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# Asia and Europe: Transnationalism, Multiple Linkages and Development

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Currently, the role of migrants and migrant diasporas in the development of their countries of origin has been more and more in the limelight. It is now widely acknowledged that *labor migrants* send substantial amounts of remittances back home and that these could have a profound impact on the socio-economic development in the villages, regions and countries of origin. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that over the years *migrant diasporas* maintain multifarious relations with the regions and countries of origin. These ties can be economic, social, cultural, religious and political in nature. Recent studies (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999; Portes, 2001; Nyberg-Sorensen et al., 2002; Haas, 2003) suggest that *transnationalism* - i.e., migrants being involved in their countries of destination and origin and in different locales aided by improvements in communication and transportation – could be a factor promoting development and social change in the countries of origin. Since labor migration and transnationalism are worldwide phenomena, their effects on development processes call for a comparative approach that takes the different settings into consideration. Also, more studies are required to determine the exact nature of the impacts, i.e., whether the net effects are advantageous, deleterious or mixed for the origin areas, and under which circumstances. In particular, research on the link between migrant diasporas and development from the perspective of developing countries is called for (Hugo, 2003:36).

The papers in this special issue originate from an international conference to address these issues. The conference, "Contemporary Migrations in

Asia and Europe: Exploring Transnationalism, Multiple Linkages and Development," co-organized by the Department of Human Geography of the Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) and the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC), was held in Manila on 12-14 January 2005. The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the European Alliance for Asian Studies (EAAS) and the Swiss Foundation for Population, Migration and Environment (PME) generously provided financial support.

The focus on migration in and between Asia-Europe and holding the conference in Manila were appropriate, since Asian migration is of increasing importance in Europe and, in Southeast and East Asia, the Philippines is a country that has been greatly affected by migration, with nearly 10 percent (eight million as of 2004) of its population living abroad. This perspective presents an opportunity to examine the conceptual and empirical validity of transnationalism in two different migration regimes - relatively permanent migration (or long-term residence) in Asia-Europe migration and temporary labor migration in intraregional migration in Asia.

The workshop was meant to provide new information and theoretical insights on the development implications of international migration and the ways in which transnational linkages can harness the development process. Without disregarding the impact of remittances on (local) development, the conference attempted to address other aspects of the migration-development nexus as well, such as knowledge transfer, social capital, transnational entrepreneurship, the involvement of civil society organizations and the role of state policies. Thus, it aimed to contribute to our knowledge on the relationship between globalization, international migration, transnationalism and development.

The articles in this special issue touch on many of the themes and issues we envisioned when planning the conference. What follows is structured along the following lines: first, theoretical and conceptual issues will be discussed after which the discourses on transnational migration and development are dealt with. This feeds into the discussion of state policy and the role of civil society. Next, specific development impacts (e.g., remittances, foreign direct investments, etc.) and transnational entrepreneurship is discussed. The volume concludes with contributions focusing on the social-cultural aspects of transnationalism and diasporas (identity, homing desire, solidarity and philanthropy).

### ***Conceptual Issues and Current Discourses***

Since the introduction of the concept of transnationalism in migration studies by Basch et al. (1994), it has triggered some debate as to its novelty,

importance and contribution to theory. Although the paradigm has become quite commonplace and has been instrumental in demonstrating the connections between processes of globalization, diaspora dynamics and development, there remain some unresolved issues. Some have pointed to the danger of methodological nationalism or the glossing over of class differences (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). In addition, among the many issues raised in his contribution to this volume, Michael Parnwell questions the mainly positive connotations attached to the concept of 'transnationalism.' Parnwell also rightly questions the novelty of the phenomenon of transnational migration by pointing to the fact that in the context of Southeast Asia, such movements preceded nation-state formation and 'globalization.' He also points out that the notion of development in connection with migration is most often used in a narrow economic way. Linear thinking about development is insufficient, and an alternative perspective on development is needed.

Transnational migration and the modes of what Guarnizo (2003) coined 'transnational living' have increasingly caught the attention of academics and policymakers. Reviewing recent discussions at the EU level, and recent debates and research in the Netherlands and Germany, Ernst Spaan, Ton van Naerssen and Felicitas Hillmann (this volume) show notable shifts in discourses around migration and the role of diasporas in development. Government policies have only recently moved away from a narrow focus on repatriation, reintegration and remittances. However, policies integrating migration with development and development cooperation are still a long way off. At this point, the issue of migration and development is currently on the agenda of both development agencies and research institutes in several European countries. In the 1960s and 1970s, the issue was discussed in terms of push-and-pull factors in migration, brain drain, remittances and return migration. The renewed interest on the topic and its return on the developmental agenda occur within the context of globalization and European post-modern societies. Key notions in current discussions are remittances and foreign direct investments, knowledge transfer, brain gain, transnational entrepreneurship and diasporas.

### *The Role of the State and Civil Society*

The state in the countries of origin is also extending the nation to the diaspora population. The Philippines, India and Pakistan, for example, are taking great strides in promoting various programs to keep in touch with their overseas population. In 2003, the Philippines passed two pieces of legislation that relate to the overseas population: the absentee voting law and the dual citizenship law. In India, the development program, Pratham

Mumbai Education Initiative, with an annual budget exceeding one million dollars, strives to maintain linkages with diaspora communities in Canada, Germany, UK, USA and the United Arab Emirates for international fund raising. Extending the nation to the diaspora is one form of state response to migration. The state can also feel threatened by the emergence of cosmopolitanism and transnational identities. The resistance against double passport arrangements in some European countries is one example.

The article by Brenda Yeoh and Katie Willis (this volume), characterizes Singapore's policy towards the state-supported migration of its nationals as Janus faced. On the one hand, the state propagates Singaporeans to be cosmopolitan in keeping with the state's "go-regional" economic blueprint; on the other hand it wants them to keep strong ties with the city-state. While the state propagates a Singaporean diaspora identity as part and parcel of its economic interests in the People's Republic of China, Singaporean attitudes towards its giant relative is ambivalent to say the least.

Vietnam provides another example of the state taking a lead in framing perceptions of migrants. The shift in the state's view of emigrants is suggested by the language used to refer to *Viet khieu* or overseas Vietnamese: from 'traitors' to 'those living far away from the fatherland' or to 'our Vietnamese abroad' (Dang, 2005). This change coincided with politico-economic changes since the introduction of market reforms. Evidence of a similar shift is observable in other countries in the region as well e.g., in South Korea.

Other than state policies, the linkages opened up and sustained by migration processes hold important implications for governance and the role of non-state actors in this age of migration. Migrant civil society organizations in sending countries and countries of destination as well are engaging in advocacy and lobbying activities to change national state and multilateral policies in favor of migrant diasporas. Another issue is the impact on development processes of transnational cultural and political linkages between the diaspora communities and the region/country of origin. Diaspora communities might support processes of (local) institutional change in the home country through their newly acquired capital, skills or ideas. In several countries, the migrant diaspora is increasingly being recognized as an overseas electorate that can have a role to play in national politics and policy. Moreover, migrants and civil society organizations have become more organized in networking, which has strengthened their voices in pushing for socio-economic and political rights. The passage of the Overseas Absentee Voting Law and the Dual Citizenship Law in the Philippines (both were passed in 2003) are examples of the strength of advocacy. In this issue, Nicola Piper illustrates the vibrancy of Southeast Asian transnational activist networks that are critical for advocacy work

and lobbying for the protection of migrant workers, particularly foreign domestic workers. She also argues for more synergy between civil society and trade unions across the region and advancing advocacy transregionally as well.

### ***Remittances, Investments and Entrepreneurship***

Remittances have been the major indicator of migrants' commitment to their home countries in academic and policy debates. The extent to which migrants can increase the volume of remittances and channel them into productive investments depends on a complex of factors. These include, inter alia, their individual commitment towards their family and home communities, the opportunities and constraints imposed by state policies and the socio-economic conditions in the country of destination. The article by Daniele Cologna clearly illustrates the importance of external factors in determining the volume and effective use of migrants' remittances. He describes the various phases Chinese migrants in Italy go through before they could send remittances back home. They have to adapt to their new environment first, pay back their loans, apply for regularization (since they came as unauthorized migrants), and to prepare for their family members joining them in Italy (which means mobilizing considerable funds). Migrants' decisions on sending remittances and their uses may be affected by the specific socio-economic configuration of the communities of origin. The contrasting impact of migrants' remittances on two neighboring districts of origin in Southern Zhejiang, China bears this out.

Hye-Kyung Lee's article on the Korean experience indicates that government policy can help capture a large part of migrant remittances and direct its utilization to productive ends. Korea crossed the migration transition in the late 1980s, ending a long history of emigration. The migration of Korean construction workers to the Middle East in the 1970s, which was remarkable in its magnitude and organization, brought in considerable remittances. The government intervened by instituting measures such as imposing heavy taxation on imported goods and requiring migrants to remit 80 percent of their earnings.

Remittances are not the only resources that can contribute to development in the countries of origin. The local economy in countries of origin can also benefit from venture capital, knowledge and skills, and technology which may be transferred by migrant organizations and business networks, or brought back by migrants. The market and creation of commodity chains with new forward and backward linkages have the potential to boost local employment and regional GDP. The research on immigrant or ethnic entrepreneurship, thus far, has been on the countries of immigration. It has

only been recently that several studies have specifically examined the role of (return) migrants in setting up or investing in (family) businesses in their countries of origin. The potential of migrant entrepreneurship for development is now also gradually gaining more attention among policymakers in the EU (Spaan, van Naerssen and Hillmann, this volume).

Lee's paper draws attention to how overseas Koreans fostered investments and trade in the homeland and how the Korean diaspora has proven to be a valuable resource for Korean firms setting up businesses abroad. The government's acknowledgement of the contributions of overseas Koreans to national development is epitomized by the passing of the Overseas Koreans Law, aimed at facilitating the business activities and investments in Korea by the Korean diaspora. In a similar vein, now that Vietnam's economy has become more outward oriented and liberalized under the policy of market socialism (*Doi Moi*), the government has been promoting the role of their compatriots overseas in national economic development by facilitating the transfer or remittances and foreign investments (Dang, 2005).

Marisha Maas' contribution provides a good illustration of transnational entrepreneurship and its expansion into other pursuits. Her case study deals with a Dutch-Filipino couple who started a business in the Philippines and who work to expand their Dutch-based 'door-to-door' services into various activities in the Philippines. Importantly, it is pointed out that transnational entrepreneurship is not solely driven by purely economic considerations (profit maximization) but that these businesses also serve social and even philanthropic purposes.

### ***Socio-Cultural Relations***

Maas' study of Filipino transnational entrepreneurs shows how commercial activities can 'spill over' into social, charitable activities, based on solidarity and reciprocity, with migrants playing a key role. The altruistic side of migration is something that has not been explored as much. The focus on the philanthropic initiatives of Filipino migrants, the topic of Jeremiaah Opiniano's contribution, discusses the strength of sentimentality, solidarity and reciprocity that underlie migrants' motivations to give back to the homeland. Philanthropic funds raised by various groups, e.g., hometown associations, Filipino-run charities or professional organizations, are channeled to the areas of origin in support of infrastructural, educational or health related projects. Opiniano's study makes clear that overseas migrants' financial contribution to (local) development goes beyond remittances.

Other manifestations of transnationalism can be gleaned in marriages between overseas Vietnamese and Vietnamese women from home and in tourism (Dang, 2005). Given the importance of tourism for the Southeast and East Asian economies, this latter theme warrants attention. In a globalizing world, tourism is a dimension of transnational relations serving as an important vehicle for strengthening socio-cultural and economic relations between the diaspora and the homeland. Maggie Leung shows how Chinese migrant entrepreneurs in Europe penetrate this market and illustrates how these travel agencies draw on transnational feelings and 'are selling nostalgia to Chinese migrants' in order to promote diaspora tourism. On the other hand, Chinese travel agencies make use of their cultural capital by guaranteeing Chinese tourists to Europe that they stay in Chinese friendly accommodations and will receive Chinese food to feel at home abroad (*see also* Leung, 2004).

### ***Concluding remarks***

As the contributions in this volume attest, the linkages between migration and development are multifarious. These linkages can be initiated, triggered, sustained or affected by labor migration, educational migration, remittances, international trade promotion, foreign investments, transnational entrepreneurship, diaspora philanthropy, promotion of 'good governance,' transnational marriages and tourism. This volume also shows the broad variety of migrants: undocumented labor migrants, Asians (mostly women) married to Europeans, self-employed businessmen and women, Korean labor migrants, Chinese migrants going through phases of adaptation and having to make a choice to invest in a grave tomb or a house 'back home,' and Filipino-Dutch entrepreneurs. In addition, there are diasporas composed of transnationals of the first, second or third generation, such as in Singapore. However, notwithstanding the picture of diversity, taken together, the essays in have just started to explore the theme of 'transnationalism and development.' Thus, in-depth comparative studies are part of the research agenda in the future. As a first step, there is a need to clarify some central concepts.

Transnationalism is, of course, a broad concept. It refers to both a feeling of belonging ('at home or not at home,' my identity versus 'the other') and behavioral referents (making homes in different places; carrying out transnational entrepreneurial activities). It is an economic, social, cultural phenomenon as well. The idea of transnationalism originated in a particular historical context, and the implications for comparing transnationalism in Europe and in Asia raises thorny questions such as: who are using the concept, for what purposes and under what conditions? Transnationalism

is linked to the notion of 'nation.' Historically it contributed to the shaping of nation-states in Europe. On the other hand, some will argue that dispersed loyalties as implicit in current notions of 'the Philippine nation abroad' or 'our Vietnamese people overseas' might well endanger the nation-state, particularly in states that are socially and/or ethnically fragmented.

The concept of 'development' is a contested concept since the decades-old debate of 'economic growth versus distribution' or 'trickling down' versus unequal access to resources and increasing disparities is still valid. In general, in this volume, international migration is approached as positive for (economic) development, with the implicit notion of development as a trickle down process. The reason might be that at the household level remittances contribute to the improvement of the livelihoods of household members, and at the national level they have a positive effect on foreign assets and might even cushion fiscal crisis. Well-designed studies at the village and neighborhood level are needed to give us a more nuanced perhaps and less rosy picture. The expression 'migration culture' is often used as if everyone participates in this culture. In reality, migration systems are selective, since the prospective migrant needs resources to participate in the system, and for this reason, a migrant must have access to physical, human and social capital. Detailed area studies might reveal increasing inequalities between households or regions included and excluded in the system – which begs the question, what about development then? One policy implication could be to make the migration system more accessible. But do we really want this? More concretely, do we want a situation whereby a substantial proportion of the population work and live abroad, supporting those who remain "at home," such as what has become of the Philippines. What does this situation imply for 'development'?

These questions lead us to the role of policy making. At the macro level, as exemplified by the Philippines, Vietnam, and South Korea (to some extent) it is clear that currently national governments in the sending countries do not consider emigration and diaspora as negative phenomena. Instead, they are ready to reap the fruits of remittances in the form of foreign assets. At the receiving end, 'Europe without borders' is becoming more and more Fortress Europe. There are more restrictive limitations to immigration, and there are signs of resentment, sadly enough even among political elite circles. Nevertheless, one also notices the emergence of a counter or alternative discourse and politics to fight these developments. NGOs have come out to draw attention to the social costs of international migration, labor rights, human rights violations and human trafficking. The Philippines is a case in point, where many NGOs are engaged in supporting migrant workers, lobbying and advocacy. In forging links between NGOs in

both sending and receiving countries transnational networks are created in the process, often supported by diasporas. This volume in its own way might contribute to furthering an alternative vision of migration.

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