor Transformations](#)", and co-edited "[Mobility, Labor Migration and Border Controls in Asia](#)" (with Ian Metcalfe), and "[Proletarian and Gendered Mass Migrations](#)" (with Dirk Hoerder).

MIGRATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

by Satyanarayana Adapa (Emeritus Professor of History, Osmania University, Hyderabad, India)

The dominant western migration paradigm tends to privilege Europe-based trans-Atlantic mobility of people, skills, commodities, ideas, culture etc., and undermines the role of intra-Asian migrations in the making of the modern world. The Eurocentric migration studies while prioritizing the role of western capital have also underplayed the role of Asian labor in the emergence of the international capitalist world order and modern globalization (for references on Eurocentric approaches see Adam McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846-1940" (http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_world_history/v015/15.2mckeown.pdf)). Moreover, the emphasis in such studies on the dominating role and influence of the metropolitan industrial world tends to undermine the historical role and significance of non-western regions and regional economic integration through migration. To challenge this assumption, this note addresses some aspects of the process of formation of regional/sub-globalization based on contacts and linkages between Asian countries by exploring the trajectory of migration of South Indians to Burma, Malaysia and the Gulf countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Global South, mainly the Asian continent, has been closely integrated by the mobility of millions of its people across the seas/oceans. From about the mid-nineteenth century, migrations within Asia were also closely linked to the changing global commercial, economic and political conditions. Although the Indians migrated to the far off places in the Pacific (Fiji) and Caribbean islands and the Indian Ocean region (Mauritius and South Africa/Natal) predominantly as indentured laborers, the interconnectedness was greater within Asian countries than beyond. Available evidence suggests that between 1834 and 1917, around 1.3 million indentured laborers migrated to the above destinations, whereas six million contract laborers went to Southeast Asia under the *kangani* and *maistry* systems (Clarck et al. 1990, "[South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity](#)", p.8-9). However, unlike the European migrations the Indian migration flows across the Bay of

Bengal region were characterized by several forms of middle-men-mediated contract systems and debt-bondage. Labor migrations in the mid-nineteenth century from South India to the Bay of Bengal region, and since the 1970s to the Middle East/Gulf countries are a case in point.

The Bay of Bengal's circuits of migration both responded to and brought about changes on a global scale. For instance, Malaysian rubber – tapped by South Indian migrant workers – fed the American Automobile industry. During the colonial period, Malaya became the most economically valuable tropical colony in the whole of the British Empire, whereas Burma became the largest rice exporter in the world, in a boom backed by Indian Chettiar capital and drawing millions of Indian migrant workers into the every sector of its economy. Indian migrations grew in the first two decades of the twentieth century, especially after the abolition of the indenture system. Around 28 million people crossed the Bay of Bengal in both directions between 1840 and 1940. The Bay of Bengal region was home to one of world's great migrations under European colonialism. Subsequent to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, large-scale Indian emigration began with the development of European commercial and industrial enterprises in Southeast Asia. It has been estimated that out of approximately 28 million people who emigrated from India up to 1940, close to 27 million went to just three destinations in Southeast Asia; Burma, Ceylon, and Malaya. In other words, the Bay of Bengal region accounted for nearly the sum total of India's emigration history in the age of empire. During the post-colonial era, the Gulf boom of the 1970s and thereafter led to a considerable increase in the revenue of the oil-producing countries in West Asia and the Gulf region. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the South Indians responded almost immediately to the growing demands for labor in those countries. Starting on a modest scale in the early 1970s, this trend continued to grow. Between 1976 and 2011 more than 29 million Indian workers obtained emigration clearance to work in the foreign countries, predominantly in the Middle Eastern countries. The gulf labor migrations are mediated both through the recruiting agents and social networks. In principle the Gulf migrations are voluntary and

free, though elements of compulsion and coercion are noticeable.

Indeed, unlike the trans-Atlantic migrations, South Indian migrations across the Bay of Bengal region included short-term, chain, and return, as well as family-oriented patterns. In the case of South Indian labor migrations, development of extensive middlemen and agents' networks were crucial during both the colonial and post-colonial periods. The South Indian migrants relied on the networks and connections that kinship and local community provided to find jobs and security and to carve out new ways of migrating to Southeast Asia and the Gulf countries. Between 1844 and 1910, about 250,000 indentured laborers migrated to Malaya. The *kangani*-recruited labor formed the bulk of the labor force on the rubber estates. From 1844 to 1938, *kangani*-assisted migration accounted for 62.2 percent of total Indian labor migration, compared to 13 percent for indentured migration. It was estimated that in 1920, only 12 percent of Indian workers were voluntary migrants, but this proportion had increased to over 91 percent by the 1930s. Thus it is clear that labor migration to colonial Burma was mostly temporary, short-term, and circular (sojourning). As I pointed out in a recent article ("[From Coromandal Coast to Suvarnabhumi: Intra-Asian Migrations in the Era of Globalization](#)", p. 132-34), unassisted and voluntary labor migrations have become popular in Burma and Malaya during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the pace, patterns, and networks of South Indian labor migration increasingly undermined the structure and function of the middlemen. Thus by the 1930s assisted and free South Indian

labor migration increased rapidly. In the development of such a pattern the return migrant and village played a significant role. Available evidence indicates that many of the returnees invited their relations and friends to go over either to Burma or Malaya and take advantage of the opportunities there; while many returned with newfound awareness and competence. Nevertheless, the main difference between the Asian and the Atlantic migration circuits lays in the numbers of those who settled rather than returned. Amrith, in "[Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia](#)", found that that between 6 and 7 million Indian people, and a similar number of Chinese, had settled overseas by the end of the 1930s; whereas 85 million people of British origin lived outside the British Isles by that time (p. 18). An examination of the available data on arrivals and departures from colonial Burma between the years 1889 and 1929, and for Malaya between 1888 and 1935, indicates that more than 80 percent of the South Indian laborers did not migrate to settle permanently.

An argument can thus be made against the view that northern migrations were voluntary and free, while the non-European migrations were coercive, indentured and/or involuntary. An examination of the pattern and nature of Indian migrations since the mid-nineteenth century indicates that indentured migrations constituted only a small part of the total migration flows. What is more, Asian migration is comparable in scale to trans-Atlantic migration in the same period in the global context.

Adapa Satyanarayana's recent publications include the article "[Beyond the Eurocentric History of Migration: An Indian Perspective](#)".

INDENTURED MIGRATION WAS DRIVEN BOTH BY COLONIAL CAPITALISM AND BY REGIONAL SPECIFICITIES

Interview with Vincent Houben ([Professor of Southeast Asian History and Society](#), Humboldt University Berlin, Germany). The interview was conducted by Tobias Schwarz.

Tobias Schwarz: Prof. Houben, you are a historian working on modern and contemporary Southeast Asian history. Can you briefly outline what you think is particular regarding the historical migration pattern of South East Asia?

Vincent Houben: Southeast Asia has always been a region at the crossroads; therefore migration patterns involving China, India, and the Middle East have been an integral element of those economies and societies since long before Western colonization started. Several types of migration co-existed: labor migration within and between areas; religious pilgrimage; and resettlement as a consequence of political upheavals and conquest. Since colonialism and the rise of postcolonial statehood there have been attempts to survey and regulate existing migration patterns to a greater degree. Nowadays, temporary labor arrangements govern intra-regional migration (from Indonesia to Malaysia, from Myanmar to Thailand etc.) as well as transregional or international migration (mostly towards the Gulf and Northeast Asia).

TS: With regard to global migration history, the comparison is sometimes made between “free” migration in the Global North (i.e., massive waves of Europeans emigrating to the Americas during the 19th and early 20th century; or immigration into the USA and Europe today), and “non-free” migration within the Global South (i.e. colonial indentured laborers). Can such contrast between “free Northern” and “unfree Southern” migration (still) be regarded as an appropriate description?

VH: Amarjit Kaur’s book, [“Wage Labor in Southeast Asia since 1840”](#), which connects Southeast Asian historical and contemporary migration, sums up the major research findings for this world region quite convincingly. Kaur indicates that during colonialism there existed a generic linkage between industrialization in Europe and the rapid growth of labor migration from China, India, and Java to plantations and

mines in Southeast Asia. The predominant format was indentured labor, but many left their homes voluntarily. So, instead of contrasting free migration in the global North and unfree migration in the global South, one can observe that there existed and still exists a connection between North and South but that this connection cannot be simplified into a one-dimensional contrast between these two parts of the world.

TS: What are the theoretical implications that follow from contesting the “free vs. unfree migration” distinction?

VH: Between free and unfree labor migration there exists a whole spectrum of realities, which need to be specified according to context, both in a spatial and a temporal sense. What has been classified as “free” migration was often linked to the pressure of circumstance at home, so one can ask to what extent the choice to migrate has really been free. Implicated in contrasting a “free” North to an “unfree” South is a world-system model based on the work of the dependency theorists ([Gunder Frank](#), [Immanuel Wallerstein](#), [Fernando Cardoso](#) and others). However, the rise of the global South, particularly the BRIC states, has replaced dependency with a world system based on multipolarity. The theoretical implication is that the dividing line between global North and global South has increasingly become obsolete, as nowadays we can find both free and unfree forms of migration all over the world.

TS: Are the historical patterns of indentured migration in South(-east) Asia similar to those in other regions of the Global South, for instance because they were part of a common, integrated system of colonial rule? And would this imply that it makes sense to speak of a shared migration experience in the Global South?

VH: The choice between commonality and specificity of indentured migration in Southeast Asia depends on the perspective taken by the researcher. Indentured migration was historically linked to a system of colonial rule, which displayed certain common features all across the global South. At the core was the establishment of tight control over available human capital in order to generate profit for the colonial state and European business. However, within this

uniformity on a general level, there existed considerable variations in regional and even local patterns. Colonizers were most successful when they were able to build their systems of labor mobilization on already existing local arrangements. In some areas the supply of labor as a consequence of non-regulated migration was such that free wage-labor arrangements could be installed. In other areas a lack of local labor supply necessitated the implementation of unfree labor arrangements and forced migration. The way in which indentured migration constituted itself was therefore driven both by the uniformities of colonial capitalism and by regional specificities.

TS: In your work, you stress the relevance of historiographic research in order to understand contemporary societies. Can you give an example of how the historical roots (of e.g. coerced labor) inform today's structure of unfree labor migration?

VH: If we look at the migration patterns and labor relations of domestic and construction workers from Southeast Asia in other parts of Asia and the Middle East, the similarities with

the colonial era are striking – with regard to state regulations and surveillance, recruitment practices, and the nature of labor relations in the workplace. Assuming that there are systemic features of global capitalism which cause unfree labor migration to persist, and that there is an institutional memory involved in the mobility of labor, the study of history becomes all the more relevant for grasping the genealogy of contemporary labor migration in both the global North and the global South.

Vincent Houben's latest edited books include "[Figurations of Modernity. Global and Local Representations in Comparative Perspective](#)" and "[Southeast Asian Studies. Debates and New Directions](#)".

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

by Ibrahim Awad (*Professor of Public Policy at the [School of Global Affairs and Public Policy](#) and director of the [Center of Migration and Refugee Studies](#), The American University in Cairo, Egypt*).

International migration is a result of the functioning or malfunctioning of the global system, in both its political and economic segments. In few places is this more evident in the second decade of the 21st century than in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA).

Domestic and international conflicts have produced consecutive waves of refugees over the past several decades. The current Syrian displacement is the most important refugee crisis the world has witnessed in recent times. Consecutive crises and the reactions and responses to them have revealed and reinforced the fragility of nation-states in the Middle East. “Nations” were broken down into their constitutive elements. Building the new political system in Iraq after 2003 based on religious, ethnic, and sectarian belongings stands out as an eloquent example of the breakdown of a “nation” that was already fragile because young. The drive behind this system-building process in Iraq could be considered as global. It had been conducted after an intervention that aimed not only to realize the interests of Iraqis but also to achieve the “global good”. In Syria, violent actors in the civil strife that soon engulfed the country after it rose up demanding a pluralistic and democratic political system brought out their religious and sectarian affiliations and their open hostility to all others. In a way, the precedent of Iraq, followed by the practice of power in that country in the last decade, “legitimized” the political identification with primordial belongings. So far, the process has culminated in the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) symbolically doing away with the borders between these two countries. Nation-states are the cornerstone of the international system. The concept is certainly not without its flaws, either in theory or, more especially, in practice. All the same, disfiguring nation-states and building new political units on bases other than nations is an open challenge, not only to directly affected countries but also to the whole international system. If some of the cross-border

population flows are due to the population’s wishes to escape violence and seek safe refuge in bordering or neighboring countries, others are an outgrowth of the realignment of political units along criteria other than nations.

The Syrian crisis is a significant manifestation of the global reach of refugee issues. With Syrian refugees overflowing into neighboring Europe, the crisis brought out the closer-than-ever interlinkages between regions, and the inadequacy of the responses it has generated from actors at the international and regional levels. It has not proved possible, using the tools at the disposal of the international system, to find solutions to the conflict or to the resulting refugee flows – and this is not the first conflict of its kind. Neither Iraqi refugees a decade ago nor Palestinian refugees before them found solutions to their predicaments either. According to the international refugee regime, return to countries of origin, resettlement, and local integration are the durable solutions to refugee crises. Return to countries of origin demands the settlement of the political problems at the origins of population flights. For decades such solutions have proven elusive. Resettlement opportunities are a drop in the sea. Local integration first requires substantial financial resources for it to be carried out under conditions of equality and non-discrimination on religious, sectarian, ethnic, gender, political opinion, or other grounds while at the same time also realizing the unmet economic and social demands of native populations. Host countries do not have these resources. The global responses to these crises did not make up for the large shortfall in resources. Second, given the volumes of population involved and the history of recent and fragile state formation in the region, local integration could open the door to the reconfiguration of the regional state system, which, obviously, is but a sub-system of the international system. “Sub-national communities”, the sub-regional state system, and the international system do not show any sign of being ready for such a reconfiguration. Therefore, it could be said that global responses have allowed neither local integration, resettlement, or voluntary return, nor the solving of the political problems necessary for that latter solution to materialize. From a global perspective, the reach of the consequences of the refugee crises, especially the current Syrian one, is brought harshly to light by the population overflows to Europe.

But MENA is also an origin and transit region for international migration for employment purposes. Workers migrate within the region and to fellow Arab countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in search for better employment opportunities than those their own economies can create. With the same objective, they also migrate to Europe and beyond, where they additionally respond to demand for labor. From countries to the south of MENA, workers arrive with the intention of joining flows to Europe. Nearly six decades after decolonization, the functioning of the global economy has not permitted African countries to develop and to raise the standards of living of their citizens. Rules of the global system and the functioning of sub-regional and “national” economies may well be at the origin of the prolonged stalemate and the resulting international migration within Africa as well as out of the continent.

Unconsciously, labor seems to be moving to where the other factor of production of production, capital, looks abundant. With the liberalization of movements of goods, services, and capital, one question that arises is whether it is possible to keep labor as constrained in its mobility as it is at present. Occasioned to considerable extent by migration from or through MENA, away from the policy realm, some research is being carried out on the liberalization of labor movements and its consequences. Good parts of civil society call for this liberalization. This reveals an evolution in global thinking about migration and the exclusive rights of nationals to access the territories of the states to which they belong. It also exposes a development in ideas about states’ monopoly over decisions about access to their territories. In sum, this is a reconsideration of “sovereignty”, or rather of how it could be re-defined in an era of steadily increasing globalization.

Ibrahim Awad’s most recent publications include [“Population Movements in the Aftermath of the Arab Awakening: The Syrian Refugee Crisis between Regional Factors and State Interest”](#).

ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER: TREASURE-HUNTING BEYOND FAMILIAR SHORES

by Francis B. Nyamnjoh ([Professor of Anthropology, University of Cape Town, South Africa](#))

Africa is a continent characterized by mobility as a normal condition of being human. While the tendency of states everywhere is to police and manage mobility so as to maximize the economic and political interests of those they consider citizens, those with capitalist ambitions of dominance do not expect Africans to be mobile, especially beyond their continent, even as mobility is celebrated in principle and practice for others ([Collier 2013: 11-26](#)). When not savaged by envenomed, razor-sharp territoriality, mobile Africans are often perceived by the nationals and citizens of the host countries at whose borders they clamor for inclusion as an invasive and predatory inconvenience ([Nyamnjoh 2013a](#)). This was especially the case after the high-income societies of the West witnessed the largest increase in migration from poor countries from 1990-2000, an increase which coincided with deceleration in the growth of their high-income economies, thereby forcing them to respond by “retightening their immigration controls”, even if what followed as migration policies were “based on neither an understanding of the process of migration and its effects nor a thought-through ethical position” ([Collier 2013: 51-52](#)). Since then, those who countenance African mobility do so *selectively*, like French President Nicolas Sarkozy in his provocative speech in Dakar on July 26, 2007, where he expressed the idea of “*immigration choisie*” (“chosen and not endured immigration”) – see the reactions it elicited from African and Africanist intellectuals, [the first of which by Achille Mbembe](#) ([Bergson and Ngnemzué 2008](#); [Foé 2008](#); [Nyamnjoh 2013a](#); [Collier 2013: 57-142](#)). African musicians in France – some of whom, like Papa Wemba, have been [accused of using their position as musicians](#) to smuggle hundreds of people from Africa who disappear upon arrival – have often composed songs to decry the arrest and deportation of fellow Africans. Petit Pays of Cameroon is said to have named his band *Petit Pays et Les Sans Visa* because he was [once deported from France](#) for not having a visa. African immigrants in France,

and Africans seeking to emigrate to France, would argue that it was not without their exploitation and dispossession under French colonialism and neo-colonialism that “between 1945 and 1975 French per capita income tripled”, resulting in what the French nostalgically refer to as “The Golden Thirty Years” ([Collier 2013: 28](#)). This tendency to see the nimble-footedness of being African ([Nyamnjoh 2013b](#)) purely in narrow economic terms is highly problematic, as it tends to suggest that mobility should be the exclusive attribute only of those who are economically viable.

If there is any lesson mobile Africans could learn from their European and Western counterparts, it is how to comb the world with imperial ambitions of dominance, hunting with relentless greed for riches and resources in distant lands, and using coercive violence to dispossess and indebt without being indebted. It is thanks precisely to this logic and approach that “Third World debtor nations are almost exclusively countries that have at one time been attacked and conquered by European countries – often, the very countries to whom they now owe money” ([Graeber 2011: 5](#)). For those Africans who have borrowed a leaf from Europe, uncontested success comes from hunting for opportunities in distant unfamiliar lands, among distant unfamiliar others, who should not be close enough to appeal to one’s scruples and conscience. Ideally, the lands should be distant enough to constitute hunting grounds and the people unfamiliar enough to be considered prey, and be preyed upon. Ruthlessness and detachment are the name of the game, as it permits one to freeze the humanity of those one seeks to take advantage of. This is a sentiment superbly captured by the Nigerian actor and musician, Nkem Owoh, in his song “I Go Chop Your Dollar”, in which he argues, *inter alia*, that the infamous scamming Nigeria is renowned for is just a game, and that no one should seek to moralize unduly about it (see his film, *The Master*). He warns “Oyibo” [whites]: “[I go chop your dollar, I go take your money disappear. 419 is just a game. You are the loser, I am the winner.](#)” In Cameroon the phenomenon of *bushfalling* documents how Europe, North America, and other fruitful zones of accumulation have served as hunting grounds for mobile young Cameroonians seeking to free themselves from the frustrations, pressures, and stress of undera-

chievement and the paucity of prospects and opportunities in the homeland ([Nyamnjoh 2011](#); [Alpes 2011](#); [Tazanu 2012](#); [Nfon 2013](#); [Pelican 2013](#); [Nyamnjoh 2014](#); [Alhaji 2015](#)).

The excessive investment in governing and policing mobility by states – rich states in particular – is what brings about the apparent unequal and differentiated patterns of migration by which the West, despite its histories of migra-

tion with reckless abandon, seems to be surprisingly alarmed today.

Francis Nyamnjoh is currently finishing a book titled: [“C'est l'homme qui fait l'homme”: Cul-de-Sac Ubuntu-ism in Côte d'Ivoire](#)”, from which he has extracted his contribution. For further details visit www.africanbookscollective.com

GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT “PATTERNS” OBSCURE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MIGRATION PROCESSES ALL OVER THE WORLD

by Alejandro Grimson ([Professor of Anthropology at the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina](#)) and researcher at CONICET

I believe the answer to the question “Is it possible to distinguish patterns of migration in the Global South from patterns in the Global North?” is a simple no. The so-called “Global North” and the “Global South” are “entities” which are extremely heterogeneous in every respect. What is demographic homogeneity? Exaggerating the homogeneity of “the North” a bit, let us assume that there the birth rate is decreasing and the numbers of immigrants are rising. But are the United States of America with a little under three hundred million inhabitants, around forty million of which are immigrants, comparable to all countries of the north? Obviously not.

It is important to clarify that when speaking of “migration”, we are not only talking about economic or labour migration, we are also talking about people living in exile and political refugees or those affected by displacement, for example, as the result of war. In my opinion, migration includes every phenomenon that involves human displacement in a given territory. If we had to specify the date around which human migration began, the most adequate answer would be the beginning of the human race. Archaeological finding and, more recently, the Old Testament, demonstrate just this, as one of the books of the Old Testament is called “Exodus”.

One could say that we are witnessing large-scale migrations from the South towards the North, or from the ex-colonies to the metropolises. But these are very limited descriptions within time and space. For example, one hundred years ago we saw large-scale emigration from Europe to the Americas and Australia. After the Second World War, there was also emigration in the same direction, for example, Italians that migrated to Argentina ([Fernando Devoto: Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina](#)). If we limit these movements to the current epoch (which is already a very crass limitation) the idea of patterns still would not work. What if

the United States had ex-colonies in the European sense? Well, one could consider the relationship with Puerto Rico as a colonial relationship and there are, in fact, four million Puerto Ricans in the United States. However, if any example were to break with the idea of patterns, it would be Puerto Rico: Puerto Ricans are born with the right to a United States passport and their migration to the United States is completely legal and it grants them the same rights and obligations as any other citizen of the United States. One also cannot compare the legal relevance of jus soli (citizenship by birth on the territory) in all American countries to the matching norms in Europe. Nationality laws are more similar in the United States, Canada, Argentina, and Mexico, than between the United States and Germany, for example. And although the legal framework is not homogeneous on every continent, there are even more issues that separate the continents than separate the “North” and the “South”.

The most populated country of the supposed “South” and at the same time the most populated country on the planet is China, whose demographic situation, process of urbanisation and some migratory norms do not comply with generalised patterns. It is obvious that Chinese emigration to various countries is very high, but the destinations of emigrants are not exclusively in the North, as they include Latin American and African countries. Furthermore, there are internal limitations with respect to migration within the country as well as with respect to civil rights, which are not feasible in most other countries of the world. Another relevant question is that generalisations of “patterns” essentially hide migratory processes in different world regions: migration within Africa, within South America and between Central America and Mexico.

According to the United Nations ([International Migration Report 2013](#)), one can divide all of the international migrants in the world into three groups: Those who migrate from the south to the north, those who migrate between countries of the south, and those who migrate between developed countries. Regarding this last group, I can comment on the migratory system in the Southern Cone. Specialists have pointed out that, around the 1980s, there was a “regional migratory system” including Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia as countries of emigra-

tion, and Argentina as a receiving country. Currently, Chile and Brazil have clearly become receiving countries, but if we consider South America, we must add three further elements: 1) The Peruvian diaspora living in approximately twenty different countries; 2) the Ecuadorian emigration with an especially strong migration to Spain; 3) the Colombian emigration that includes large numbers from middle classes. (For those wanting a better understanding of certain migratory dynamics in the Southern Cone I recommend my book "[Argentina and the Southern Cone](#)", co-authored with Gabriel Kessler.)

In short, thinking in terms of patterns of the North and South will not help us to comprehend the complexities of contemporary migratory processes, which are a key issue to understanding where "the global" is heading to.

Alejandro Grimson is researcher at CONICET and Professor of the Instituto de Altos Estudios Sociales of San Martin University, Argentina. His research interests are migration, border zones, and national identifications; among other books, he has published "[Relatos de la diferencia y la igualdad. Los bolivianos en Buenos Aires](#)"

ALTERNATIVE VISUALIZATIONS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA ON MIGRATION

by Tobias Schwarz ([Senior researcher at the Global South Studies Center](#), University of Cologne, Germany)

In a situation of ever-increasing mobility... well, this is how many accounts of globalization portray the scale of international migration today. But is migration really increasing in terms of numbers? Some say it is not (Abel/Sander 2014, "[Quantifying global international migration flows](#)", p. 1521). Certainly, there is no uniform trend: in some regions, more and more people move (or are moved) across borders, while in other regions the numbers are falling (especially where they were extraordinarily high in the past). While it is of course theoretically possible to measure the total number of international migrants on a global scale, the relevance of such statement is questionable. To assume only one driving force behind them all would be implausible, and there is not one global pattern, but rather many regional ones (the South American system, the Southeast Asian system, etc.) and multilayered patterns (e.g. the routes of economic elites easily span across continents, while most refugees seek shelter in neighboring countries). Hence, what is the insight we gain from a generalizing concept such as that of an assumed "global trend"? At the same time, the conflated and sometime simplified depiction of

the numbers of international migrants abounds. Let's look at four different examples of how data on international migrant stock is generally presented, along with an innovative depiction of migrant flows.

Probably the most intuitive way to present the total number of immigrants in various countries is to color in the respective country areas on a world map differently according to the numbers of immigrants there. Unfortunately, this can easily produce a grossly distorted picture, as one example shows. The World Bank website makes use of data from the United Nations Population Division publication "[Trends in Total Migrant Stock](#)", and allows the generation of the world map shown in figure 1. The template used for this map is a variation of the [Mercator projection](#) used in most of the current web mapping applications. As we all know, it heavily distorts the relative areas of land masses, with the distortion increasing toward the poles, resulting in an overall increase in the apparent land mass in the northern hemisphere and a reduction of that in the southern hemisphere (due to the relative distributions of land in those regions). Just compare Greenland with Australia: the latter is in fact 3.5 times bigger than the former, but on this map it appears to be the other way around. But this quantitative distortion left aside, the countries colored in the darkest red this way appear to be evenly inhabited by large numbers of immigrants, which is obviously not the case.

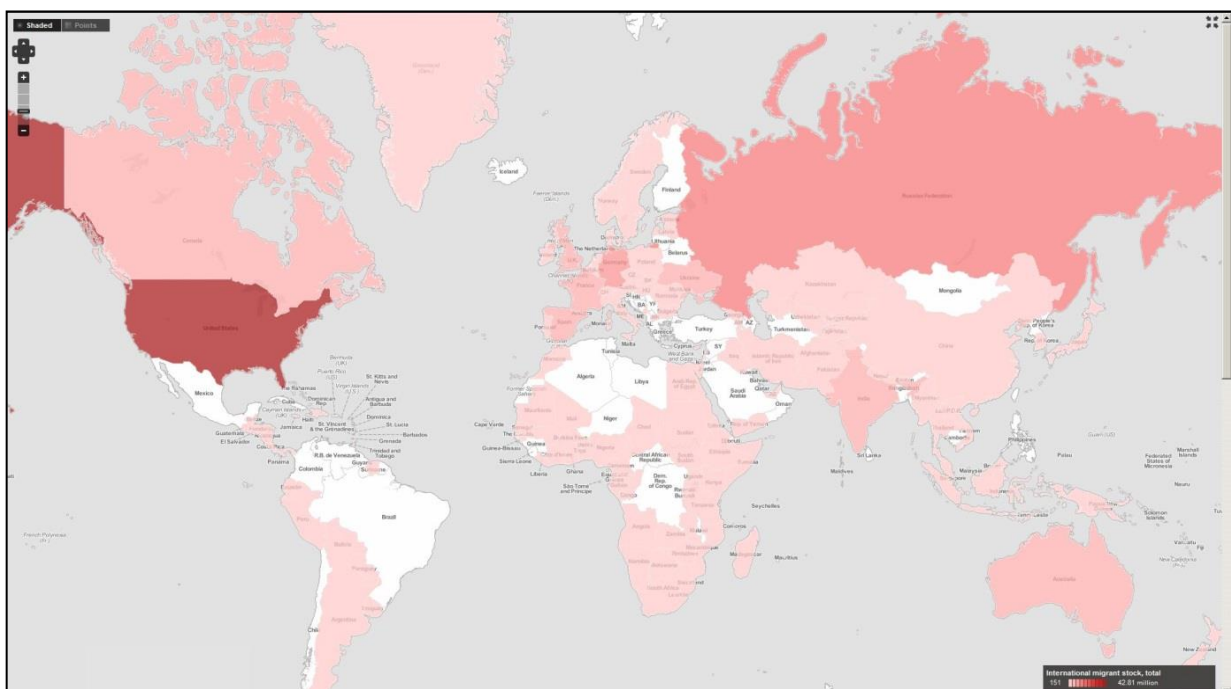


Fig. 1: [The World Bank, International migrant stock \(data.worldbank.org\)](#)

Who wants to move to Alaska, really? Or settle in Arkhangelsk? This flaw is inevitably caused by taking national data as the baseline, and projecting it onto the whole area of the respective states instead of breaking those states down into equal-area territorial segments (which of course is not possible because such data in most cases is unavailable, and would in turn cause further issues of applicability; see as an analogous example [how GDP could be graphically related to population density](#)).

So, perhaps it is better stick to more abstract graphics? The United Nations Population Division mentioned above provides a migration database that covers the whole globe. In their publications they frequently distinguish “North” and “South”, and define “Europe and Northern America plus Australia, New Zealand and Japan” as the North, and the rest of the world as “South” (“[Population Facts 2013](#)”, p.4). Well, the Russian Federation is assigned to Europe (hence, in the worldview of the Population Division, this large continent reaches from Portugal in the west to the Kamchatka Peninsula in the east), and Mexico is classified as part of the “South”. But never mind. The aggregation of countries into larger units (continents; less/more developed; North/South, etc.) is always theory-driven and hence artificial to a certain degree. One example might suffice: one of the largest cross-continental and at the same time South-North migration flows is from Mexico to the US. It is somewhat convincing that these two countries are located on either side of a South-North divide (defined in economic terms) – not without reason did Acemoglu and Robinson start their [book on global economic divergence](#) at the border in Nogales. But in terms of geography and history, both countries are in North America. It is not human movement across their border that requires explanation, it is the border that has been placed across human movement there. Yet this specific migration flow has over the last decades been (and continues to be) the main contributor to South-North migration on a global scale.

Thus I find it striking how “North” and “South” are sometimes used as self-evidently meaningful categories. In the reports of the UN Population Division, we learn that most migration

(36%, see figure 2) happens in and from the South – well, yes, the “South” accounts for 85% of the world’s population. There is no need to comment further on such very general diagrams.

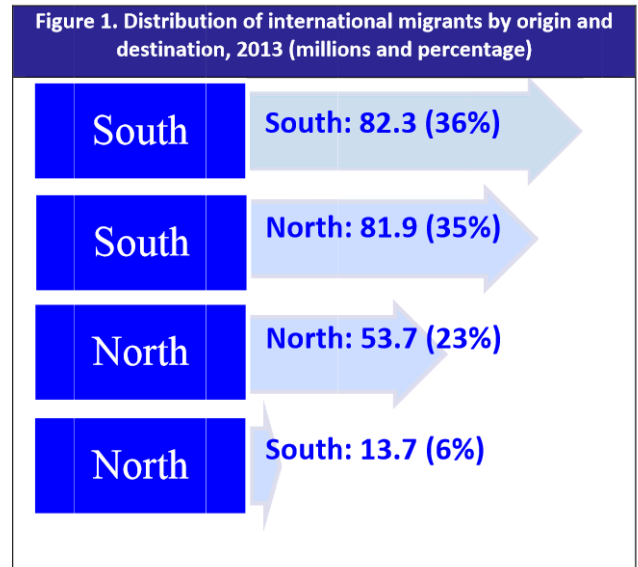


Fig. 2: [UN Population Division, “Population Facts”, No. 2013/3 Rev.1, April 2014, p.1.](#)

It is safer to stick to geographic, hence seemingly objective, definitions of units: the continents. Accordingly, the bar chart that gives absolute numbers of immigrants for each continent is widespread (limitations as to where to draw the line between continents mentioned above apply). Among many others, Castles and Miller do this in their seminal work “[The age of Migration](#)” (see figure 3). But to provide stock

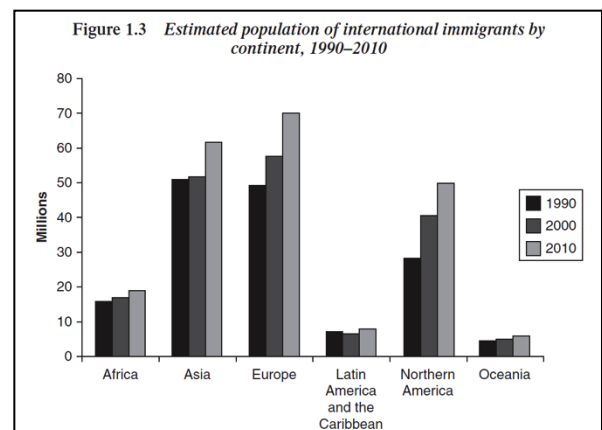


Fig. 3: [Castles and Miller \(2009\): The age of migration. International population movements in the modern world. 4. ed., p.9.](#)

data only neither accounts for percentages of immigrants in relation to the total population (just think of Saudi Arabia, a country among those with the highest proportion of foreigners in the world, which appears as a white dot on the map in fig.1), nor does it show the regions of origin of those migrants. We also know that not only immigration, but also emigration changes a society.

What is the alternative? The United Nations Population Division also offers their data on 221 countries in the world nicely assembled on one poster (see fig. 4). This presentation might be prompted by a helpless urge to try to keep track of (and “fence in”?) the broad spectrum of migration experiences, but it does not really help if one is searching for comparisons or patterns.

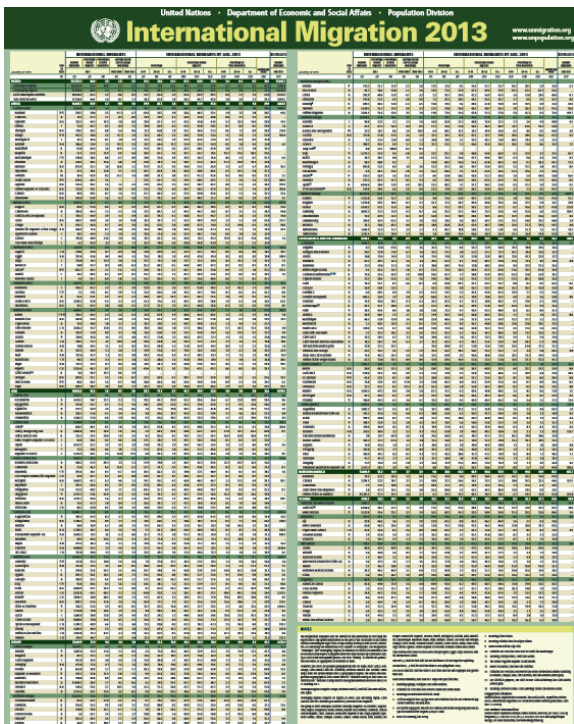


Fig 4: [UN Population Division, Migration Wall-chart, 2013](#)

I recently came across an alternative pictorial presentation of global international migration flows; a circular plot (see fig. 5). I like it more than other diagrams I’ve seen so far, for two reasons. First, it does not show data on migrant

stock, but rather relates to flows. Hence it covers immigration as much as emigration, and

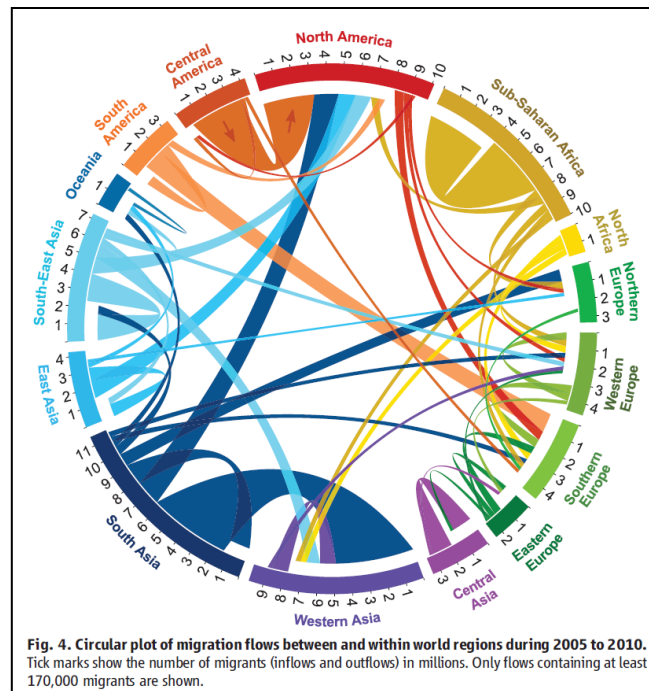


Fig. 5, [Abel and Sander \(2014\): Quantifying global international migration flows. In: Science 343 \(6178\), p. 1522.](#)

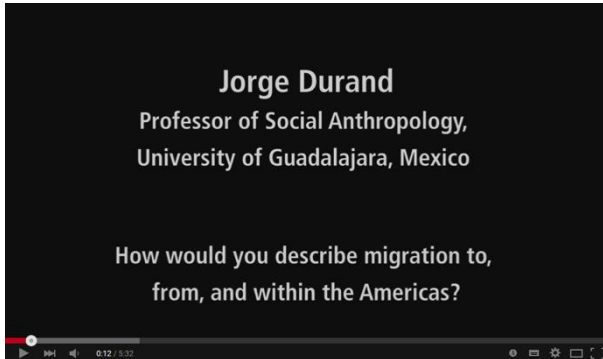
accounts for the empirical connection between sending and receiving regions. Second, the circular shape schematically represents large-scale regional proximities across the globe, and thereby allows for a visualization of relative distances. This is not perfect of course, but at least differentiates between arrows that connect segments next to each other and arrows that span the center of the image (the latter “reaching across the globe”).

This quick comparison of various ways of presenting data on international migration shows at least one thing: charts give materiality to abstract data, and in so doing may reinforce a taken-for-granted world view, and at worst “confirm” old preconceptions. But if data are aggregated differently, or if the charts are constructed creatively, even if that involves going against the mainstream, they can also help to prompt us to think “off the beaten track”.

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MIGRATION TO, FROM, AND WITHIN THE AMERICAS

Video interview with Jorge Durand ([Professor of Social Anthropology](#), University of Guadalajara, Mexico)



Video: <http://gssc.uni-koeln.de/node/801>

CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRATION IN ASIA

Video interview with Min Zhou ([Professor of Sociology](#), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)



Video: <http://gssc.uni-koeln.de/node/800>