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## Global migrants: Understanding the implications for international business and management

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## ABSTRACT

Global migration has always impacted individuals, organizations, and societies, but the attention given to migration in international business and management (IB/IM) has not been commensurate with its importance. In this article we detail why a focus on migration is needed, how this topic has been addressed so far in the field, and especially how it could contribute to generating knowledge and relevant insights for practice and policy. We underline the relevance and significance of the phenomenon by introducing a collection of studies in a special issue on global migration and its implication for IB/IM.

Global migration touches nearly all corners of the world. At the time this article was written, 272 million people were residing in a country other than that of their birth ([International Organization for Migration \(IOM, 2020\)](#)). This number was a significant increase from the 258 million just three years earlier ([US-DESA, 2017](#)), when we saw the need to call for a deliberate focus on global migration in international business (IB) and management (IM)—to both acknowledge and further stimulate work on this important phenomenon. Indeed, the migrant stock has been on an upward trend for decades: The number of migrants in 2019 was almost quadruple the 75 million counted in 1965 and almost triple the 105 million recorded in 1985 ([International Organization for Migration \(IOM, 2020; King, 2012\)](#)). The growth in migrants has begun to outpace population growth ([United Nations & Department of Economic & Social Affairs, 2019](#)), leading to important demographic changes. In some countries, migrants have become more than a negligible minority (e.g., 21 % of the population in the Oceania region, and 16 % in North America) and in some they have even become a majority (e.g., Gulf Cooperation Council States). Therefore, some unsurprisingly argue that we live in the “Age of Migration” ([Castles & Miller, 1993, 2009](#)), a period during which international migration has globalized, diversified, and become increasingly politicized (2009).

However, this situation can also be viewed from another perspective: The world’s “stock” of 272 million international migrants represents

only 3.5 % of the global population. In other words, most of the world’s population is *not* composed of migrants. Moreover, the COVID-19 global pandemic that began in 2020 and is ongoing at the time of writing this article may further change the migration landscape. Lockdowns and quarantines have prompted legitimate questions about the future of migration, at least in the short-term. Nevertheless, economic hardship or inequalities, along with social and political changes triggered by different approaches to dealing with COVID-19, may initiate new flows of migration in the long-term. Migration has always been connected to acute and long-term economic and social events but its direction has never been easy to predict ([International Organization for Migration \(IOM, 2020\)](#)).

Regardless of these potential changes, most migrants end up as part of the workforce of their new countries. Typically, two-thirds of international migrants are *labor* migrants ([International Organization for Migration \(IOM, 2020\)](#)), rendering migration directly relevant to both IB/IM researchers and practitioners. Migrants are also crucial agents of change in their organizations and in societies in general. Inevitably, they are also the subject of increasing controversy in social and political debates—especially in relation to recent protectionist policies and new anti-globalization sentiment in some nation states ([Hajro, Stahl, Clegg, & Lazarova, 2019; Shukla & Cantwell, 2018; Vertovec, 2004](#)), making the topic highly relevant to contemporary IB/IM.

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Researchers in other disciplines (e.g., sociology, anthropology, political science, population geography and economics) have been interested in global migration and migrants for decades, but in IB/IM the global work experience has been primarily studied from the perspective of expatriates. Expatriates are a subcategory of migrants, but their experience is not representative of the broader migrant population. They are usually on company-initiated temporary assignments, with particular support from their organizations and typically with intention to repatriate—features rarely associated with other categories of migrants. The literature abounds in accounts of the expatriate experience (McNulty & Brewster, 2019), but perhaps it was this exact focus that placed any other type of migrants in the shadows. Only recently has the research in IB/IM begun to properly recognize the diversity and importance of the majority of migrants—those who self-initiate their international mobility—and their implications for IB and IM.

The increasing interest in the topic, its obvious relevance to the current debates in workplaces and societies, the significant gaps in our knowledge of it, and its potential for future research have inspired us to create a special issue on global migration and its implications for IB and IM. It is important to clarify that our call for papers specifically highlighted an interest in a broader understanding of the migrant experience, including migrant entrepreneurs, refugees pursuing access to the local labor markets in their destination countries, and any other type of global worker who lives and works in a country other than her or his country of origin, with the obvious exclusion of company-initiated expatriates, who—as noted earlier—have already received appropriate attention.

The seven studies included in this special issue, selected out of 65 submissions, reflect this diversity and variety of migrants and also the diversity and variety of their experience. They were also chosen for content that hints at the broad array of knowledge that can result from studying migrants (in general, beyond expatriates), and simultaneously showcase the multitude of questions still unaddressed. Of the total number of submissions, 30 focused primarily on the individual-level, five on the meso-level phenomena; six were at the macro-level of analysis, and 24 were multilevel studies. The guiding principles in selecting articles were the *uniqueness of the work*—we sought articles that extend existing theory and knowledge on migration in new ways; *methodological rigor*—we paid special attention to the way the studies were executed; and *relevance*—we wanted the special issue to be of relevance to both internal (i.e., other academics) and external (i.e., practitioners and policy makers) stakeholders.

More specifically, the papers accepted for this special issue address an array of topics pertaining to international migration and migrants, including the mechanisms that affect the cross-market status transfer of migrants in the creative industries (Shipilov, Li, & Li, 2020); the role of generational status and personality on immigrants' entrepreneurial intentions (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2020; Vandor, 2020); the interactive and cumulative effect of gender, race, and mother tongue on migrants' work outcomes (Fitzsimmons, Baggs, & Brannen, 2020); sensemaking narratives that enable skilled migrant employees to develop positive identities in the face of occupational downgrading (Fernando & Patriotta, 2020); the relationship between migration and trade (Cai, Meng, & Chakraborty, 2021); and country-level determinants of remittances (Piteli, Kafourous, & Piteli, 2021).

Collectively, these studies advance our knowledge about the implications of migration for IB and IM and resolve some of the contradictions in the existing literature. In addition to introducing the articles in this special issue, we also provide an overview of existing research on migration in IB/IM and highlight potential avenues for future investigations. We hope this special issue will inspire the IB/IM research community to study migration in more depth. Migration is “part and parcel of the contemporary world's social transformation” (Castles & Miller, 2009: 47), a phenomenon that embraces all dimensions of human experience (Castles, 2010). As such, it represents a universal feature of humanity. Hence, IB/IM scholars can no longer ignore the way migration shapes and influences individuals, organizations, societies, and vice

versa (de Haas, 2007). In fact, to the contrary, it is high time that this topic finds its legitimate place in mainstream IB and IM research.

## 1. Global migrants, the context of work, and IB/IM research

Increased ability to cross borders, social and economic development and disparities, and the intensified war for talent are just a few of the reasons migration has increased in absolute terms in the last few decades. Migrants contributed an estimated 9.4 % of the global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015, but, better inclusion in terms of employment could add an additional USD 1 trillion per year to the global GDP (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016). It is also noteworthy that contributions to host economies are predominantly associated with highly skilled migrants. However, low-skilled migrants also play a significant role in their host country's economies. In countries with large shares of high-skilled natives, low-skilled migrant workers have complemented the skills of natives by occupying jobs in sectors in which citizens are in short supply; in many cases, these are also sectors native workers consider unattractive (Constant, 2014). The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of these low-level jobs and the workers who fill them. In fact, the pandemic has forced many Western European companies to resort to charter flights to bring in the seasonal migrant workers they traditionally rely on (Reynolds, 2020).

Furthermore, recent patterns of migration have challenged numerous long-held assumptions about migrants and migration. Events since the middle of the 20th century—the end of colonization, increased international trade, and the spread of economic growth across the globe—have changed who migrates, where they come from, and where they end up. All these affect companies and organizations that rely on foreign workers. Old migration corridors that reflected past colonization—migrants from Francophone Africa in France, migrants from Anglophone Africa in the UK (Bakewell & De Haas, 2007; Czaika & de Haas, 2014)—have been replaced by migrants from an increasingly diverse array of countries of origin whose destinations are primarily in Western Europe, North America, and the Gulf region (de Haas et al., 2019). Hence, migration has globalized from a destination country perspective but not from an origin country perspective, “with migrants from an increasingly diverse array of non-European-origin countries concentrating in a shrinking pool of prime destination countries” (Czaika & de Haas, 2014: 283). This reflects the asymmetric nature of globalization processes in general. The transformative “diversification of diversity” (Hollinger, 1995; Martiniello, 2004; Vertovec, 2007) in terms of more countries of origin is also evident in many corporations (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudelko, 2017). However, IB and management frameworks have yet to fully catch up with these emergent demographic and cultural shifts.

The aforementioned changes have posed significant opportunities as well as challenges for individuals, organizations, and societies. At the individual level, significant differences exist between circumstances of migration, and therefore experiences—leading to distinct “cultures of migration” (King, 2012). For instance, “stairway to heaven” migrants—individuals with no specific reason to leave their country but who saw migration as freedom and a new beginning—are in general less vulnerable and more motivated to integrate than “rootlessness and sadness” migrants—those who had no other choice but to leave (Cerdin, Diné, & Brewster, 2014; Fielding, 1992). At the organizational level, many firms employ migrants to gain access to diverse markets and customers, secure local resources, or share knowledge across national and geographic boundaries (Cerdin et al., 2014; Hajro, Gibson et al., 2017; Zikic, 2015). Yet despite this, companies often design policies that ultimately encourage assimilation, thereby failing to leverage the unique capabilities of these individuals, with negative implications for organizational performance (Hajro, Zilinskaite, & Stahl, 2017). At the societal level, migrant remittances increase the general and more narrowly defined availability of venture capital in migrants' sending countries as well as generate a broader openness to international trade

(Vaaler, 2011). However, the general assumption that migration and development are negatively and linearly correlated processes and, hence, substitutes for each other, continues to dominate much of the political discourse (de Haas, 2007; Stalker, 2002).

In short, the relationship between migration and business is complex and often contradictory. To resolve some of these contradictions, it is essential to further explore the implications of migration for IB/IM theories and practices and vice versa; how migration-related outcomes are affected by influences at multiple levels and across levels (i.e., individual, organizational, and societal levels); migrant acculturation dynamics, integration processes, and underlying forces that are at play; what receiving nations and/or corporations can do to make immigration work; and what should be changed to avoid the potentially negative consequences of existing and/or new policies and practices.

To elaborate on these points and others, we next provide an overview of individual-, organizational- and societal-level research on migration in IM and IB.<sup>2</sup> We have also included in the special issue summaries of its studies to illustrate how they contribute to, and extend, the current knowledge of the topic. We then present our observations about how to build on these insights and advance research on the cross-level links between the societal context (i.e., the macro-level), organizational policies and practices (i.e., the meso-level), and individual strategies and outcomes (i.e., the micro-level). The last section includes our concluding thoughts.

## 2. Individual-level research on migration in IB and IM

### 2.1. Skilled migrant employees

Although scholars from other social science disciplines have studied a range of issues related to both high- and low-skilled migrants, in IB/IM the main interest has been the exploration of skilled migrants' career transitions and work integration issues upon arrival in the host country (e.g., Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Dietz, Joshi, Esses, Hamilton, & Gabarrot, 2015; Zikic, Bonache, & Cerdin, 2010). Empirical evidence has revealed that to engage in migration and cope with its myriad challenges, many migrants are typically motivated to work hard and perform well (de Castro, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008; Frieze, Hansen, & Boneva, 2006). They are described as "adaptive" in their new career orientation (Zikic et al., 2010)—that is, they are proactive in their adaptation efforts while still cognizant of the barriers along the way. Furthermore, they often have higher achievement and power motivations, characteristics sometimes described as related to a "migrant personality type" (Boneva & Frieze, 2001; Frieze et al., 2006).

Yet despite this motivation, migrants continue to encounter significant barriers when searching for jobs in their destination countries (Aydemir & Skuterud, 2005; Fang, Samnani, Novicevic, & Bing, 2013; Frenette & Morissette, 2005). The reasons are numerous. First, migrants predominantly originate from emerging/developing economies and concentrate in developed countries. In fact, two thirds of international migrants – around 176 million—resided in high-income countries in 2019 (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020). These individuals are often phenotypically and culturally distinct from host country nationals and thus easily recognized (Czaika & de Haas, 2014). They usually experience a concomitant drop in status that flows from their overt demographic cues and from factors related to their foreign educations and experiences that are typically devalued locally (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980). Specifically, many skilled migrants experience downward career transition as well as

suffer from the liability of foreignness (i.e., the hazards of discrimination and unfamiliarity with skilled migrants' foreign human capital) (Fang et al., 2013). These factors prevent them from finding their desired type of work and often lead to underemployment. The outcomes are detrimental not only to migrants but also to their employers (e.g., Bhagat & London, 1999; Esses, Dietz, & Bhardwaj, 2006). Of course, the nature and magnitude of these effects will depend on the national context, with different countries providing varied levels of support and opportunities for migrants. Yet, even in countries known as "migrant countries," the value loss associated with integration challenges can be significant. To give an example, it has been shown that Canada's economy loses over \$11 billion annually because migrants' skills are underutilized (Reitz, Curtis, & Elrick, 2014).

The research has progressed to comparing the migrants' experience with that of local employees. Although many countries welcome skilled migrants in the hope of filling labor market shortages, studies have revealed that the more skilled migrants are, the less likely they are to find suitable employment relative to their local counterparts. Whereas in absolute terms migrants are more employable the more advanced their skills or degrees, their employability nevertheless decreases, in relative terms, when compared to the employability of locals with comparable skills or degrees (Dietz et al., 2015). This phenomenon is called the skill paradox and is prevalent in many migrant-receiving countries (e.g., Western Europe, U.S., Canada) for two reasons. First, the discounting of foreign degrees held by migrants assures that their relatively lower social status ("being a migrant") does not taint the high professional and social status that native degree holders enjoy and expect. Second, the competition for high-skilled jobs is fiercer than for low-skill jobs, and skill discounting may somewhat eliminate migrants as competitors (Dietz et al., 2015). In line with this, Ravasi, Salamin, and Davoine (2015) discovered that changes in the status of foreign employees in Switzerland over the past 20 years from assigned expatriates to migrants with local contracts increased both competitiveness in the local employment market as well as the need for status protection. This need for status protection by local employees triggered negative attitudes toward foreigners, even from members of the local highly skilled population who may feel they now compete with an abstract, globally skilled workforce. Thus, local country attitudes, especially toward skilled migrants, can often shape migrants' career outcomes and determine how their career transitions unfold.

Another local barrier for skilled migrants in the host country is occupational regulation, the local professional rules related to practicing in a specific country. Zikic and Richardson (2016) studied the impact of professional regulation, namely professional pre-entry scripts, in the local medical and IT professions on migrant careers. They found that the well-established and highly regulated medical profession created widespread occupational closure and rigid credentialism that acted as barriers, often insurmountable, to entry by migrant doctors. Conversely, international information technology professionals also faced some mostly soft skill-related barriers, but their entry into this unregulated profession was fairly open and much more flexible. Similarly, Fang et al. (2013) analyzed the job-search methods used and the associated job success of comparable migrant and native workers in Canada. The authors found that migrants face numerous barriers attributable to the liability-of-foreignness mentioned earlier. This form of liability is typically manifested in either local discriminatory employment practices or in stereotyping of the migrants' countries of national origin.

Lastly, when exploring the existing literature on how skilled migrants reestablish their careers in a local context, we found they face a major obstacle in building a network comparable to the one they left behind. This is complicated by the minority status of most migrant newcomers. One recourse is to seek to become part of homophilous networks (Ibarra, 1993), that is, they become part of the networks of similar others (i.e., ethnic networks of migrants). Although these networks provide some support, they typically do not involve high-status contacts because the similar others are usually not in positions of

<sup>2</sup> When compiling this review we included only articles that contained "migrants" or "migration" as the primary keyword in their title or abstract. We did not incorporate the pool of studies on self-initiated expatriates; for a detailed review of this category of migrants, please see Soutari, Brewster, and Dickmann, (2018).

authority. Confirming this, Al Ariss and Syed (2011) found that the accumulation of local social capital is challenging, but deployment of social capital may also be negatively impacted by factors such as gender and ethnicity.

In conclusion, IB and management research has predominantly focused on studying labor market entry barriers that skilled migrants face upon their arrival in the destination country and before incorporation into the labor market. This focus is unsurprising because the potential contribution of migrants cannot be realized without proper work integration (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003). For migrants, just as for nonmigrants, labor market inclusion brings greater economic security and enhances their well-being and sense of belonging in the receiving society (Huddleston & Dag Tjaden, 2012).

Nevertheless, what happens to migrants after they have entered the local labor market remains severely underexplored. What type of challenges do they face after labor market inclusion? Do they undergo significant professional and identity changes in response to these challenges? What are the mechanisms underlying migrants' status attainment when they move across countries? Do first-generation migrants suffer more than second-generation migrants? Can downward pressures on workplace outcomes based on gender, race, or mother tongue overwhelm generational effects? Until recently, with very few exceptions (e.g., Hajro, Zilinskaite et al., 2017; Kuehlmann, Stahl, Heinz, Hajro, & Vodosek, 2016), IB and IM scholars have made limited contributions to this conversation.

## 2.2. New studies included in the special issue

The two individual-level studies by Shipilov et al. (2020) and Fitzsimmons et al. (2020) published in this special issue address the aforementioned issues as well as others. Shipilov et al. (2020), drawing on research on status and typecasting, reveal the dynamics associated with the loss or gain of professional status when migrants move to a new country. Their insights were developed through an analysis of a unique data set on the status attainment of mainland Chinese movie actors in the Hong Kong film industry. The findings reveal that the experience of migrants in terms of their status in a new country varies based on whether they had low or high status in their country of origin (with those of low status having better chances of improved status when they move), and their ability to support innovation for their local counterparts. It is especially interesting to discover that high status in the home country is not always an advantage in terms of the experience in a new country. This is because high status can give a person unrealistic expectations and reasons for complacency as well as incite discrimination from the local audiences and local counterparts. The results also highlight one of the well-known potential contributions of migrants: bringing a new perspective (innovation) is beneficial to both local workers and migrants—of course, only when such contribution is facilitated and materialized.

In the second article, Fitzsimmons et al. (2020) studied two workplace outcomes for migrants—annual salary and attainment of a supervisory position. They used a sample of 20,000 employees from 6000 Canadian firms and found that the number of barriers (gender, race, migrant generation, and mother tongue) each group faced loosely served to predict pay and promotions. For instance, when holding everything else constant, women earned 13 % less than men. People of color earned 8% less than white people, and migrants working in a nonnative language earned 7.6 % less than those working in their mother tongues. The findings of this study also debunk the common belief that first-generation migrants lag in compensation and advancement at work, but their children fare better for having grown up in the local culture (Algan, Dustmann, Glitz, & Manning, 2010). It would be nice if the popular belief were true, but the story of migrant success is more than a generational story. Both the top and bottom earners in this study were first-generation migrants with white Anglophone/Francophone men at the top and women of color working in a nonnative language at

the bottom.

## 2.3. Migrant entrepreneurs

We next turn our attention to a broader observation: Not all migrants end up being employed by an organization. Many choose to become entrepreneurs instead. The factors behind such choices have been frequently investigated, with most researchers falling into one of two camps—those who subscribe to migrants' entrepreneurship as a survival strategy (economists typically fall into this camp) and those who see business acumen accounting for success (anthropologists and sociologists) (Portes & Yiu, 2013). Sociologists attribute migrants' entrepreneurship to college educations and business experience acquired in the receiving countries (Portes & Jensen, 1989; Portes & Yiu, 2013; Portes & Zhou, 1996). They have described entrepreneurship often emerging among migrant groups with middle-class or elite backgrounds in their home countries that translate into access to financial capital through both relatives and financial institutions catering to migrants in the receiving countries (Naudé, Siegel, & Marchand, 2017; Neville, Orser, Riding, & Jung, 2014). Migrants' willingness to take risks—a characteristic already demonstrated in their becoming migrants—is also a factor in their entrepreneurship (Naudé et al., 2017; Neville et al., 2014). Scholars who stress the survival factor in the choice of entrepreneurship (Shinnar & Young, 2008) emphasize the obstacles that migrants encounter and their use of self-employment as both a way to surmount or circumvent barriers and perhaps even forge a route to upward mobility (Bates, 1994; Min, 1987; Yoon, 1991). Both perspectives, business acumen and survival strategy, support the explanation of differences in the probability for self-employment within migrant groups.

Although there is little doubt that migrants are entrepreneurially active, our knowledge of the factors that motivate them to start new ventures is incomplete (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2020; Dheer, 2018; Lofstrom, 2019). For example, we do not know if generational differences between migrants will predict their intentions to start new ventures. Will those from the first and second generations display greater entrepreneurial intention than later generations? And if the answer is yes, can the mechanism underlying this variance be explained by ascertaining the role of cognition?

## 2.4. Special issue highlights

These questions are addressed in the special issue by Dheer and Lenartowicz (2020). In their study of 289 migrants, they found first- and second-generation migrants are likelier to intend to pursue entrepreneurship than later generations because of variances in cultural intelligence and self-efficacy—components of cognition that enable them to see and exploit the potential of business opportunities in their host countries. Their work offers an alternative and novel explanation for migrants' entrepreneurial potential other than what has been explored in the literature (e.g., the push-pull and disadvantage theories).

Likewise, prior work has speculated about the role of personality in migrant entrepreneurship but has not provided convincing evidence for it. The paper by Vandor (2020) attempts to fill this gap. It reveals that voluntary international migrants have a more entrepreneurial personality as a result of self-selection. Specifically, it suggests that the relationship between voluntary international migration and entrepreneurship is mediated by greater willingness to take risks and, to some extent, by a greater need for achievement.

## 2.5. Organizational-level research on migration in IB and IM

### 2.5.1. Organizational drivers of migrants' integration

The process of immigration inevitably involves organizations that affect the lives and experiences of international migrants. How organizations approach migrants and their integration can have important



consequence for both migrants and for the organizations themselves. However, we have limited understanding of migration-related management policies and practices (Hajro et al., 2019; McGahan, 2019).

The few organizational-level studies on migration in IM research have focused on skilled migrants. For example, Zikic (2015) developed an organizational framework that touches upon three critical stages in the skilled migrants-employer relationship: (1) organizational motivations (knowing why) to hire skilled migrants; (2) organizational practices (knowing how) for attracting and managing skilled migrants' entry, and (3) organizational processes (knowing how and knowing whom) in integrating and developing skilled migrants. Similarly, based on in-depth interviews with skilled migrants working predominantly for large and multinational organizations in Austria, Hajro, Zilinskaite et al. (2017) developed a model illuminating the coping strategies of skilled migrants as a key link between the perceived organizational climate for inclusion and migrants' acculturation modes. The authors identified a range of challenges immigrant employees face in the workplace. Many of these challenges—corporate ethnocentrism, social discrimination, and thoughtless integration policies—were beyond the control of skilled migrants and difficult, if not impossible, to change through rational problem-solving efforts. Hence, in their attempt to sustain a positive state of affect and to continue with their integration efforts, the interviewees developed a range of emotion-focused strategies. Research has also shown that in an effort to help migrants “fit in,” organizations often design policies that fail to leverage the unique capabilities of these individuals, a failure with negative implications for organizational and team effectiveness (Hajro, Gibson et al., 2017). In conclusion, the examination of organizational drivers of migrants' integration in IB/IM is still in its infancy (Hajro et al., 2019).

### 2.5.2. Special issue study

The study by Fernando and Patriotta (2020) published in the special issue contributes to the existing work in this domain. It exemplifies research situated at the intersection of organizational and individual levels, highlighting the importance of the organizational context and its implications for migrants' experience. The authors examined how skilled migrants from Sri Lanka made sense of occupational downgrading associated with their career transitions in organizations in the U.K.

They found that migrants employed in large public sector organizations that were portrayed as generally unwelcoming of foreigners and as having limited formal and informal support structures for them used a disregard sensemaking narrative (*they don't care about us*). Respondents who worked for small unlisted organizations in which a low-pressure environment, a good pay structure, and flexibility appear to have led to an appreciation of their employers despite the career compromises involved, constructed a fit narrative (*this works for us because we are different from them*). The “opportunity” narrative (*we can learn from them*) was evoked by respondents who worked for the Financial Times and Stock Exchange 100 and 250 organizations. These individuals described their organizations in terms of opportunities to learn and develop and a diverse environment.

These three distinct sensemaking narratives allowed migrants to construct a more positive identity in relation to their downgraded occupational status. The insights are theoretically relevant because they point out the moderating role of organizational contexts in linking sensemaking to the identity processes of skilled migrants.

## 2.6. Societal-level research on migration in IB and IM

### 2.6.1. Remittances

The two key themes that emerged in the context of societal-level research on migration in IB and IM are remittances and trade impacts. Economically, the implications of money migrants send to their families and communities of origin represent one of the most transformative processes of global migration (Cummings & Gamlen, 2019; International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020). The financial flows generated

by international migrants' remittances surpass the national budgets of several developing countries as well as the flows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Official Development Aid these countries receive (Batista & Narciso, 2018). In 2018 global remittances reached USD 689 billion, with more than USD 529 billion going to developing countries, where remittances are often one of the largest sectors of the economy (World Bank, 2019). Unfortunately, because of the ongoing economic recession caused by COVID-19, these remittances are projected to fall to USD 445 billion, a decline expected to cause a potential loss of crucial financial support for many vulnerable households (World Bank, 2020).

Despite the importance of such international financial flows, IB scholars have only recently begun to pay more than passing attention to remittances as a source of venture capital, new business ideas, and increased economic internationalization for developing economies. An exception is the work of Vaaler (2011). By analyzing associations between migrant remittances and different indicators of the home country venture investment environment, he found that migrants and their remittances enhance the development of vital entrepreneurial building blocks in migrants' home countries. Remittances are directly associated with the enhanced availability of capital to invest in new businesses, with increased rates of new business startups, and with greater internationalization of the broader economy. Furthermore, the lack of advanced education or technical training associated with migrants from developing countries does not appear to undermine this positioning for venture funding purposes (Vaaler, 2011). However, when remittances come from migrants living abroad in dispersed diasporas, the direct effects of migrant remittances on access to home country venture capital diminish to insignificance. These direct effects are magnified in geographically concentrated diasporas, especially concentrated diasporas composed of less-skilled (educated) migrants (Vaaler, 2013). Noteworthy in this context is that diaspora engagement institutions significantly magnify the positive impact of remittances. More powerful diaspora engagement institutions matter more. The positive effect is higher for institutions that are highly placed politically and located in the executive rather than legislative branch of home country governments (Cummings & Gamlen, 2019).

### 2.6.2. New study included in the special issue

The paper by Piteli et al. (2021) in this special issue contributes to this stream of research. The authors expanded existing work on the relationship between FDI and migrants' remittances by detailing the mediating role of firm creation. Empirical findings also suggest that governance and corruption are important contingencies, influencing the extent to which inward FDI impact remittances as opposed to funding through formal channels such as banks. Such considerations help us explain when this relationship is stronger or weaker, and why some countries are more able than others to attract a higher level of remittances from a given level of inward FDI.

### 2.6.3. Migration-trade nexus

The increased volume of demand created by migrant remittances and investments in their home countries also supports the expansion of the market for multinationals and encourages local firms to go abroad themselves, establishing branches in areas of migrant concentration (Portes, 2001). The literature, predominantly concentrated in the field of economics, identified three channels through which migrant networks impact trade. First, there is an information effect in that migrant networks help reduce transaction costs in trade by mitigating information asymmetries. Second, there is a demand effect because migrants help stimulate trade by demanding goods from their home countries. Third, over time migrants also bring changes in the institutional environment of a location—the so-called “institutional affinity effect”—which makes the location less foreign and more attractive for investing conational firms (Shukla & Cantwell, 2018). Each of these arguments suggests a positive pro-trade effect of migration (Gould, 1994; Hernandez, 2014; Shukla & Cantwell, 2018).

The migration-trade nexus is a widely accepted theorem that has been empirically supported by numerous studies. Gould's work (1994) is one of the most notable investigations into the role migrants' links play in facilitating trade between the host and the home countries of migrant populations. Gould (1994) used a panel data set of 47 U.S. trading partners and showed that migrants' links to a home country have a strong positive impact on exports and imports. Using the same network logic as the aforementioned study—portraying migrants as a knowledge-carrier channel that influences FDI activities—Hernandez (2014) studied foreign subsidiaries established in the U.S. by firms from 27 countries. He found that common nationality links to migrants are important to the process by which firms find a home away from their home countries because, as a source of homophily, they help overcome the relational and communication barriers to the exchange of knowledge. These relationships are especially strong for firms lacking experience in the country, for locations in which migrants can help firms capitalize on industry-specific knowledge spillovers, and for firms with operations that are highly knowledge intensive.

Yet despite the significant role that migrants play in facilitating trade, firms often make heterogeneous investment choices across locations with potentially valuable coethnic communities. They do not always choose to locate where coethnic groups reside. The same firm may seek support from coethnic migrants in one location but not in another (Bartlett & O'Connell, 1998; Dawar & Chandrasekhar, 2009). Further, the ethnic community itself may not always find the presence of firms from the homeland valuable. To address the question when economic exchanges between firms and communities of the same ethnicity are valuable in foreign markets, Li, Hernandez, and Gwon (2019) tested the influence of ethnic communities on the locational choices of firms in places where formal institutions are unreliable. The authors found that a coethnic community has a significantly stronger positive effect on the locational choice of a firm in locations with weak formal laws or high environmental uncertainty than in locations with strong formal laws or low environmental uncertainty.

Collectively, these articles support the notion that transnational ethnic or migrant communities help firms overcome the barriers to foreign expansion (Felbermayr & Toubal, 2012; Girma & Yu, 2002; White & Tadesse, 2011; White, 2007). Typically, these studies test this relationship at the aggregate level by assuming that the main agents (migrants and firms) are homogeneous. In other words, they focus on whether migrants benefit conational firms rather than on exploring when and how they impact the performance of heterogeneous types of conational firms. However, this approach limits our understanding of the underlying components of this comovement.

For instance, we do not know if the integration of migrants into the host country society has any discernable impact on the migration-trade nexus. Likewise, it is unknown whether the geographic dispersal or clustering of migrants in the country of destination exerts any influence on exports from their home country. As for firm-level characteristics, IB scholars have not looked, with one notable exception (Hernandez & Kulchina, 2020), into the relationship between migration, ownership/locational characteristics of firms, and trade. Hence, we still lack insight into whether individually owned, geographically isolated conational firms located in the home country benefit to the same extent from migrants as multinational enterprises (MNEs) or state-owned enterprises.

#### 2.6.4. Special issue highlight

Some questions about the role(s) of migrants in international trade are addressed in the article by Cai et al. (2021), who studied 50,000 Chinese firms that export to 205 nations with Chinese migrants. They found an inverse correlation between integration of migrants into the host country and exports from their country of origin. This suggests less integrated migrants drive the demand for home goods. On the supply side, individually owned and remotely located firms benefit more from migration than state-owned enterprises and Chinese multinationals.

Because of locations that may be outside of export zones, these smaller firms may be ineligible for infrastructure support and government resources that enhance trade. Conational migrants help these disadvantaged firms fill the gaps in their information and support resources, especially in the early years when these firms are struggling to develop overseas business. The insights of Cai et al. (2021) show migration and development are more connected and also more complex than usually thought, with migrants playing a key role.

### 3. The future of migration research: breaking away from disciplinary closure and integrating different levels of analysis

In this introduction to the special issue we have provided a brief overview of the literature on migration in IB and IM. The seven articles published highlight specific aspects of this literature and extend existing theory and knowledge on migration in new and relevant ways. What follows are some thoughts on how we, as a field, could capitalize on this knowledge and develop it further.

#### 3.1. Breaking away from disciplinary closure

Our overview and the studies included in this special issue underline the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to migration studies (Castles, 2010). For instance, it seems essential to acknowledge and build upon some enduring fundamentals of migration theory such as Ravenstein's (1885, 1889) law of migration, the new economics of labor migration (Lucas & Stark, 1985; Stark, 1991) and the transnational perspective of migration (Portes, 1999; Vertovec, 2004). Otherwise, we risk limiting our understanding of the full complexity of migration processes and their implications for the activities of MNEs, societies, and individuals themselves. The social science disciplines already house a range of theoretical perspectives on migration that could be harnessed to fill in more details of the phenomenon and its implications for IB and IM (King, 2012). These include the noteworthy contributions of well-established migration scholars such as Alejandro Portes (transnational entrepreneurship and the new second generation of migrants), Stephen Castles (citizenship, migration, and the politics of belonging), Steven Vertovec (migration, diasporas, and transnationalism), Hein de Haas (international population movements in the modern world and the effectiveness of migration policies), and Russell King (the changing global map of migration), among others.

#### 3.2. Integrating different levels of analysis

It is important to keep in mind that the individual outcomes of migrants are affected by influences at multiple levels and that no single antecedent variable or set of variables at one level (e.g., individual traits, motives, or competences) is likely to predict or explain by itself the integration success of these individuals (Hajro et al., 2019). A trend in the literature is to recognize the agency of migrants; nevertheless, for a more inclusive study of migration, we must not forget that migration is patterned by decisions taken in government offices, by policy makers, and by the headquarters of firms. Hence, the interplay between the agency of a migrant and the structural context within which he or she maneuvers should remain at the heart of our studies (King, 2012). With this in mind, we next focus on three broad themes that represent potential avenues for future research: (a) the interplay between organizational context and migrants; (b) the implications of macro-level contextual aspects for organizations that rely on migrants, and (c) migrants and their organizations as integral to societal changes.

#### 3.3. The interplay between organizational context and migrants

For migrant employees, organizational context provides the purpose, resources, norms, and meanings that shape their behavior (Hackman, 1999). The context of an organization includes its patterns of social

integration, organizational climate and culture, diversity history, strategic focus, and the presence of specific practices for managing migrants (Hajro, Zilinskaite et al., 2017; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Zikic, 2015). Whether transient or enduring, organizational contextual factors play a key role in shaping workplace dynamics. Yet scant literature exists on the organizational drivers of migrants' integration (Zilinskaite & Hajro, 2020). The two greatest challenges to future advancement may be (a) the large number of potentially important contextual factors to consider in combination with (b) the lack of a strong theory to guide researchers in the search for contextual factors to study. Four important contextual aspects deserve our scholarly attention and should be considered in future research.

### 3.3.1. Organizational diversity climates

The literature on organizational diversity climates represents a potential source of frameworks and ideas for the study of migrants' integration success. Elements of organizational context that are pertinent for diversity (e.g., diversity policies and procedures, management approaches to diversity, etc.) can be detrimental or beneficial to migrants' workplace outcomes (Hajro, Gibson et al., 2017). Their nature directly influences migrants' conflict resolution styles, their feelings of being valued and respected, and the meaning and significance they attach to their own identities (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, diversity climates have been ignored in studying migrant employees (e.g., Hajro, Zilinskaite et al., 2017). For example, we don't know how behavioral strategies and psychological processes that migrants use to make sense of their work experiences differ in "multicultural" organizations—characterized by a collective commitment to integrating diverse cultural identities—from "plural" organizations that expect nontraditional employees to assimilate to dominant norms (Cox, 1991).

### 3.3.2. Human resource management policies and practices

Worth further exploration is also the complexity today's organizations face in light of the changing nature of contemporary diversity (Vertovec, 2010). With migrants moving from more places through more places to fewer countries, it has become more difficult to make clear distinctions between migrants' nations of origin and destinations (Czaika & de Haas, 2014). Consequently, old labels for easy distinctions between origins and destinations no longer apply. An individual's ancestry, birth, education, and employment history may each reflect different countries; the mix becomes even more complex when spouses and children are considered. This complexity reflects the changes that have made migration easier for individuals but more complicated and challenging for the companies that hire them. Topics of investigation in traditional international human resource management (HRM) — such as recruiting, managing and developing globally mobile employees—may take on different meaning in the context of today's migrants (Tung, 2016; Zilinskaite & Hajro, 2020). More research is needed on MNCs' staffing policies and practices pertaining to the new varieties of migrant employees.

### 3.3.3. Organizational strategy

Understanding migrants' work outcomes requires understanding the strategic motives of organizations in employing them. This vital interrelationship remains empirically unexplored and thus deserves our scholarly attention. Organizations may vary in the specifics of how their assessments of migrants relate to their overall strategies. Some see migrants as a route for quick access to otherwise inaccessible markets while others seize upon their availability as means to reconfigure their work. More specifically, some organizations view the insights, skills, and experiences of migrants as potentially valuable resources they can use to refine products, strategies, and business practices (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Zikic, 2015). And sometimes migrant employees are nothing more than a way to fill labor shortages. What we don't know is if and how the strategic motivation to employ migrants may influence their

individual-level outcomes such as the strength of their transnational ties, migrants' motivation to integrate, their host country career embeddedness and, more importantly, better health and employee well-being (Zilinskaite & Hajro, 2020). With regard to the last point, research in medicine has shown that migrants often display what is known as the "healthy immigrant effect" (Dunn & Dyck, 2000): they tend to be healthier and live longer than people living in either the communities they leave or in those in which they settle. Yet health vulnerabilities and resilience factors are dynamic and change over time. An elevated health status can be eroded by unstable working conditions experienced post-migration (Aldridge et al., 2018). Future research should explore if and how strategic motivations of MNCs to employ migrants impact individual migrants' health outcomes. For instance, do firms with motives related only to a shortage of workers, especially if hiring them is perceived as a short-term solution, potentially harm migrants' health?

### 3.3.4. Corporate social responsibility aspects

How migrant workers are recruited is another important gap in research. Unethical recruiters pursue practices that turn many low-skilled migrant workers into forced laborers by keeping them impoverished and locked into jobs with no future and a risky present. These practices often include debt bondage linked to the payment of extensive recruitment fees. Although employers of higher-skilled migrant workers normally cover these costs, lower-skilled migrant workers pay agencies between USD 500 to USD 5,000, or the equivalent of one month up to as much as 15 months of their earnings abroad (Jureidini, 2016).

The situation of low-skilled migrants generates a lot of rhetoric but not enough commitment to gain the resources and enact policies to make meaningful differences in their lives. Another impediment is a lack of basic knowledge and experience among scholars in how to approach pursuing and securing the ethical recruitment practices that are needed, along with potential risks associated with engaging in such topics (Stringer & Simmons, 2015). Nevertheless, the plight of this category of migrant workers deserves immediate attention (Zilinskaite & Hajro, 2020). The current lack of attention was also reflected in the type of submissions we received for our special issue. Not a single paper among the 65 submissions centered on the social, humanitarian, and business implications of low-skilled migrants.

### 3.3.5. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on migrants and the role of the private sector

Migrant workers are often vulnerable to exploitation, and this vulnerability might be accentuated in situations of economic hardships. Many of them risk being hit the hardest by the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially if they are in early stages of settling into a new country. Although stories about such risks abound in the media, there is much to learn about the potential impact of COVID-19 on low-skilled migrants. How do companies respond to the current crisis? Do they account for the unique vulnerabilities of migrant workers (e.g., anxiety of being isolated and far from their homes, fear of deportation if they lose their jobs and work permits)? How do they ensure that the living conditions in employer-owned or operated accommodation are safe? What steps do they take to prevent discrimination, xenophobia and/or exclusion related to migrants and COVID-19 (International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS), 2020)? These are all questions worth investigating for the benefit of both migrants and organizations, and ultimately for society in general. They can also generate important insights in theorizing about the role of organizations in the "new-normal" envisioned for a post-COVID world.

Having elaborated upon the corporate drivers of migrants' integration, we will now provide an overview of macro-level aspects that may determine internal organizational dynamics and influence the individual experience of migrants.



### 3.4. Implications of macro-level contextual aspects for organizations that rely on migrants

Very little research has been done in IB/IM on the policy choices (e.g., assimilation, integration, multiculturalism) that shape migration effects despite the significance of these effects for organizations that rely on migrants. In many countries, preferences toward assimilation dominate much of the political thinking. This approach builds upon three assumptions: (1) diverse ethnic groups come to share a common culture (2) original cultural and behavioral patterns gradually disappear in favor of new ones, and (3) diverse migrant groups are expected to “melt” into the mainstream culture. National governments who rely on this assimilationist model usually support the idea that the maintenance of social and economic ties with origin countries is a manifestation of migrants’ unwillingness to integrate (de Haas & Fokkema, 2011). In contrast, the multiculturalism approach values diversity and expects a low degree of adaptation by migrants. In essence, multiculturalism encourages various migrants’ groups to retain their distinct identities (Chand & Tung, 2019; International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2020). As such it enables and supports transnational migrants’ ties and interactions with different social worlds and communities (home, host, and third countries) (Chand & Tung, 2019; Vertovec, 2007). These ties, in turn, provide social networks that facilitate trade and investment opportunities for home and host countries of migrants and have implications for both the organizations that employ them (migrants as entrée into new markets) and for conational migrant firms (migrants as markets, customers, and knowledge carrier channels).

Although the framing of international migration as a transnational process has dominated migration studies for the last decade (Castles, 2010; Faist, 2000; Portes, 2010), with very few exceptions (e.g., studies on transnational entrepreneurship) this analytical theme has not yet become an integral part of the mainstream IB and IM literature. We believe this is an important omission. Portes (1999) offers a much-quoted definition of transnationalism: “transnationalism involves migrant activities that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants. ... These activities are not limited to economic enterprises, but include political, cultural and religious activities as well.” The value of this approach is that it delineates the complex interrelationship between host country integration policies (e.g., assimilation and multiculturalism) and migrants’ networks and organizations. As such it questions the push-pull, no-return model; it also places a big question mark over the extensive body of literature devoted to the integration/assimilation of migrants in host countries and organizations (King, 2012). Nevertheless, these are precisely the models and literature that continue to dominate much of our IB and IM theorizing.

Apart from their indirect impact on firms via transnational ties, macro-level factors may also have direct implications for organizations that rely on migrants. For instance, aspects of the broader institutional and cultural context (migration policies, public support systems, societal values, host country level of ethnocentrism, etc.) may shape organizational culture, policies, and practices that affect the integration of migrants. Similarly, broader macro forces (e.g., nepotism or in-group networks, xenophobia, or other types of social discrimination) may impact migrants’ ability to cope with challenges in the workplace. Yet how these relationships vary across different institutional and cultural contexts and what the implications of macro influences are for the activities, strategies, structures, and decision-making processes of firms remain uncharted territory. We do not know how organizations respond to external pressures (e.g., restrictions on numbers of migrants allowed to enter a country, political conservatism; new migration rhetoric in light of the COVID-19 crisis), and how these challenges in turn affect their strategies, diversity climates, and HRM policies targeted toward migrants.

Likewise, we believe the perspective of migrants as super-entrepreneurs is problematic. Bad migration policies have been both

obscured and worsened by this perspective that seems to assume migrants operate in a vacuum. Quite the reverse is true: Formal and informal institutions matter when it comes to migration and entrepreneurship (Naudé et al., 2017). Further refutation of the migrant-as-entrepreneur perspective surfaces in the statistic that, measured by self-employment, such entrepreneurship can only be considered a common occurrence in 13 of 25 OECD countries (OECD, 2010). Similarly, according to the 2012 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, in sub-Saharan Africa first-generation migrants account for only 1.8 % of early entrepreneurial activity in contrast to 11 % and 10 % in the U.S. and Western Europe, respectively (Vorderwülbecke, 2012), and highlights the complexity of the migration-entrepreneurship relationship (de Haas, 2010; Naudé et al., 2017). There “is no automatic mechanism by which international migration leads to development” (de Haas, 2010: 240). Future research should explore the cross-national dimensions—political-cultural contexts in the destination country and migration and integration policies—that distort or facilitate migrant entrepreneurship.

### 3.5. Migrants and their organizations as integral to societal changes

Over time, the reverse is also likely, namely that migrants impact the local environment (Shukla & Cantwell, 2018). Although they do not bring substantial societal transformations by themselves, patterns of cross-border exchanges and relationships among migrants can contribute significantly to changing individual orientations toward consumption and collective sociocultural practices; migrants can even exert influence on political frameworks (e.g., shifts affecting the nation-state model) and affect integral processes of economic development (e.g., remittances, transnational ethnic entrepreneurship) (King, 2012; Portes, 1999; Vertovec, 2004). Similarly, the presence of significant ethnic enclaves in a host country can over time change the fabric of the local society or of the receiving city. Only a few business scholars have paid attention to these conjoined processes of transformation (Shukla & Cantwell, 2018). We believe this lack of attention is an important omission. Meaning is derived from context. Hence, we can no longer ignore the ongoing societal changes and political shifts triggered by patterns of global migration.

Furthermore, although we have highlighted that locals form perceptions of migrants on the basis of experiences in the society and that these perceptions can spill over into organizations, we do not know if the reverse may also hold true—namely whether exposure to a positive organizational climate that values and supports migrants may influence how host country nationals make sense of and view migration in society. Can organizations act as primary change agents? Can positive organizational perceptions of migrant employees provide a lens for viewing migration issues in a society in general and ideally result in less discrimination? These questions represent an interesting avenue for future research. They have the potential to move the study of migration into some fascinating directions in which organizations and the broader society adopt a more holistic view of their roles in the discussion and treatment of migrants. In Table 1, we list the key research findings on migration in IB and IM to date and summarize the themes we have identified as fruitful for a future research agenda.

## 4. Concluding remarks and further implications for future research

In this final section we would like to highlight some concluding remarks and further implications of our overview and the seven articles published in this special issue. The insights provide nuance to the topic of migration and underline some of its unique features.

First, we have shown that the relative number of migrants on a global level has remained remarkably constant over the last half century—international migrants are around 3.5 % of the world’s population (Czaika & de Haas, 2014; IOM, 2020). What has changed is the direction



**Table 1**  
Key research findings on migration in IB and IM to date and a proposed research agenda.

Level of analysis	Phenomena/Topics
Research predominantly at the individual level of analysis	<p><b>Key findings to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career transitions and work integration issues of skilled migrants upon arrival in the host country (e.g., <a href="#">Dietz et al., 2015</a>; <a href="#">Zikic &amp; Richardson, 2016</a>)</li> <li>• Labor market entry barriers of skilled migrants in the destination country (e.g., <a href="#">Fang et al., 2013</a>)</li> <li>• Accumulation and deployment of skilled migrants' social capital (e.g., <a href="#">Al Ariss &amp; Syed, 2011</a>)</li> <li>• Migrants' workplace outcomes (e.g., loss of professional status) (e.g., <a href="#">Fitzsimmons et al., 2020</a>; <a href="#">Shipilov et al., 2020</a>)</li> <li>• Factors influencing migrants' entrepreneurship (e.g., business acumen, survival strategy, cognition, and personality) (e.g., <a href="#">Dheer &amp; Lenartowicz, 2020</a>; <a href="#">Vandor, 2020</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Future implications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core challenges low-skilled migrant workers face (e.g., forced labor, debt bondage, dangerous and demeaning work) and coping strategies they develop in response to these challenges</li> <li>• Psychological and behavioral processes skilled migrant employees use to make sense of their work experiences</li> <li>• Migrants' physical and mental health needs and challenges across time</li> <li>• Inclusion and the role of migrant workers in times of crises (e.g., COVID-19)</li> </ul> <p><b>Key findings to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational motivations, practices, and processes for attracting, integrating, and developing skilled migrants (e.g., <a href="#">Zikic, 2015</a>)</li> <li>• Impact of different aspects of organizational context on skilled migrants' sensemaking processes and identity constructions (e.g., <a href="#">Fernando &amp; Patriotta, 2020</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Future implications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core responsibilities of companies around recruiting high- and low-skilled migrant workers for overseas employment and ensuring responsible HRM practices</li> <li>• Corporate responses to restrictions on rights and movement of migrants (e.g., COVID-19, new post-Brexit immigration regime)</li> <li>• Strategic motivations to employ migrants (e.g., migrants as a source of labor, means through which firms gain entrée into previously inaccessible markets or valuable boundary spanners in global organizational contexts) and the resulting organizational- and individual-level outcomes (e.g., knowledge transfer, foreign market expansion, migrants' health and well-being)</li> <li>• The role of MNEs in managing sociocultural stereotypes against immigrants and fostering intercultural inclusiveness</li> </ul> <p><b>Key findings to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remittances as a source of venture capital, new business ideas, and increased economic internationalization for developing economies (e.g., <a href="#">Vaaler, 2011</a>)</li> </ul>
	Research predominantly at the firm-level of analysis
Research predominantly at the macro-level of analysis	<p><b>Key findings to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational motivations, practices, and processes for attracting, integrating, and developing skilled migrants (e.g., <a href="#">Zikic, 2015</a>)</li> <li>• Impact of different aspects of organizational context on skilled migrants' sensemaking processes and identity constructions (e.g., <a href="#">Fernando &amp; Patriotta, 2020</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Future implications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core responsibilities of companies around recruiting high- and low-skilled migrant workers for overseas employment and ensuring responsible HRM practices</li> <li>• Corporate responses to restrictions on rights and movement of migrants (e.g., COVID-19, new post-Brexit immigration regime)</li> <li>• Strategic motivations to employ migrants (e.g., migrants as a source of labor, means through which firms gain entrée into previously inaccessible markets or valuable boundary spanners in global organizational contexts) and the resulting organizational- and individual-level outcomes (e.g., knowledge transfer, foreign market expansion, migrants' health and well-being)</li> <li>• The role of MNEs in managing sociocultural stereotypes against immigrants and fostering intercultural inclusiveness</li> </ul> <p><b>Key findings to date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational motivations, practices, and processes for attracting, integrating, and developing skilled migrants (e.g., <a href="#">Zikic, 2015</a>)</li> <li>• Impact of different aspects of organizational context on skilled migrants' sensemaking processes and identity constructions (e.g., <a href="#">Fernando &amp; Patriotta, 2020</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Future implications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core responsibilities of companies around recruiting high- and low-skilled migrant workers for overseas employment and ensuring responsible HRM practices</li> <li>• Corporate responses to restrictions on rights and movement of migrants (e.g., COVID-19, new post-Brexit immigration regime)</li> <li>• Strategic motivations to employ migrants (e.g., migrants as a source of labor, means through which firms gain entrée into previously inaccessible markets or valuable boundary spanners in global organizational contexts) and the resulting organizational- and individual-level outcomes (e.g., knowledge transfer, foreign market expansion, migrants' health and well-being)</li> <li>• The role of MNEs in managing sociocultural stereotypes against immigrants and fostering intercultural inclusiveness</li> </ul>

**Table 1 (continued)**

Level of analysis	Phenomena/Topics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications of diaspora engagement institutions for remittances (e.g., <a href="#">Cummings &amp; Gamlen, 2019</a>)</li> <li>• Relationship between FDI and remittances (e.g., <a href="#">Piteli et al., 2021</a>)</li> <li>• Pro-trade effects of migration (information, demand, and institutional affinity effect) (e.g., <a href="#">Shukla &amp; Cantwell, 2018</a>)</li> <li>• Coethnic communities, formal institutions, and locational choices of firms (e.g., <a href="#">Li et al., 2019</a>)</li> <li>• Underlying components behind the trade-migration nexus: firm-level characteristics and level of migrants' integration into the host society (e.g., <a href="#">Cai et al., 2021</a>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Future implications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications of transnationalism for mainstream IB and IM literature (e.g., integration/assimilation research)</li> <li>• Patterns of global migration and its implications for ongoing societal changes and political shifts in host countries</li> <li>• Impact of the broader institutional and cultural context (e.g., migration policies, societal values, host country ethnocentrism) on firms' policies and practices with regard to migrant employees</li> <li>• Relationship between formal and informal institutions and migrant entrepreneurship</li> </ul>

of flows and the nature of migrants. For instance, Europe, once a major source of outbound migration, in recent years has become a destination for international migrants ([Czaika & de Haas, 2014](#)). Such changes suggest the need to shift our view of migration as a challenge for specific societies that might see increased levels of migration at a particular point in time. Perhaps instead we should adopt a perspective that acknowledges the global and cyclical nature of this phenomenon and better defines it in terms of the sum of individual choices that are to be analyzed in terms of advantages and disadvantages to all the various communities affected ([Czaika & de Haas, 2014](#); [de Haas, 2007, 2015](#))

Second, empirical studies included in our special issue challenge the often-generalized assumption that migrants are driven by a lack of opportunities in migrants' developing home countries: Lack of opportunities is just one of the factors that can drive migration. Therefore, policies focusing on one-sided aspects of migration—such as those aimed at reducing permanent migration ([de Haas, 2007](#)) by creating better home country opportunities (e.g., through increased exports) can be misleading. For instance, these policies overlook the fact that migrants themselves drive demand for goods produced in their home country. The paper by [Cai et al. \(2021\)](#) in this special issue reveals such complex dynamics that must be considered. Migrants' links to their home countries positively influence bilateral trade flows. Yet not all companies benefit equally from same-nationality migrants abroad. The strength of the supply-push effect on country-of-origin exports is not uniform. It is based on firms' ownership and locational characteristics. Privately owned, small firms benefit more from same-nationality migrants than large state-owned enterprises or MNEs.

In line with this, [Piteli et al. \(2021\)](#) reveal that inward FDI stimulates migrant remittances by increasing entrepreneurial opportunities to create businesses that support the activities and operations of incoming MNEs. Put differently, international operations by MNEs, notably FDI, act as a provider of investment opportunities for local entrepreneurs who use remittances as funding for investments that support the network structure (ensuring a business ecosystem) of MNEs. These two papers highlight the conditions under which migration contributes to poorer countries' development.

Finally, papers in this special issue by [Dheer and Lenartowicz \(2020\)](#);

Fernando and Patriotta (2020); Fitzsimmons et al. (2020) & Shipilov et al. (2020) collectively question the controversial view of some politicians that migrants threaten the welfare state. Instead they reveal the positive economic consequences of migrants and migrant entrepreneurship, delineate how migrants bring opportunities of creative input for high-status local incumbents, and explain the underlying sense-making mechanisms that enable migrants to maintain positive identities and continue to contribute to their organizational success despite their downgraded occupational status.

In conclusion, migration is not a problem. It is a global phenomenon embedded in multifaceted contexts with economic, cultural, legal, and political elements. As such, it can only be understood properly through multiple lenses and levels of observation. Limiting enquiry to single levels of analysis may reduce our understanding of the full complexity of migration processes and hold us back from building robust theory. Likewise, to adequately capture the inherent complexity of the phenomenon, it is necessary to combine ideas and methods from other disciplines. We need a range of interlocking cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, assembled in various combinations, if we wish to develop a deep understanding of the nature of migration and its implications for IB and IM (King, 2012). This involves bringing together scholars from different fields, embracing both micro and macro theories, and using a broad, inclusive, range of qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is our sincere hope that this special issue will inspire future research on migration that is meaningful, of high impact, and above all deployed in the service of those 272 million people who are currently subjected to it.

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