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*Environment and Urbanization* 2010 22: 5

DOI: 10.1177/0956247810364111

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# Editorial: Governance, migration and local development

CECILIA TACOLI

## I. MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: GROWING INTEREST AND POLARIZED PERCEPTIONS

Migration has been attracting growing interest in the last two decades. Internal movement (especially rural-to-urban migration) largely mirrors urbanization patterns and transformations in the national economic base, which in some countries have been remarkably fast. At the same time, the number of international migrants has increased (although not its proportion of the world's population) and the global volume of international remittances now outpaces both foreign direct investment and official development aid to low- and middle-income countries. It is a reflection of such interest that the 2009 annual reports by two of the most influential international agencies, the World Bank and the UNDP, focus on the links between migration and development.

The starting point of the 2009 World Development Report<sup>(1)</sup> is that economic development is inherently uneven, and that concentration of economic activities is necessary before governments can promote some level of convergence in incomes and standards of living in different geographical locations, mainly through economic integration. It follows that, from an economic point of view, countries do not prosper without mobile people, and that governments should facilitate internal labour mobility. A similar view applies to international migration. According to the report, "...allowing the freer flow of skilled and unskilled labour across national borders would probably do more to reduce poverty in developing countries than any other single policy or aid initiative."<sup>(2)</sup> The 2009 Human Development Report<sup>(3)</sup> also argues that migration and development go hand in hand. In destination countries and areas, migrants boost economic output at little or no cost to

locals. And while the report warns that, even if well managed, international migration is not an alternative to a national development strategy, "...mobility can facilitate access to ideas, knowledge and resources that can complement and in some cases enhance progress."<sup>(4)</sup>

The two reports share an overall positive view of population movement as a key element of social change and economic growth, both in areas of origin and destination, across and within national borders. This view, however, is not universally shared. Indeed, the UNDP report argues that the main reason why in the past 50 years the share of international migrants has remained surprisingly stable at around 3 per cent of the world's population is because of an increase in government-imposed barriers to movement, especially for migrants with low skills. Internal migration, especially rural-urban movement, is also generally viewed with concern, and the number of governments worldwide that are implementing policies to control it has risen from 47 per cent in 1976 to 65 per cent in 2007.<sup>(5)</sup> Underlying the most alarmist estimates of the numbers of environmental refugees and climate

1. World Bank (2009), *World Development Report: Reshaping Economic Geography*, The World Bank, Washington DC, 383 pages.

2. See reference 1, page 161.

3. United Nations Development Programme (2009), *Human Development Report 2009: Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York, 217 pages.

4. See reference 3, page 5.

5. United Nations (2008), *World Population Policies 2007*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 496 pages.

**Acknowledgement: We are grateful to Graham Bowden for his help with the graphics and to Ernesto José López and Alice Sverdlík for their help in preparing Book Notes.**

migrants is an inherently negative view of migration as a societal failure.<sup>6</sup>

To some extent, such policies or understandings reflect deeply held assumptions that are not unambiguously supported by reality. For example, not only do rural–urban migrants not necessarily contribute to the growth in the number of urban poor, but they are also often more likely to be employed and sometimes better educated than non-migrants; similarly, international migrants tend to respond to a demand for labour that is not filled by local workers – although in the current recession, unemployment rates among migrants to Europe and North America tend to be higher because of their concentration in sectors such as low-skilled construction, manufacturing and services, which are also the ones shedding the most jobs. The antipathy with regard to rural–urban migrants is also a little odd when in all the world's wealthiest nations they were such a central feature of the economic success. At the same time, it is also true that mobility and migration are not inherently positive. In destination areas, migrants' rights are all too often ignored as they are forced to accept below-standard living and working conditions, effectively making employers the main beneficiaries of migration. And remittances sent home can contribute to higher standards of living for the families of migrants as well as, in many cases, the construction of public facilities such as schools, religious centres and water points. All too often, however, they also widen social and economic inequalities, themselves the root causes of migration. This does not mean that the best policy response is to try and control (reduce) migration: there is enough evidence to show that this does not lower the number of migrants, while it certainly contributes to making them more vulnerable.

An additional problem is the complexity and heterogeneity of migrants and their experiences, which defy generalizations. Furthermore, the diversity in duration and destinations and in the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of migrants is reflected in the diversity of impacts. This, in turn, is best understood at the local level, where local institutions can play a critical role in ensuring that the transformations from migration do not result in deepening social polarization. It would be naïve, however, to assume that local authorities, especially

in low- and middle-income countries, have the necessary capacity and revenues to fulfil this role without strong support from central government. And, perhaps more importantly, it would be wishful thinking to assume that the impacts of migration are purely financial and economic and do not involve the creation of new, often powerful interest groups able to contest existing social and cultural hierarchies. As several papers in this issue note, in areas with high rates of out-migration, the new poor are often those groups that do not receive remittances. Local governance systems that are inclusive – of in-migrants, out-migrants and also of non-migrants – accountable and effective are thus more essential than ever in achieving equitable development in the context of increasing migration and mobility.

Surprisingly, the concept of governance is largely missing in current debates on migration and development, which tend to focus instead on the (macro) economic benefits of mobility and on the rights of migrant workers. The papers in this issue contribute to filling this gap by exploring the processes and institutional responses through which population movement does – or does not – contribute to social, economic and cultural change at the local level.

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS IN SHAPING MOBILITY

Several papers in this issue focus on small and intermediate urban centres. These tend to be overlooked in discussions of migration, but in many instances are important mobility nodes combining the role of “home” places receiving remittances with that of destinations for new in-migrants. But not all smaller urban centres attract migrants, and differences in economic and demographic growth patterns are best understood within the broader national context. The paper by Arif Hasan describes how several factors shape Pakistan's migration and mobility, ranging from the country's geography, with

6. For a review of the literature on migration and climate change, see Tacoli, C (2009), “Crisis or adaptation? Migration and climate change in a context of high mobility”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 21, No 2, October, pages 513–525.

large mountain and desert areas where incomes from agriculture are low and unstable, to the concentration of industry and cities in the Indus plains, where both incomes and literacy rates are higher and constitute a powerful magnet for internal migrants. But it is the combination of changes in traditional social structures, including the collapse of the feudal system in the rural areas, changes in agricultural production systems, including the mechanization brought about by the Green Revolution, and cultural transformations, such as the wish to give children and especially girls a level of education that is not always available in the rural areas, that act as important triggers of rural–urban migration. The paper also reminds us that Pakistan has a long tradition of migration: in the past century it has received more international migrants, mainly from within the region, than it has sent abroad, and these flows have played an important role in the country's social, economic and cultural transformations.

The paper by Wilma Nchito describes the different trajectories of two smaller urban centres in Zambia's Southern province, and shows how different economic bases and labour markets, themselves shaped by the colonial plantation and mining systems, are key factors in determining not only the size and destinations of migrant flows but also their gender composition. The contrast with China's dynamic small urban centres described by Bingqin Li and Xiangsheng An is sharp. The number of small towns in China has grown phenomenally since 1978, and they are now home to almost half the country's urban population. This is the consequence of national strategies for economic development and of the subsequent relative relaxation of what had previously been a tight system of control over people's mobility that in the past made migration from rural areas to urban centres extremely difficult. Within the Chinese administrative system, however, local authorities in small towns are under the political and financial control of higher levels of the administrative hierarchy. Local government performance and incentives under this system are linked to local economic growth and revenue generation. Hence, underfunded small town authorities are keen to attract migrants as an economic resource but in most cases are unable to guarantee basic services to their expanding populations.

### III. THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: CITIZENSHIP, INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL POLARIZATION

Central to several contributions is the attention to the ways in which mobility and migration influence and in some cases radically transform the dynamics of power at the local level. Mohamadou Sall's paper describes how international migration is transforming governance systems in two Senegalese small towns, where remittances have long been a key element of local economies and livelihoods and have enabled communities to survive recurrent economic and ecological crises. Migrants are highly critical of local authorities, however, whom they accuse of incompetence and corruption, and decentralization has opened up an opportunity for migrants to participate in local politics, until recently dominated by the old system of traditional chieftaincy. While this certainly helps foster local democracy, Sall warns that migrants' ability to enter into, and influence, the political system effectively depends on the clientelist electoral system based on financial rewards to activists and voters. In this way, migrants can become a powerful new interest group whose main attraction to local politics is the control of state and public land, whose management and use has been devolved to local governments. This is especially important given that land and property are preferred investments for Senegalese migrants.

Christien Klaufus describes the impacts of international remittances on two intermediate urban centres in Latin America. In San Miguel, El Salvador's second largest city, 34 per cent of all households receive remittances; in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, this figure is 40 per cent. This has triggered a construction boom of luxury gated communities, and the extension of urban areas has almost doubled. The growing role of the private sector goes hand in hand with the retreat of state institutions from housing provision. The consequence is not only house price inflation but also environmental degradation, as weak municipal planning institutions are unable to implement regulations to protect hydro-geological systems. Effectively, international migration becomes less and less an option, as households that do not receive remittances are the new poor. Arif Hasan makes

a similar observation in the case of Pakistan, where farming families who receive remittances increasingly rely on waged labourers, often on a seasonal basis, for farm work. This is not an isolated case: similar trends have been noted in Tanzania and in Vietnam.<sup>(7)</sup>

Remittances from international migrants in many cases have a positive impact on low- and middle-income countries' economies: in Pakistan, for example, they are the third most important source of capital for economic growth, without which the exchange rate and monetary and fiscal policies would come under great pressure. But as described by the papers in this issue, the impact of both internal and international migration is complex and contradictory, especially at the local level. Gery Nijenhuis describes how the remarkable growth of international migration from Bolivia has resulted not only in large financial benefits but also in concerns about long-term development, especially the undermining of the country's ambitious decentralization policy and participatory planning. The response of local governments and NGOs is, however, limited and fraught with difficulties, not least the lack of capacity and resources.

As an example of the diversity of migration, Mark Duda and Bingqin Li explore the issue of housing from a very different perspective, that of employer-provided accommodation for China's internal migrants. Dormitories for migrant workers are being built alongside factories, but this is not out of concern for the difficulties migrants often encounter in ensuring accommodation in urban areas. Rather, in this way employers can increase their control over the workforce: proximity to the factories makes it easier to enforce long working hours; the provision of cheap, shared accommodation means that salaries can be kept low; and not providing accommodation to couples and families discourages workers who may also want more stable employment. But, the authors argue, this is nevertheless a valuable supply of housing that can play an important role in China's rapidly expanding cities, and policies should concentrate on ensuring that the accommodation they provide is of decent quality and is reasonably priced.

The paper by Kees Van der Geest, Anton Vrieling and Ton Dietz deals with an increasingly pressing aspect of migration, that is, its relation to environmental degradation. The authors use

census data at the district level to map migration flows in Ghana, and relate these to vegetation dynamics in order to answer two questions: how do environmental conditions affect migration, and what is the impact of migration on the environment? However, it is difficult to understand migration patterns without considering historical and geographical data. Indeed, the authors note that while movement to the capital, Accra, is the largest movement of people in the country, high-income differentials make it difficult for poor rural people, especially those from the poorest regions in the north, to move there. In other districts, access to land is more likely to attract migrants than environmental conditions. What emerges clearly from the paper is the diversity of factors affecting mobility and migration in addition to environmental conditions.

The paper by Hoai Anh Tran and Ann Schlyter addresses a different dimension of mobility and examines how urban transport affects gender inequalities and emerging class issues in China and Vietnam. In both countries, the increase in the use of private motorized transport overlaps with the development of market economies and the growing differentiation of households' economic resources. However, the authors argue that these also relate to land use and social justice, although political concerns about these issues are usually limited to ethnic minorities and remote rural areas, with little attention to the growing polarization within urban centres along lines of wealth and gender.

#### IV. CLIMATE CHANGE AND CITIES

Patricia Romero Lankao's paper on Mexico City considers what climate change is likely to bring to its history of water-related hazards and vulnerabilities, which include flooding and water scarcity. Of course, this depends so much

7. Hoang, Xuan Thanh, Thi Thu Phuong Dinh and Thu Huong Nguyen with Cecilia Tacoli (2008), *Urbanization and Rural Development in Vietnam's Mekong Delta: Livelihood Transformations in Three Fruit-growing Settlements*, Rural-Urban Interactions and Livelihood Strategies Series, Working Paper 14, IIED, London, 64 pages; also Diyamett, Bitrina, Mathew Diyamett, Jovita James and Richard Mabala (2001), *The Case of Himo and its Region, Northern Tanzania*, Rural-Urban Interactions and Livelihood Strategies Series, Working Paper 1, IIED, London, 37 pages.

on what measures are taken, just as past floods and droughts are the result not only of “nature” (and now of human-induced climate change) but also of past and present socio-environmental changes. Two other papers on climate change have been accepted but there was no room to include them in this issue, so they will be printed in the October 2010 issue: “Built-in resilience: learning from grassroots coping strategies to climate variability” by Huraera Jabeen, Adriana Allen and Cassidy Johnson; and “Climate change adaptation in Indian cities; bridging the gap between the global agenda and local action” by Divya Sharma and Sanjay Tomar.

## V. FOOD SECURITY AND URBANIZATION

Perhaps too little attention has been given to hunger and food insecurity in urban areas. Two papers in this issue, and one to be published in the October 2010 issue, help address this. The rapid food price increases in 2007 and the first half of 2008 attracted serious policy attention, but most of the responses focused on rural food production and consumption, not on the hundreds of millions of urban dwellers who suffer from hunger and food insecurity. This issue is discussed in the paper by Marc J Cohen and James L Garrett, to be published in October 2010, which outlines the pathways through which food price rises impact on urban people, and highlights evidence of how these impacts played out in the recent crisis; it also describes current policy responses, suggesting how to enhance their effects on urban food security. The paper in this issue by Degefa Tolossa looks at what factors impoverish households and expose them to chronic food shortages in two low-income settlements in Addis Ababa. It also considers their coping and survival strategies, as a sustainable livelihood framework is used to explore how context, shocks, assets, institutions, activities and strategies interact to affect well-being and food insecurity. The paper by Jesper Stage, Jørn Stage and Gordon McGranahan considers whether urbanization contributes to higher food prices. It finds that urbanization (the increasing share of the population living in urban settlements) is being conflated with related but separate processes, such as economic growth, population growth and environmental degradation.

## VI. FEEDBACK

Irene Karanja’s paper describes in considerable detail the enumeration and mapping of informal settlements in Kisumu, Kenya’s third largest city, that was implemented by their inhabitants and supported by savings groups, the Kenyan Homeless People’s Federation (Muungano wa Wanvijiji), of which they are members, and Pamoja Trust, a Kenyan NGO. This work included collecting data on each household, numbering each structure and providing photo identity cards to each household. It also included the preparation of detailed maps defining the boundaries of all house structures along with features of the site, with a level of accuracy and detail needed for upgrading and providing secure tenure. The enumeration in Kisumu is part of a larger enumeration and mapping programme, both within Kenya and in many other nations, supported by organizations and federations of the urban poor.<sup>(8)</sup>

Two Feedback papers are on the theme of the October 2009 issue – securing land for housing and urban development. The paper by Arzu Ispalar Cahantimur, Rengin Beceren Öztürk and Ayşen Celen Öztürk explores how urban regeneration in old industrial sites in Eskişehir has contributed to the city’s development, and the importance of local government in this regard in providing integrated approaches to land management policies and sustainable urban development. The paper by A Ayotamuno, A E Gobo and O B Owei examines the changes in land use and economic activities between 1986 and 2005 in a residential area in Port Harcourt that was originally developed for senior civil servants and military personnel. It shows how land ownership has changed and also the rapid expansion of commercial activities within what was exclusively a residential development. The authors suggest that with no

8. Several papers in past issues of the journal have also looked at community-managed surveys of informal settlements. See Patel, Sheela, Celine d’Cruz and Sundar Burra (2002), “Beyond evictions in a global city; people-managed resettlement in Mumbai”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 14, No 1, April, pages 159–172; also Glockner, Heike, Meki Mkanga and Timothy Ndezi (2004), “Local empowerment through community mapping for water and sanitation in Dar es Salaam”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16, No 1, April, pages 185–198; Weru, Jane (2004), “Community federations and city upgrading: the work of Pamoja Trust and Muungano in Kenya”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16, No 1, April, pages 47–62; and Patel, Sheela, Jockin Arputham, Sundar Burra and Katia Savchuk (2009), “Getting the information base for Dharavi’s redevelopment”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 21, No 1, April, pages 241–252.

enforcement of land use regulations this has led to a decline in the quality of life for the residents.

Most large and successful cities are faced with the problem of dense informal settlements in central locations that need upgrading. Arif Hasan and his colleagues are challenging the emerging consensus that these sites need to be cleared and rebuilt with high-rises, and the developer-led approach it engenders. The findings of their work to date, which includes videos, photos and detailed plans, can be viewed or downloaded from a new website, [www.urbandensity.org](http://www.urbandensity.org). The October 2010 issue of *Environment and Urbanization* will also include a paper summarizing their work's findings.

## VII. PORT-AU-PRINCE AND HAITI: A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

As we go to press, it is two weeks since Port-au-Prince and its surrounds were hit by a devastating earthquake. Already, estimates suggest a death toll of more than 150,000, making it one of the world's most catastrophic disasters. These have been two weeks in which the difficulties of getting the much-needed rescue services, equipment for infrastructure repairs and emergency supplies into the area have been so evident, when the main port and airport are damaged. But now comes the time when decisions about reconstruction will have a profound impact on the survivors, especially those who live or lived in Port-au-Prince's informal settlements.

It is worth reflecting on the experience with reconstruction in Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh in Indonesia, after the tsunami in late December 2004.<sup>9</sup> This killed more than 100,000 people and left more than half a million survivors without homes in Aceh and North Sumatra. Funding poured in but with so many international funding agencies and so much funding coming in, the survivors and their community organizations found it difficult to influence plans for redevelopment. The government wanted to ban all reconstruction within a two-kilometre zone along the coast and constructed large relief camps designed like army barracks 20 to 30 kilometres away from the city – and thus far from the survivors' friends and relatives, schools, jobs, markets and health care services. Most international agencies treated the affected persons as victims and made local

communities see themselves as recipients. Local communities were flooded with cash; people were even paid to attend meetings.

Within a few days, some survivors began returning to their ruined settlements, which were in the zone where reconstruction had been banned. Many more followed later. A local NGO, Uplink Banda Aceh, knew that the chances of communities being able to move back were limited unless they worked together. So it supported a network of community groups who returned to their settlements so that they could learn from each other, share grieving, share ideas and increase their capacity to negotiate. By May 2005, the network included 25 settlements. Each set up teams to handle construction (building temporary and permanent houses and infrastructure), logistics (food distribution, managing public kitchens, purchasing building materials), survey teams (gathering data from survivors), women and children teams (to look after their particular needs), environment teams (organizing tree planting, village planning, alternative health care), economics teams (to support income generation and manage accounts) and advocacy teams (to share information, maintain links with outside groups, facilitate negotiations on inter-community issues). Teams with representatives from each village also worked with Uplink's technical support team. This is real reconstruction, as it centres on the homes, lives, assets and social networks of those who were most affected, and it is hoped that there is much space and support in Port-au-Prince and other parts of Haiti for this kind of reconstruction. But the desire of many middle- and upper-income groups not to allow the inhabitants of informal settlements to return will have to be overcome, and developers' interest in getting the choicest sites in what were informal settlements will have to be counteracted. This kind of reconstruction will have to get the attention of those international agencies that stay to help.

9. This account is drawn from Syukrizal, Ade, Wardah Hafidz and Gabriela Sauter (2009), *Reconstructing Life: After the Tsunami: The Work of Uplink Banda Aceh in Indonesia*, Gatekeeper Series 137i, IIED, London, 18 pages (this is available from <http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/14852IIED.pdf>); also Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (2005), "Tsunami; how Asia's precarious coastal settlements are coping after the tsunami", *Housing by People in Asia* 16, ACHR, Bangkok, 52 pages; and Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (2006), "Tsunami update", ACHR, Bangkok, 16 pages (available from <http://www.achr.net/> within the section on tsunami).

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## In Memoriam

Nisar Baloch, a community activist in Karachi who had long struggled to protect land from encroachment by developers and real-estate interests, was murdered in November 2009.

Jac Smit, who for more than 30 years had championed urban agriculture and who founded the Urban Agriculture Network in 1992, died in November 2009, a few weeks after his eightieth birthday.

Han van Putten, who championed the cause of human settlements and the role within it of civil society, from the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, to his organization of the NGO Forum at the UN Conference on Human Settlements in 1976, through to his support for the formation and development of the Habitat International Coalition, died in October 2009.