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Migration and development: theoretical legacies and analytical agendas in the age of rising powers

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Migration and development in the age of Rising Powers: theoretical legacies and analytical agendas

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Migration and development in the age of Rising Powers: theoretical legacies and analytical agendas

Abstract

The growth of the ‘Rising Powers’ has had an impact on migration – some new patterns have emerged, others have intensified and still others have declined. This chapter explores what provocations Rising Powers pose for existing theorisations in the field of migration and development. It outlines the intellectual inheritances into which the new patterns of migratory growth and dynamism offered by the ‘Rising Powers’ intervenes. It begins by providing a broad overview of binary theories of migration and development before turning to those that go beyond these binaries and conceptualise the multiplicities of trajectories in migration and development thinking. It suggests that the effect of the existing conceptual landscape is that analyses of the Rising Powers tend to veer between theorising the Rising Powers as mid-way in both development and migration pathways or as offering new endpoints for migration streams. The Rising Powers thus raise the interesting question – are they the new middle of a well-known trajectory, or are they offering new pathways and outcomes for migration and development? Or can we reimagine migration and development within the context of a multipolar world? The chapter ends by offering a series of empirical and analytical questions that the Rising Powers pose for scholarship on migration and development.

Keywords: binaries, development, migration, Rising Powers, middle, multipolar

Migration in the age of Rising Powers: theoretical legacies and analytical agendas

Introduction

Economic growth in the global South has begun to dominate world imagination (World Bank 2011; UNDP 2013). With different nomenclatures – BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India China), Rising Powers, emerging countries, E7 - these countries seem to occupy newspaper headlines and book stands (Sidaway 2012). China and, to some extent, India, have been at the centre of the rhetoric of Rising Power but the range of countries that are supposedly rising is much larger and is also dynamic. It includes the BRICs as well as countries like Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa (CIVETS). This has led to what Pieterse (2011) calls a global rebalancing.

The growth of the so-called Rising Powers has had an impact on migration – some new patterns have emerged while others have intensified (Dumont et al. 2010). Return migration to the global South has been noted, particularly among skilled professionals who are taking advantage of the opportunities that their home countries now provide (Jain 2012). New patterns of migration from North to South have also emerged, such as, for instance, from Portugal to Angola (Åkesson 2016). Secondly, there has been an intensification of old South-South migration alongside new corridors of mobility (IOM 2017; Bodomo 2009; Park and Chen 2009).

The topic of migration and development has become a key area of research and policy as attempts have been made to slow South-North migration through in-situ development

packages (Council of Europe 2003; de Haas 2007). Moreover, remittances now play an increasingly acknowledged part in development (Alonso 2011; World Bank 2008). However, the place of Rising Powers in theories of migration and development is yet to be analysed. This chapter fills that gap. It outlines some of the options and challenges that these Rising Powers offer for theorising migration and development.

The Rising Powers are sometimes theorised as if they are replacing or joining the countries that are developed, at other times as mid-points within the binary thinking that has haunted both the migration and development literatures. They offer versions of the middle (Fangjun, 2009; Kennedy, 2010). However, this chapter argues that they are better conceived as disrupting these binaries (Noxolo et al., 2013). It suggests that the empirical variations within the global South as well as the different types of transformations that those countries are going through makes a multi-polar world a more useful way of conceptualising the Rising Powers. The chapter ends by offering some empirical and analytical questions that the Rising Powers raises for future research on migration and development.

Dominant binaries in migration and development thinking

Binary thinking has dominated both migration and development literatures and hence, the migration-development nexus literature, too. Migration theory binaries include, for instance, sending-receiving, origin-destination or some other forms of a 'here-there' analysis (IOM 2017; UN DESA 2015). Similarly, development theories also have their own binaries: modern-traditional, First-World – Third World, Global North- South or

core-periphery (See Table 1) although development practice, through, for instance, the Sustainable Development Goals has taken a more variegated, or global approach to development. Yet, the effects of this are not yet evident in either theorisations or policy around migration and development.

Table 1 about here

As a result, approaches to migration and development, too, have a set of binaries which are widely used in tracking and analysing migration within its own analytic lens, terminology, direction of travel, location of migrants, direction of developmental efforts and location of development (see Table 2: de Haas 2010; Düvell et al. 2012). There are two different versions of place which are at play in this analysis of binaries. The first, often underpinned by modernisation theories, holds places as distinctive and different. The second involves theorising connections between places through Marxist influenced theories such as dependency, or phenomenology influenced theories of transnationalism. This section explores these different forms of binary thinking.

Table 2 about here

The first version of migration and development thinking is influenced by modernisation theories and by its underpinning neo-classical economic theories of migration. Here, opportunities in one country and the openings it offers are compared with those in another and the differences between the two are said to trigger migration (Grossman and

Stadelmann 2013). In these push-pull theories migration is conceptualised as linking distinctive places which are marked by difference – higher/lower wages, better/worse economic opportunities, a safer/dangerous environment and so on. Migrants respond to these differences between places through calculation and movement (van Hear et al. 2018). The vectors of difference between ‘here’ and ‘there’ become the causative factors for migration (see Raghuram 2013). One of the most highly political and policy relevant versions of this difference is in the case of brain drain migration or migration of the highly skilled, especially those in the social reproduction sectors. For example, health worker migration from sub-Saharan Africa is undoubtedly shaped by wage differentials and variations in working conditions between sending and receiving countries (WHO 2010). Policies to stem such mobility and to bridge the gap between the two places often involve increasing the wages or improving working conditions in sending contexts (for a critique see Raghuram 2009).

A second version of binary thinking emphasises connections, not only difference. There are at least two connective arguments in migration and development theory. The first focuses on the economic causes and consequences of migration and the inequalities that underpin this. They differ from neoclassical theories in digging deep into the reasons why some places are more desirable and by linking this to how inequalities are produced between places. The approach is summarised by Stephen Castles (2009) as a combination of the virtuous circle and vicious circle. A virtuous circle is one where migrants who leave poor countries enhance development in areas they leave behind by drawing down fewer resources, reducing competition and by remitting. They then spur development in

Commented [RS1]: Essentially, you are alluding to the old push-pull binary that was so influential in early migration work and still persists in the shadows – see the paper by Van Hear, Bakewell and Long in JEMS vol. 44 2018.

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the countries they leave behind. Theorisations of the virtuous cycle draw on the optimism of modernisation theory.

In contrast, and drawing on Marxist thinking, a more vicious circle is envisaged in what Castles (2009) calls historical-institutional approaches to migration and development. Here, the migration leads to or is part of a set of wider negative set of relationships. Countries at the core of the world economy draw in highly skilled labour, for instance, from peripheral countries who lose this labour (Sassen 2000). Migrants withdraw resources through their movement and teach social behaviour such as consumption patterns which results in dependency on imported goods which in turn lead to greater dependence on the core countries.

A second way of theorising place connections is through the lens of transnationalism. This framework focuses on connections, seeing them as enactments of the attachments that migrants form to multiple places (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Szanton-Blanc 1994). Research adopting a transnational perspective emphasises the agency of migrants who maintain these relations across space and offers us a way of thinking about migration at scales other than that of the nation-state, a concept further emphasised through the term 'translocalism' (Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013).

How do the Rising Powers ifit into these binary theories of migration and development? Depending on how the Rising Powers are conceptualised the answer will differ. If they are seen to replace or join existing powers (see for instance, Ramo 2004) then the binary

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still stands. This is best exemplified by Samir Amin (2007) who argues that the Rising Powers do not imply change. If growth is sustained then the Rising Powers have only added to or replaced other centres of capitalist accumulation. The benefits of the same processes of accumulation by dispossession will simply be transferred to the Rising Powers. Development and migration will look the same. It is only that development is now located elsewhere and migration is oriented in a new direction. We may ask will the Rising Powers become additional destinations or alternative destinations?

Beyond the binary in migration and development thinking – versions of the middle

However, the Rising Powers may also be understood as following in the footsteps of existing powers (Fangjun 2009). Whether their ‘rising’ is seen as economic, as political, as the ability to influence foreign policy, they could, arguably, be seen to occupy a space in-between (Table 3).

Table 3 about here

As a result, at least three intermediate positions can also be envisaged in migration and development as outlined below.

First, in response to an often-posed question on whether migration leads to development or development leads to migration, theorists have identified that some degree of development is necessary for migration – it is not the poorest from any country, or indeed

those from the poorest countries who migrate (Castles 2009). In Rostowian terms, then, it is the pre-take-off and the take-off countries that show the greatest migration and this was conceptualised as the migration-hump: a certain degree of development was necessary for migration to take place (Martin and Taylor 1996). This necessarily focuses on the middle stages of development, positing the middle in economic terms.

Theories of a migration hump can easily be moulded into analyses of Rising Powers. For instance, the significant increase in Chinese and Indian migrants, particularly students and the entrepreneurial classes, may be seen as a direct result of economic growth. Much of the analysis of migration in the context of the Rising Powers has implicitly adopted this framework, focusing primarily on the greater numbers of people migrating out of these countries both on short-term visits (Leung 2012) and for longer stays (Xiang 2003). It is worth noting that the relationship between emigration policy and growth policies need a separate analysis, at least in the case of China so that increase in emigration cannot simply be read as a result of growth alone. Nor is it recent. These migrations draw upon the connections and possibilities offered by earlier migrant flows and the transnational Indian and Chinese communities, for instance, that have settled in many parts of the world.

Some of this research has adopted the nuances of modernisation as a process of increasing human and cultural capital, focusing specifically on the mobility of students and highly skilled professionals (Zhang 2003; and for their deskilling see Li and Li 2008). The aspirations of the citizens of the Rising Powers also lead educational

Commented [RS4]: And a tradition of labour migration controlled by great powers, either within the boundaries of an empire, in the case of the Indians and to some extent the Chinese, or by the opening up of new areas by the US.

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institutions to relocate to these countries in order to facilitate the social and class mobility that being part of the Rising Powers enables (Feng 2013). Hence, it is not only people who are becoming mobile but also, for instance, educational institutions which give existing powers, an opportunity to benefit from the Rising Powers (Ahmad and Buchanan 2015).

[Table 4 about here](#)

Secondly, the geographical middle in the migration trajectory too, has become the object of attention (Table 4). The in-between places along the migration route, the transit zones, offer ideal places for controlling mobility (Stock 2012). In an age of anxiety over migration these places have catapulted into prominence in the imagination of those working in migration and development. Transit zones are identified as areas through which migrants move usually along a South-North axis, whether from Africa to Europe or Central America to the US. The countries in-between are those that border the destination sites (Düvell et al. 2012; IOM 2017). They have become places of investment because potentially they are sites where ‘unwanted’ migration can be stalled in return for development aid. They are thus both borders of control of migration and increasingly significant sites for mobilizing policies on migration and development. They have also been incorporated into theories of development through the increasing significance of the mobility paradigm in social sciences. For instance, Schapendonk (2011) shows with great sensitivity the range of trajectories and experiences in the European borderlands, the

transit zones, while İçduygu and Yüksek (2012) highlight the ways in which these zones are being securitised.

Some of these discussions have used the language of transition but increasingly there are also voices critiquing this terminology (Collyer and de Haas 2011). For instance, Düvell et al. (2012) argue that the term transit is dependent on and can reinforce the idea of departure and arrival which are the central categories for much migration research. For them, the term problematically denotes simultaneously a place, a destination and a viewpoint. Currently, evidence of the extent to which Rising Powers become transit zones (as well as source and destination) is not adequate for theoretical analysis.

Interesting questions may also be asked about how neighbouring countries may become transit zones on the way to the Rising Powers (or indeed destinations in their own right) but there is no research on this, thus far. There is, however, some evidence of China becoming an alternative destination to Europe and the US, a less desirable but more achievable destination for migrants from Nigeria (Haugen 2012).

A third more analytical intervention, drawing on Marxist thinking, is offered by Sandro Mezzadra (2010). He argues, writing in the context of Europe, that European borders exist not to seal off Europe from migrants from Africa but rather to selectively include and exclude migrants. He develops this into a third way of thinking about the middle. He argues that the processes of inclusion and exclusion produce the category of irregular migrants on whom the flexibility of capital in Europe and everywhere else is dependent. These transit zones are thus, simultaneously zones of inclusion and exclusion. They are

neither core nor periphery, but both sending and receiving, because it is through their position as a zone of transition that they enter global political relations. They lead to the reshuffling of the coordinates of Europe (Cobarrubius et al. 2011).

Conceptually Mezzadra and Neilsen (2008) develop this argument by positing border as method. There is an important intervention for development studies because it suggests that instead of the key categories of North-South, developed-developing, First World-Third World, what we see today is both an increase in borders between nations but also an implosion of nations with new forms of connections between places irrespective of their location. They call this the multiplication of labour because labour for them, is shaped by a number of power hierarchies. Although they multiply the boundaries between accumulation and dispossession, the two remain dialectically linked and in a binary relationship. The implications of a diversifying South are still viewed primarily through theories of capitalism. Nevertheless, this analysis of bordering which looks at circulation and the control of populations as an inherent part of exclusion/inclusion is in some ways the most sophisticated analysis as it recognises the multiplicity of boundaries between North and South, as enacted through everyday bordering practices. It offers the possibility of both opening up and moving beyond the North-South divide, the analytical framework to which we turn next.

Beyond the middle – pluralist positions

Empirically there are as many differences between these Rising Power countries as there are similarities. For instance, Russia has never been seen as part of the global South as it

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Commented [RS7]: True but it had been close to the centre of the "Second world" that ended between 1989 and 1991, and had begun in 1945. Before that latter date (well, definitely before 1905), Russia had been one of the colonial powers and the easy assumption was that it would fall once again into that more developed category.

was a colonising power which became part of the Second world and then reverted to First World status. Instead it was already part of a set of debates around the 'end of history' and the rise of a new unipolar world order. The impact of South Africa on global development has been much less marked than that of some of the other countries included as part of the Rising Powers though it remains a significant regional hegemon. The paths to development adopted have also varied as much as the bases of power. However, together the Rising Powers have altered the nature and rhetoric of discussions around global power. Although economic growth, which is often cited as the common bases for this grouping, has not been continuous or constant, the Rising Powers can be seen to foster a new global imagination (Arrighi 2007; Ramo 2004).

Empirical reconsiderations of the binaries of migration and development thinking and attempts to conceptualise multipolarity have taken many forms (Table 5). They have highlighted the diversity of migration trajectories, the diversity of development (Raghuram 2009) and therefore the varieties of relationships between migration and development. They draw on the notion that the Rising Powers offer the possibility of revising the terms of power itself and how it is done (Arrighi and Zhang 2011; Wade 2011).

One way of multiplying the analysis of migration and development has been to show the empirical difference and dynamism in migration patterns globally. While emigrants from low-income countries are more likely to migrate to neighbouring countries, those from middle-income countries are more likely to move to high-incomes ones (Lucas 2005).

Also, regional wage differentials have led some middle-income countries to become both origin and destination countries, such as Mexico and Turkey, while others have become “migration poles”. The major middle-income migration poles are Argentina and Venezuela in South America, Jordan in the Middle East, Malaysia and Thailand in Asia, the Russian Federation, South Africa in Africa and parts of Eastern Europe. These migration poles constitute a diverse group of countries with very varied histories and types of migration – in-migration, out-migration and transit-migration. Besides, there is a mix of different kinds of migratory systems in such countries. For instance, South Africa has seen some migration from Europe, regional systems of migration with neighbouring countries and internal rural-urban migrations. Moreover, these forms of migration have all coexisted through the 20th century and been adapted and modified in this century (Kofman and Raghuram 2012). Clearly, both international and intra-national differences exist in the empirical specificities of migration and development and middle-income countries skew these variations further.

Commented [RS8]: Also, surely South Africa in Africa? You have just been discussion RSA.

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[Table 5 about here](#)

These variations arguably, challenge the efficacy of the term South-South migration and its analytical hubris. For instance, the terminology suggests a commonality across the South which is empirically unsustainable (Bakewell, 2009). Migrants from Bangladesh to India do not have the same experiences as those from Zimbabwe to South Africa. Moreover, factors such as proximity may be more important in producing similarities between countries than the geopolitical construction of a unified South.

Perhaps one of the most developed systems of analysing the complexity of migration and development, both empirically and conceptually, was that offered by Ronald Skeldon (1997). He differentiates between regions on the basis of a range of criteria – economy, politics, migration patterns, among others. His classification is unique in that it takes up differences within countries and incorporates insights from his long-standing work on internal migration into wider debates on international migration. Like much more regionally sensitive and micro-scale analysis his schematisation recognises the differences within countries but he projects this into his global schema – old core, new core, core extensions and potential cores, labour frontier and resource niche. The complexity of his classification based on the range of criteria included places Skeldon's analysis not in a binary frame but in a pluralist framework

Finally, another pluralist tradition is that which draws on transformation itself as the basis for conceptualising plurality. For instance, Stephen Castles (2010) links the migration development trajectory to a variety of other transitions – demographic, rural-urban, political and economic transitions as well as shifts in the meaning of gender.

However, while he, along with others, usefully unsettles the coherence of the South in migration thinking and the dominance of the North-South axis in migration-development analyses, the challenge of theorising through and with the Rising Powers is yet to be taken up, which is the objective of the final section of this chapter.

Theoretical and empirical agenda for future research

We have looked at forms of analysis in migration and development theory where the dominance of binary thinking has been complemented by attempts to unsettle the binary (Düvell et al., 2012). These endeavours have involved both thinking through the middle where the trajectory of the binary remains largely unreconstructed, and by research and thinking that emphasises the multiplicity of flows of development as well as migration. The first places the middle alongside the other ends of the binary as part of a teleology offering, in some instances, a place and modality for development. The second purportedly moves away from a binary, although the extent to which it does so is often debatable. Nevertheless, both these approaches have offered rich, if different ways, of theorising, which complement or unsettle the binaries of both migration and development thinking.

Most of the migration and development literature looks at mobility, not as a way of allowing nations to reach out and influence, but simply as border crossing across sovereign national boundaries. Yet, in a globalising world, mobility is a central modality through which economic and political power is exercised. Both capital growth and political influence are acquired through the movement of people and these mobilities are necessary for the countries to extend their reach. Migration and development are not cause and effect but a necessary relationship. Migration is a way of governing societies, not just an object of governance by society (Bærenholdt 2013). It is a journey, not a beginning or an endpoint and therefore suggests the need to focus on the practices of

mobility and migration as inherent to and part of development. This also enables us to move past the South-North binary in both migration and development.

Moreover, there exist a range of other conceptualisations from which migration and development theories can draw in analysing the Rising Powers. I point to three rich forms of theorisation on which this literature could draw. In the first, the logic of development as a particular form of modernisation is itself questioned in this multipolar world (Table 6). Postcolonial theorists like Dilip Gaonkar (2001) argue that these multipolarities suggest the importance of alternative modernities where countries will forge their own path to development or to state formation (Chatterjee, 1997). For instance, Kang (2007) argues, using the case of China, that instead of seeking to understand Asia's future in Europe's past (as in modernisation), it is Asia's own past that explains the story of Asia's Rise. He uses history and *culture* as the basis for identifying these alternatives.

A second body of work developed by Walter D. Mignolo (2011) argues that these alternatives were made possible by a combination of de-westernisation and de-coloniality. De-westernisation consists of the politics of the economics of rising countries. These politics may be, but are not necessarily, new as they may follow a capitalist path (albeit a different form of capitalism). Much more important for him, however, is another change that is also emerging, that of decoloniality. Decoloniality is an epistemic shift which brings far-reaching change to both the content and the nature of conversation (2011b) of knowledge. It involves unsettling the coloniality of knowledge systems, which have been dominated thus far by Eurocentric processes and thought and

Commented [RS10]: I am not sure about these words but they must be developed elsewhere. However, can we at least introduce the hyphen? I makes the words look a little more "presentable".

which put European definitions of development centrestage. Instead, it requires a *cultural epistemological* shift and the importance of pluriversality for a multipolar world.

A demand to rethink the division into territorially defined North and South, i.e. **worlds**, not through the lens of area studies, as it can sometimes appear in development studies, but through vectors of power has also been put forward by black theorists, feminists and postcolonial theorists. They argue that the optic of *gender, race and class* complicates the three-fold division by suggesting new kinds of alliances and different types of disagreements. Nancy Fraser (2010) calls the third world that emerges from this kind of analysis the ‘transnational precariat’. The precariat exists simultaneously in different parts of the world but are caught up in the intersectional power relationships that increasingly stretch transnationally. These three theorisations offer alternative starting points for conceptualising migration and development and an opening for further research.

I want to end by asking some questions for future research. What role does the movement of people play in the flow of goods, ideas, policies and money? When is migration a necessary party of investments abroad and what are the different kinds of mobility that these require? Thus, what role does the mobility of people play in the Rise to Power? This question may be asked historically of ‘older powers’ as well as of those which are currently seen to be emerging. Asking these questions effectively decentres the migrant as the object of study; instead power, its modalities and the part played by mobility in Rising Powers, too, become part of the focus. It also unsettles terms such as integration. For instance, we rarely ask: How do Northern migrants integrate in the global

Commented [RS11]: Remind the reader what you consider these three world to be: I assume not first, second and third worlds, which are passé, but North In-between, and South?

South? What infrastructures of integration are offered in Southern countries? What do the answers to these questions tell us about our implicit framing of questions around migration? Asking these questions points to the racial imaginaries that are implicitly contained in words like assimilation and the place attachments that are often used in the terminology, theory and practice of integration policies (and see Bakewell and Jónsson, 2011 for discussion of some of these issues within the context of African cities).

In sum, a long history of migration and development thinking exists into which the empirical phenomenon of economic growth and a global rebalancing interjects. There are a range of analytical legacies through which we can analyse migration at a global scale within the context of contemporary dynamics of the global economy. Migration and development may be seen as a binary relationship, albeit one with in-between steps. Others conceive migration and development along multipolar lines. This history of thought needs revisiting in order to better theorise migration and development in the context of rapidly changing realities. This chapter represents one small step towards this goal.

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