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Introduction

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International migration is in the news almost daily and has risen up the political agenda of national governments and supranational organisations. Migration affects sending as well as receiving countries and is an inherent part of current processes of globalisation and internationalisation. In recent decades, international migrations have been characterised by profound changes. Global migration resulted in the transformation of societies and cultural diversity within specific countries. If the number of migrants in a country is high, this group automatically becomes relevant for multiple societal actors. People in the industrialised world struggle with questions of integration, political incorporation, undocumented immigration, and who could/should be allowed in and who should be refused. Countries in the "Global South" see needed trained professionals leave for opportunities envisaged as elsewhere in the world.

Migration research is gaining interest. But there is no encompassing coherent theory about international migration, only a series of partial ideas and models that have been separately developed, often divided by different disciplinary viewpoints, borders and goals (De Haas, 2010). All this is logical because the diverse approaches to migration were developed to study specific phenomena, without consideration for universal applicability. Research questions did not fit within any discipline's traditional boundaries and no single discipline had an overall stake in the results of the study. Research on human migration within social sciences is thus multidisciplinary. Different disciplines put forward different theoretical explanations, using different levels of analysis, different

approaches, stressing different research questions, and this results in a large variety of viewpoints and positions. Massey et al. (1993, p. 432) state that "a full understanding of contemporary migratory processes will not be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone, or by focusing on a single level of analysis". To this end, a multidisciplinary and multilevel approach must be used, presenting theories from sociology, political science, economics, psychology, anthropology, social geography, development studies and environmental studies and deriving its findings from micro-, meso- and macro-level contexts. Researchers also struggle with methods as they attempt to fit the "unwieldy questions of immigration into patterned disciplinary methodological techniques" (DeSipio et al., 2007). International migration includes processes as diverse as colonising movements, refugee migration, migration of ethnic and/or religious minorities, employment-related migration involving people with various levels of education and training, student mobility, family migration and intra-European mobility. The focus of this volume is on one of the many processes: labour-related migration.

Research by social scientists into international migration and the mobility of people has constantly been growing: more people are involved, more research projects are conducted, and more articles and books are published. Yet, apart from "still lack[ing] a body of cumulative knowledge to explain why some people become mobile, while most do not, and what this means for the societies where migrants come from, pass through and settle in (not forgetting that most societies are all of these to some extent)" (Castles, 2010), we do not even have a common definition of a migrant. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a migrant as "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence". The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines migrant workers – the main actors in labour migration – as "[…] all international migrants who are currently employed or unemployed and seeking employment in their present country of residence" (ILO, 2015). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs's definition of who is an international migrant is quite broad: "any person who changes his or her country of usual residence" (UN DESA, 1998).

These rather broad definitions immediately highlight that human movement is at the core of what is commonly known as migration. The kind of geographical mobility that migrants become associated with is usually limited in terms of time, but it shapes their lives significantly (Hage, 2005). Indeed, the migrant

is a "figure least defined by its being and place and more by its becoming and displacement; by its movement" (Nail, 2015, p. 3). However, while centring the definition of a "migrant" on movement through social and geographical space we should not forget that numerous forms of mobility entail such movements, and that the multitude of terms used to describe these mobilities reveals the differing social values associated with the former and those who engage in them (Salazar, 2018; Sandoz, 2019). For instance, relatively recent debates about whether refugees should be considered migrants reflect implicit and explicit normative stances on who is "deserving" of international protection and who is not.[1] Other discussions have similarly upheld normative stances on who merits hospitality and who does not by erecting a dichotomy between voluntary and involuntary migration (Bivand Erdal & Oeppen, 2018; Carling, 2017, p. 3). In this volume we opt for an inclusive definition of the "migrant", focused on the act of leaving one's habitual place of residence, rather than on the motives and drivers for that move. The latter are discussed in terms of imaginaries and aspirations that shape migratory trajectories, together with the regimes of mobility that enable, disable and structure mobilities involved in labour-related migration projects. With geographical mobility at its core (Salazar & Jayaram, 2016), migration is entangled with other forms of mobility too, including labour flexibility, seasonal and temporary mobility for work, regular cross-border commuting, (im)mobility within countries tied to residence requirements, as well as processes of up- and downward socio-economic mobility entrenched in geographical movement.

Labour-related mobilities exist in many shades and colours. Just as the temporal patterns of work have been diversifying, so too have its spatial patterns. Karl Marx (1906) as early as in the nineteenth century described how human mobility contributes to a reserve labour army, which facilitates the low wages necessary for the growth of capitalist industry. Labour-related mobilities are thus by no means new (Prothero & Chapman, 1985). However, because of processes of globalisation, increased levels of education, the proliferation of global media, improved transport systems and the internationalisation of business and labour markets, the nature and purpose of such mobilities are becoming increasingly complex.

Labour mobility is positively valued by respected international organisations such as the OECD (Dayton-Johnson et al., 2007) and the UNDP (UNDP, 2009). As with mobility in general, work-related mobility is intimately intertwined with the promise of economic and symbolic mobility. This is based on the assumption that a position elsewhere is "a source of exceptional learning [...] that allows

individuals to enhance their employability over time" (Williams, 2009, p. 23). As a result, "mobility itself becomes a valued measure of individual achievement; people point out the obstacles they had to overcome to make each successive move" (Ossman, 2004, p. 117). One can see labour mobility as a response to a neoliberal requirement for employment flexibility, which is believed to be a prerequisite for "success" (Sennett, 1998).

Nicholas De Genova points out how "free" and mobile labour, produced by the evolution of capitalism, is "a distinctly circumscribed" form of freedom (De Genova & Peutz, 2010, p. 56)—the "freedom" to move about and sell one's labour is produced by the lack of freedom to withhold one's labour. Mobility is, then, a contradictory form of freedom, produced by the needs and effects of global capital, yet resistant to total control by capital or the state. Labour mobilities, marked by the imposition of restrictive regulation, are entirely consistent with neoliberal labour regimes and their need for flexible, docile and expendable labour. The intersection of mediating influences such as the changing social divisions of labour, regulation and institutions, and issues of social identities, social recognition and discrimination determines whether transnational mobility leads to labour market entrapment or potential stepping-stones for individuals.

While labour mobility involves migration, the willingness to migrate in search of employment is insufficient to compel anyone to move. Other processes related to the existence (or lack) of opportunities in both sending and receiving countries and regions, the imaginaries one has of life as a migrant, and the many different rules and regulations that hinder, facilitate or even stimulate (cross-border) movement are all of great importance in the decision-making process of migrants and those who aspire to become such. Clearly, the dynamics of labour mobility are not solely dependent on workers' readiness to migrate. They are also heavily influenced by the opportunities perceived and the imaginaries held by both employers and regulating authorities in relation to migrant labour. Imaginaries, understood as socially shared and transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices (Salazar, 2018, p. 162), indeed play a central role in how potential destinations are pictured as greener pastures or in the romanticising of the homeland (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013, p. 194). At the same time, the predominance of a "migration culture" does not necessarily spawn greater readiness to seek employment overseas (Timmerman et al., 2014). It is thus of great importance to approach migration and labour mobility from a more encompassing and wider perspective.

This volume comprises chapters based on research conducted in different geographical contexts, including the European Union, Turkey and South Africa, and tackling the experiences and aspirations of migrants from various parts of the globe. In doing so, the authors weave their analyses from two distinct yet intertwined vantage points: the role of structures and regimes of mobility on the one hand, and aspirations as well as migrant imaginaries on the other. As the different chapters show, these intertwine to make and shape movements in space. These two conceptual vantage points allow the exploration of how cross-border mobilities that are usually experienced as personal, bottom-up desires are strongly shaped by top-down (infra-)structures. More importantly though, while the studies featured in this volume build around these seemingly dichotomous analytical entry points, the authors disrupt this dichotomy by pointing to the malleability and fragility of mobility regimes in the face of emancipatory and agentic action (see chapters by de Sousa Ribeiro, Lulle, Ncube& Mkwananzi, Wajsberg), while showing how the aspirations of migrants and their imaginaries are circumscribed by and feed back into how labour mobility is structured (see chapters by Di Martino et al., Dimitriadis, Moderbacher and Ayaydin). We opted for a division of the volume into two separate but related sections to reflect the privileging of either one of these vantage points in the analyses featured in the different chapters.

The first part of this book focuses more on the structures and "regimes of mobility" that underpin how people embark on their migration trajectories and offers insights into how the former enable and delineate forms of cross-border and internal mobility. In this context, "regime" refers to "the role both of individual states and of changing international regulatory and surveillance administrations that affect individual mobility" (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013, p. 189). The contributions in this section notably deal with issues of deskilling, brain waste, the proliferation of precarious employment, as well as the role of gender in structuring mobility, at the intersection of regimes of mobility and flexibility.

Lulle (Chapter 1) argues that labour migration theories ought to be read critically through the lens of care. She discusses how the need and desire among Latvian labour migrants to provide co-present care, meaning by being physically present, affect their decisions about the location and length of their stays abroad. The need to travel home regularly patterns their mobility, rendering migration often temporary, seasonal or requiring a supportive network of co-workers and employers to allow for longer absences from work. Advancing that migration is

not solely an economic endeavour but also a care-giving project, Lulle critically evaluates migrants' ability to make use of their rights as workers when the regimes that enable their mobility also restrict it; despite entitlements to holiday and compassionate leave, her data show that migrant workers frequently feel that if they were to claim these rights they would quickly be replaced by someone else.

The enabling and disabling qualities of regimes of mobility are also discussed by de Sousa Ribeiro (Chapter 2). Here, such regimes include regulations pertaining to the recognition of skills that are directly linked to social mobility. Situating her discussion in Portugal, where she looks at the experiences of healthcare workers from Eastern Europe who arrived in the 1990s, she explores the interrelations between regulation regimes (e.g. admission policies, academic institutions' procedures, professional bodies' rules) and emancipation structures (e.g. regularisation programmes, subsidised re-accreditation programmes, fast-track diploma recognition) to discuss how initiatives at various levels have contributed to institutional change.

Structuring mobilities, whether spatial or socio-economic, are influenced not only by regimes but also by social factors that work in everyday interactions and influence ideas of what is desirable, appropriate or possible (e.g. gender). Following the capabilities approach (Sen, 2001; Nussbaum, 2011) and looking at the influence of migration as a gendered endeavour, Ncube and Mkwananzi (Chapter 3) discuss how migration has allowed female sub-Saharan economic migrants in South Africa to be agentic and interrupt ascribed traditional gendered roles and stereotypes.

The tension between structure and agency is also explored by Wajsberg (Chapter 4). She analyses narratives of (im)mobility as experienced by West African migrants during their migration trajectories within Europe. Wajsberg disentangles the various navigational tactics her interlocutors have engaged in to achieve both spatial and socio-economic mobility despite their immobilisation by restrictive national and supranational migration policies within the European Union. These include individuals side-stepping some of the residence requirements that tie them to a particular place, to organising and participating in grassroots movements challenging the rules and regulations that immobilise them.

The authors featured in this first part of the book notably draw our attention to the tensions between migrants' aspirations vested in their migratory endeavours and the structures and regimes that circumscribe their mobilities. Agency and emancipation feature in all four chapters, as the authors explore how

immobilising structures are negotiated and challenged by their respondents, potentially contributing to change (see de Sousa Ribeiro, this volume). These efforts are part and parcel of ongoing migratory projects that did not end with border-crossing; the projects continue in the form of struggles to find access to the labour market and to benefit from it so as not to reproduce the sort of stasis many wanted to get away from by leaving their places of origin.

Bottom-up initiatives, such as interest groups and movements formed through social media (see de Sousa Ribeiro; Wajsberg, this volume), play an important role in dealing with the circumstances of labour migration, as do offline social ties (see Lulle, this volume). Migrant networks are an important resource to negotiate or (attempt to) disrupt mobility regimes and surmount immobilisation. As de Sousa Ribeiro and Lulle have shown, these networks not only help to deal with what immediately concerns people's ability to be spatially mobile (i.e. material and legislative circumstances) but, beyond that, with the rules and regulations that relate to work, such as the transferability and accreditation of skills, as well as workers' rights. In recognition of the interrelationship of spatial and socio-economic mobility, which is not exclusive but definitely central to migration for work, we may think of structures and regimes of mobility as including not only migration policies and the policing of borders and border-crossings on the ground, but also the rules and regulations surrounding flexible work and the acceptance and recognition of academic and professional credentials and experience.

The second part of the book focuses on the imaginaries driving desires and decisions to migrate. Imaginaries of "other" places are at the root of many travels, including labour migration (Salazar, 2011, p. 575). People seldom travel to *terrae incognitae* these days, but instead journey to places they already "know" through the imaginaries that circulate about them (Salazar, 2013). These intuitions and rumours of "the other side" (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013, p. 195) can include general expectations of achieving "better lives" through employment opportunities leading to social and economic mobility, but may also include images that deter individuals from embarking on such journeys (Timmerman et al., 2014). Migratory mobilities are as much about these underlying imaginaries as they are about actual physical movements. In other words, "movement is not just the experience of shifting from place to place, it is also linked to our ability to imagine an alternative" (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 11). Aspirations come close to a concept of imaginaries as historically laden, socially shared and transmitted.

Imaginaries, in turn, play an important role in the formation of aspiration, influencing why people aspire to move and where they aspire to move to.

Aspirations to migrate are often developed with reference to common narratives surrounding labour mobility to improve one's life, or stories told by migrant kin, or through imageries purported by media. Employers and authorities also act based on their own imaginaries of what migrants may bring to the job: for instance, migrants from certain (ethnic, religious, regional, etc.) backgrounds are expected to be hard working, whereas others are perceived as fortune-seekers. The contributions in this section thus explore how expectations of greater opportunities and better employment conditions set people in motion, how imaginaries of places and people persist over time despite changing migratory patterns and motives, and how expectations of a better life may also be disappointed as migrants find themselves immobilised by regimes of (im)mobility.

Di Martino et al. (Chapter 5) examine how highly educated migrant women negotiate their careers considering structural constraints. Focusing on coping strategies of European and Latin American women in the Basque Country, the authors analyse their respondents' experiences through the lens of migratory careers; they show how opportunities and challenges are made sense of and dealt with as their private and professional trajectories abroad unfold. In the process, aspirations initially lodged in the migratory project evolve to achieve job matching and work-life balance.

Moderbacher (Chapter 7), too, points to the important nexus between imaginaries vested in mobility and structural realities gradually disrupting the former at various instances. She illustrates how certain migrants are systemically immobilised through governmentally prescribed training programmes that keep participants busy but fail to convey skills that are applicable in the labour market. The case studies presented by Di Martino et al. and Moderbacher show that labour market integration and the structural opportunities or constraints mediating that process are central to social mobility and to the fulfilment of aspirations to improve one's life that frequently drive cross-border migration in the first place.

Such aspirations and underlying imaginaries of more desirable locations for work propel onward migration, as Dimitriadis (Chapter 6) shows in his study of Albanian migrant construction workers in Italy and Greece. Similarly, negative perceptions – such as fears of racism or of having to settle for less favourable lifestyles – can work as deterrents. Migrant imaginaries, Dimitriadis concludes,

can thus explain decisions regarding mobility on top of economic explanations, notably so in cases where staying put seems counter-intuitive if looked at solely in terms of income differentials and job availability.

Migrant imaginaries, this time projected upon migrant workers by prospective employers, fuel and structure the care labour industry in Turkey (Ayaydin, Chapter 8). Filipino nannies occupy a privileged niche in the racialised hierarchy of foreign child-carers in Turkey. Placement agencies market Filipino women's English-language proficiency, their modernity and their supposed cultural predisposition to providing good child care, thereby branding Filipina nannies as the "Mercedes" among nannies and turning them into repositories for upper-middle-class desires of class actualisation. This has by consequence driven the demand for female workers from the Philippines in that sector.

In sum, the chapters in this volume illustrate how mobility is co-produced by migrants' imaginaries, their subsequent aspirations to move, as well as by regimes of mobility that are similarly underpinned by images of desirable and undesirable migrants. As a process, mobility not merely encompasses migrations from A to B, but keeps developing along migratory routes involving moments of limited mobility and stuckedness. Imaginaries are rectified in the process of migration and new possibilities arise through the accumulation of knowledge, contacts and social networks, making it conceivable to move on to further destinations. Placing an emphasis on migrants' experiences, this book investigates the meaning of mobility to those on the move while keeping in mind that mobility and immobility remain embedded in unequal relationships of political, social, cultural and economic power that unfold differently in various local contexts.

Contemporary labour migration research often revolves around one aspect of migratory processes, such as a specific group of migrants, the core motivations to migrate, expectations involved in the process of migration, or issues surrounding the integration of migrants in receiving societies. This volume aims – in an attempt to contribute to a broader understanding of the phenomenon as described earlier – to lay out a more encompassing perspective to labour migration by bringing together discussions of the phenomenon emanating from different disciplines and focusing on international labour mobility, that having been generally ignored in migration studies (King & Skeldon, 2010). Based on an array of case-studies examining migratory movements in various contexts, this volume aims to draw cross-contextual parallels by addressing the questions of the role played by opportunities in mobilising people, how structures enable, sustain and change different forms of mobility, and how imaginaries fuel labour migration and vice

versa. In doing so, this volume also aims to tackle the interrelationships between imaginaries driving migration and shaping "regimes of mobility", as well as how the former play out in different contexts, shaping internal and cross-border migration.

Note

1   For more information on these debates see the project entitled "the meaning of migrants": https://meaningofmigrants.org/, accessed 25.03.2020.

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