

Social Transformation and Migration: Unveiling the Nexus

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Social Transformation and Migration: Unveiling the Nexus

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1. Introduction: The nexus between migration and transformation

In this entry we analyse the nexus between migration and transformation with respect to different outcomes in the societies of origin and destination of migrants. In this perspective we differentiate between three societal levels at which these outcomes can be observed; systems, institutions located within these systems, and individuals who interact and respond 'from below'. This discussion appears particularly timely in light of the different global transformation processes, which are currently taking place in parallel to increases in the volume and changes to the patterns of various international migration flows, and the consequent changes to the composition of societies of destination.

Examples of far-reaching and interconnected transformation processes at the global level are changes to global constellations of political alliances and hegemonies (Held, 2010), shifts in economic systems toward neoliberalism and globalisation (Castles, 2010; Harvey, 2007; Held et al., 1999), as well as climate change (Faist, 2016a). Moreover advances in communication and transportation technologies are associated with transformations. Castells (2004) discusses under the term 'space of flows' that capital investments, communications and travel are accelerating. Spatial transformation is a consequence of this process, such as expressed in altering planning, architecture and design of urban spheres.

Although migration to and in Europe is diverse and the numbers and characteristics of migrants in each European country differ, some overall trends can be observed that correlate with the above mentioned processes of global change. In general, migration has become more heterogeneous (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015), which is expressed in different interrelated ways: 1) the increase of mixed forms of migration, which are blurring classical migrant categories (King, 2012); 2) the growing diversification of drivers of migration, for instance linked to threats to human security due to armed conflicts or environmental degradation, (Castles, de Haas & Miller, 2014); and 3) changing configurations regarding countries of migrants' origin, transit or destination (Boswell, 2016), including an increasing diversity of countries of origin (Czaika & de Haas, 2014).

Different historical experiences illustrate how migration can be closely related to profound transformations, such as European-led colonization. For instance, the impact of European settlers, particularly in the Americas but also in Australia and parts of Africa, seems to be a very striking example of the transformative potential of migration. As Lucassen & Lucassen (2011) show, in the second half of the 19th century colonization was, with a share of more than 40 per cent of migration within the continent and to overseas territories, the most important form of migration originating from Europe, followed by the migration of soldiers and sailors. Another example is the forced transfer of people, abducted on the West African

coast, to the Americas in the context of the transatlantic slave trade, which resulted in deep changes in society not only in the US but also in many parts of Africa (Whatley & Gillezeau, 2011).

In contrast to these historical processes, Europe represents currently not exclusively but mainly a region of immigration. Nonetheless, migration to Europe represents an increasingly diversifying process that also is both caused by global changes and is leading to transformational shifts in the continent.

For instance, the internationalisation of education (Findlay et al., 2012; Held & McGrew, 2007) led to a significant increase in international student mobility to Europe. According to Eurostat (2016a) inflows of international students to the European Union increased between 2012 and 2015 by around 35 per cent.

Also labour shortages and demographic transitions (Castles, 2009) in many classical immigration countries lead to the creation of legal stimulations for attracting high skilled migrants. This is also reflected in the case of the European Union where the number of incoming high-skilled migrants increased between 2011 and 2015 by more than 12 per cent (Eurostat, 2016b).

Moreover, the increase of armed conflicts all over the world, sometimes also associated with the effects of climate change (Wodon et al., 2014) led to a significant increase in humanitarian migration towards European countries by more than 200 per cent (Eurostat, 2016c).

Obviously, a one-to-one comparison between past forms of migration, including colonisation and slave trade, and the current situation with respect to the major increase in the number of humanitarian migrants in some European countries, is misleading for a variety of reasons. Most important, humanitarian migrants do not harbour intentions to conquer societies of destination, and governments of modern nation states are able to prevent the complete transformation of their societies by the ever more sophisticated enforcement of immigration and integration laws.

Nevertheless, growing numbers of immigrants have the potential to initiate new or to perpetuate ongoing transformation processes in Europe.

These processes include potential real-life changes, for instance to the labour or housing markets. In addition, fears of the alleged negative economic or cultural consequences of migration among citizens can strengthen nationalistic sentiments to the extent of transforming the shared values of reciprocity and solidarity toward refugees within societies, expressed in some cases through the increasing support of right-wing parties, and hostility or physical violence based on xenophobic motives.

In this entry we aim to shed light on existing academic understandings of the nexus between transformation and migration, underpinned by some empirical evidence. We do so in full awareness of the current changing nature of migration patterns, particularly with respect to the recent large inflow of humanitarian migrants in many European countries, and related global transformation processes. So far, no conclusive empirical evidence exists with respect to the consequences of these changes for the nexus between transformation and migration. Despite the different contexts, some conclusions might be drawn and lessons learned from empirical analyses and theoretical reflections of previous forms of immigration, for instance with respect to labour migration in the context of guest worker agreements in Europe and North America.

In the following, we analyse existing knowledge from different viewpoints and on different societal levels. First, from the perspective of the social system, the link between transformation and migration is discussed in two ways. On the one hand, global transformation processes lead to social transformation, which also might entail outmigration. On the other hand, human movements can be understood as a trigger of social transformation. Second, we address different ways through which international migration might transform institutions. We particularly focus on the impacts of immigration on migration and integration policies and citizenship rights in destination countries, as well as on shifting discourses and changing policies of countries of origin with respect to their diasporic communities. Third, migrants' agency can be understood as being closely linked to transformation processes in different ways. These include the framing of migration as a livelihood and adaptive strategy in response to transformation processes in regions of origin, and responses to transformation by different local actors, including migrants and non-migrants. In this section we also focus on the importance of migrants' transnationality as a source of responses to transformation 'from below'.

2. Transformations in systems and migration

Macro-level approaches to the transformation and migration nexus, focused in this section, address, first, social transformation and migration; second, migration and social change; and third, gender, ethnicity, and social class as particularly relevant aspects for the nexus, and are discussed both in relation to countries of origin and destination.

The first perspective identifies migration as an integral component of social transformation processes. The theoretical background is based on Polanyi's (2001) analysis on the effects of market liberalization on European societies in the 19th century. Polanyi found that economic liberalization led to fundamental political, economic and social changes in society, based on the "fictitious commodities" of land, labour and money. Their commodification in a market economy resulted, in his view, in the disembeddedness of the economy from society, a process he defined as the "Great Transformation" (Polanyi, 2001). Following this perspective, some scholars continued and partly expanded Polanyi's approach for the analysis of contemporary global economic and political changes (Castles, 2015; Castles, 2013; Munck, 2006; Stiglitz, 2001). In particular, Stephen Castles developed the concept of social transformation in the tradition of Polanyi and linked it systematically to international migration, as he outlines below:

Social transformation can be defined as a fundamental shift in the way society is organised that goes beyond the continual processes of incremental social change that are always at work...[because it] implies a 'step-change' in which all existing social patterns are questioned and many are reconfigured (Castles, 2010: 1576).

Polanyi discussed transformation processes by focusing on Great Britain in the 18th century. Castles' approach on social transformation exceeds this national perspective and invites to address issues of disembeddedness in contemporary contexts.

As to the effects of social transformation on migration, Castles discusses neoliberal globalisation as a further moment, in which a step-change began in the 1970s. He addresses some of the economic, political and social changes involved, to show how the social organisation of contemporary societies is altering, including shifts in the characteristics of international out-migration (Castles, 2013; Castles et. al, 2011).

These changes on the economic and political levels are often discussed under the neoliberal values of market liberalization, deregulation and privatization (Castles, 2015; Stiglitz, 2002), in which the underlying idea is that markets should be self-regulating rather than state-controlled. The implementation of these principles implies the withdrawal of the state from the provision of central public services. This process was in many countries of the Global South introduced forcibly by the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (Delgado, 2014; Harvey, 2007), which led to different forms of social transformation in society. In general terms, these transformation processes are associated with a range of consequences that are related to the undermining of traditional ways of living and working (Arango, 2000; Massey et al., 1993; Portes & Walton, 1981; Wallerstein, 1974), which consequently shape migratory conditions (Castles, 2010).

Neoliberal globalization in practice can facilitate ‘transnationalism from above’ (Smith & Guarnizo, 2006), meaning, for instance, the unrestricted entrance of foreign capital. Especially in the case of rural areas this can trigger land grabbing (Borras & Franco, 2010), leading potentially to the displacement of small-scale farmers and marginalised population segments from their croplands. Similarly, the entrance of foreign capital can also destroy small-scale production forms and rural livelihoods, for instance, by the implementation of biotechnologies (Pechlaner & Otero, 2008), which can require the purchase of modified seeds for cultivation. As this kind of technology is often unaffordable for most rural dwellers, the exclusion of small-scale farmers from agriculture is the likely result. In urban areas of less-developed countries, deregulation and privatization in particular might mean for the middle classes the degradation of livelihoods due to significant cuts in educational and health services as well as in social provisions, which in turn might lead to worsening living conditions (Castles, 2013).

Neoliberal globalization is expressed differently in countries of the Global North. In these regions, social transformation can be associated, for instance, with the relatively quick retirement of workers, improvement of educational opportunities as well as demographic transitions (Castles, 2013). These dynamics may lead to decreasing numbers of local workers who are available or willing to engage in low-skilled jobs. In addition to these aspects, global cities (Sassen, 2005) are also seen as magnets for international migrants from less-developed countries (Castles, 2001). In both the Global South and the Global North those factors associated with social transformation are seen as powerful driving factors of human movements on an international scale, and are likely to lead to shifts in migration patterns (Castles, 2013). Moreover, in line with Polanyi’s thoughts, Castles considers ‘counter movements’ as a form of response from below, such as different kinds of social action on an individual, family, community or nation-state-level. As discussed in more detail in the section on migrants’ interactions in response to transformation below, this also comprises internal, international and transnational human movements.

The second perspective, developed especially in the work of Alexandro Portes (2010), is based on a slightly different understanding of the nexus, focusing on the link between migration and social change. From this viewpoint, migration itself represents social change, addressed as a ‘form of change’ that can potentially lead to further societal shifts in both countries of origin and destination, and is thus considered a ‘cause of change’. To analyse the principal consequences of international migration, primary attention is paid to the latter dynamics. In this way, Portes focuses on the larger-scale transformative impacts of immigration on cultures and the social structures in countries of origin and destination. He argues that, in the case of destination countries, it is useful to differentiate between “structural importance

and change potential of migration flows” (Portes, 2010: 1548). The former refers to the need for foreign labourers for achieving (economic) development; through the contribution of labour migrants, countries of destination advance and thereby social change may occur. Change potential refers to the initiation of profound transformation in society triggered by incoming migrants.

In line with these reflections, Portes argues that changes triggered by migrants are significant, because they have structural importance, but often remain on the surface, and hence would not have a change potential. In other words, this suggests that migration mainly implies only minimal alterations of the social order, because social values and the social structure of the destination countries remain mostly unaffected which would not only hold true for the case of the United States, but also for West European countries. In short, Portes contends that the potential of migration to initiate deep social change is limited, because a dense institutional landscape in which profound “cultural and power arrangements” are embedded would hinder them. What is more, the argument is made that when migrant groups seek to challenge the constitutive pillars of national states the contrary would often result, namely, the underpinning of existing societal values and social order by the domestic population (Portes, 2010; Entzinger, 2009). Consequently, migrants are channelled into certain social status positions and gradually assimilated in the destination country.

Similarly, in sending countries emigration reinforces the existing social and political order and therefore does not transform it. According to Portes, this would occur, for instance, when emigration represents an economic strategy that eases civic discontent with respect to development and power asymmetries, but which nonetheless allows political elites to preserve their higher social positions in society. Financial remittances would compensate some structural deficiencies (e.g., absence of local credit) and help support the sending country's economy, but would not result in social change. In contrast to temporary or circular forms of movement, permanent migration is seen as especially favourable for far-reaching transformations. Negative forms of migration-induced changes can include, according to Portes, the depopulation of emigration regions, which can involve the outflow of valuable cognitive (brain drain) and productive (brawn drain) human capital and undermine the demographic foundation of local development. In addition, the transnationalisation of the culture of origin can represent another adverse dimension of migration-led changes. This can mean that the “value system and the pattern of normative expectations become increasingly affected by ‘imports’ [of goods, social values and cognitive patterns], in particular those from expatriate communities” (Portes, 2010: 1552). Finally, marginalisation in the countries of destination that feeds back to the sending country can have unfavourable outcomes for sending countries. Such is the case, for example, when adverse experiences and marginalised lifestyles in the US relat-

ed to 'downward assimilation' (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) are transported back to countries of origin by deported young migrants. It is considered that such dynamics can involve the establishment of new criminal gangs and result in public security issues.

The reason why far-reaching change potentials are more likely to occur in societies of origin than in countries of destination is associated with the uneven distribution of "economic power, technological knowhow and institutional strength in the global system" (Portes, 2010: 1555), which favours countries of destination and makes them more resilient against the influences that immigration implies.

The third approach is analytically close to the previous account, but emphasises gender, ethnicity and class as significant traits that need to be considered in the study of drivers and consequences in the transformation and migration nexus. In line with the previously discussed social transformation processes, Munck (2009) argues in regard to the role of gender that political and economic restructuring within neoliberal globalisation affects a large number of households of less-developed countries and leads to many job losses, particularly among female workers, which consequently triggers the outmigration of women. In turn, outmigration would potentially "lead to shifting identities and new complex forms of gender" (Munck, 2009: 1234), indicating the possible social changes triggered by international migration.

That both ethnicity and gender need to be considered as particularities of the global economy was already acknowledged by Wallerstein and Balibar (1991). According to these scholars, ethnicization and sexism serve in countries of destination as mechanisms for maximising profits, minimising production costs and reducing costs incurred by labour force protests. Similar to Portes' ideas on the structural importance of migrants for destination countries, from this angle migration releases shifts in economies of destination countries, because ethnicization and sexism as profit strategies are likely to transform labour market conditions in destination countries. A current example can be found in the subcontract worker schemes in Germany, which represent mostly flexible and low-paid occupations. In contrast to the regular labour market, in which workers of a different ethnic origin made up 10 per cent in 2015, the percentage of migrants in subcontract jobs amounted in the same year to 24 per cent, meaning that every fourth employee involved in these precarious occupations was represented by workers with a migration background (Federal Office for Employment, 2016), compared to an overall share of migrants in the workforce of about 10 per cent. Subcontracts illustrate how capitalist strategies can change labour markets through their segmentation, in which the migrant labour force plays a crucial role.

It can likewise be argued that the factor of ethnicity can not only introduce a changing division of labour, but also lead to circumstances in which xenophobic and racist discourse and

attitudes might increase in destination countries (Munck, 2009), because migrants might be identified as a threat to national security or national identity (Castles, 2013). The current strengthening of right-wing movements in reaction to the influx of refugees among all the European Union member states indicates that migrants can be scapegoated as a menace to the fair distribution of scarce resources in society, such as jobs, public goods and social benefits.

Finally, migrants' social class affiliation can also be involved in transformation. From this angle, an expression of the 'new international division of labour' (Fröbel et al., 1980; Delgado, Márquez & Puentes, 2013) is high-skilled and low-skilled migration (Entzinger, 2012) as well as forced labour migration. Munck considers that the latter type of human movement "not only survived, but reproduced and even expanded while the capitalist mode of production...becomes dominant" (2009: 1235). This illustrates how labour force demands in developed countries in the context of neoliberal globalisation can shape North-South labour migration. It also shows the ways in which migration is structured by the social class background of migrants. The emergence of, and increase in involuntary labour migration in particular indicate also that destination societies can be transformed due to new labour market segmentations.

Notwithstanding these solid theoretical considerations discussed above, some aspects still seem to be unresolved, particularly those related to the interactions between social transformation, as discussed by Castles, and social change, as addressed by Portes. Moreover, the question emerges whether there are also other heterogeneities in addition to the discussed traits of gender, ethnicity and class that are significantly linked to social transformation, such as age, migrant category, transnationality etc.

3. Migration and institutional change

The meso-level analysis of transformation and migration suggests a focus on how institutions or organisations are shaped by international migration. This section examines institutional change by addressing changing migration and integration policies in destination countries, altering citizenship policies in both countries of origin and destination, as well as shifting discourses and policies regarding diasporic communities and development in countries of origin.

Institutional transformation and migration become visible in countries of destination when new discourses emerge and immigration policies change. While national immigration policies vary between countries, the current and general trend is toward the tightening of migration policies in almost all traditional immigration countries (Castles, 2013; Entzinger, 2012). Faist

(2004) discusses this trend as the “migration and security nexus” and stresses that in both immigration and integration policies in traditional destination countries securitisation gained in importance, especially after the 9/11 attacks. As a result, not only have existing institutional practices changed, but new institutions have emerged. To cite only two examples, the Department of Homeland Security, was established shortly after the noted attacks in 2001, to take charge of securing the country from any external threat, including from those migrants who are seen as a danger to public security. In Europe, the EU border control agency Frontex was founded in 2004 to protect EU borders more efficiently from irregular inflows of migrants. This shows how migration can provoke the emergence of new institutions. This is also linked to changing institutional practices and the distribution of tasks within the European Union. Frontex, for instance, was also charged with a risk analysis regarding the expected numbers of undocumented crossings at different borders of EU member states. The goal of this assessment was to inform EU policies and the process of distribution of funds for border protection to particular EU member states (Horii, 2016). As Entzinger (2012) discusses, welfare states especially are challenged in their sovereignty by immigration, and even more so by an uncontrolled influx. Consequently, it is sought to manage immigration, whereby unwanted people are systematically excluded through border control and through the denial of welfare services.

The current refugee situation illustrates how EU institutions and EU member state governments react to the alleged threat of uncontrolled inflows of asylum seekers through incremental change. Institutional reactions on the national level to uncontrolled refugee inflows are indeed context-specific, but the effort to control this influx can even lead to the violation of humanitarian principles. In other cases, such as in Germany, the objective to manage humanitarian migration can lead to the emergence of different and sometimes contradictory political reactions. This is evident in the recently adopted amendments on the asylum law: While immigration policies became on the one hand stricter and more selective (e.g. the simplified deportation of criminal asylum seekers), at the same time more financial and public resources were dedicated to the integration of refugees (e.g. the doubling of financial resources for language courses).

Closely related to changing institutional practices is the matter of immigrants’ citizenship acquisition. That institutional practices became more tolerant is visible through increasing numbers of individuals acquiring citizenship by naturalisation. For instance, in the period between 2005 and 2013 the annual numbers of naturalisations increased by almost 30 per cent in the case of the US (USCIS, 2016) and by 36 per cent in the case of the European Union (Eurostat, 2016d). A similar trend in changing institutional practices is also observable in the acquisition of multiple citizenships. According to Faist (2010), in the past, the idea of having two

or more political identities had a highly negative connotation, because it was associated with non-integration into the host society, low levels of political loyalty, or with the undermining of civic principles in the election process. These perceptions have changed over the last decades, and multiple political memberships are increasingly seen as “a challenge that needs to be negotiated from standpoints ranging from (mostly) pragmatic tolerance to active encouragement” (Faist, 2010: 1676). The causes for this institutional shift are manifold and are related to the influence of international discourses on national citizenship policies, the political recognition that social integration can be promoted via dual citizenship, or the official acknowledgment of migrants’ transnationality through the allowance of dual memberships. A further relevant consideration with respect to the transformation and migration nexus has been the political pressure that migrant and civil society organisations exercised on institutions (Faist, 2010).

The toleration of dual citizenship was implemented not only in several traditional destination countries, but also frequently adopted by emigration countries. To be sure, the reasons for changes in institutional practices among the latter regarding citizenship differed; for example, the recognition of the migrants’ development potential for less-developed regions may have led to the institutional encouragement of dual citizenship. According to Faist (2008), there is a discursive trend in which international migrants are identified as ‘transnational agents of development’, which resonates with a paradigmatic shift in international development debates since 2000. In these discussions, civil society members’ ownership of and participation in development processes, especially of less-developed countries, were emphasised (Stiglitz, 2008). That these changing discourses are also reflected in national ones is, for instance, shown by Nyíri for the case of China: While previously the Chinese government invoked return for serving the country, this rhetoric has changed to the slogan “serve the country” (2010: 637). In this fashion, the desire to relate more intensively with respective diaspora groups is likely to correspond to the interest in sustaining existing cross-border ties and practices of migrants with people in their home country, because these bonds are associated with financial returns, in the form of either remittances or investments (Portes & Zhou, 2012). As some migration scholars stress, rising amounts of family- and community-based financial remittances over recent years are seen by some emigration country institutions as a way to promote development or are even used strategically in bargaining for external loans (Delgado, 2014; Guarnizo, 2003). This perceived development potential of migrants can represent a major factor for discursive and institutional changes in traditional sending countries, which can be reflected in the recognition of multiple citizenships, but also in other ways, such as the proactive interaction, negotiation and collaboration with migrant organisations. These dynamics can lead to new institutional practices, as the 3x1 migrant programme in Mexico

shows: Negotiations between Mexican state institutions and migrant organisations located in the US not only enabled diasporic groups to define some social development priorities in their country of origin (Garcia Zamora, 2006), but also led to the emergence of new formal commissions and to changes in public financing schemes. In addition to such changes observable in the case of migrant programmes, migrant organisations can challenge institutions and their practices and thereby influence them. An example of this process is the frequent interrogations of the role of the state of origin in the development process by migrant organisation representatives (Bada, 2016), through which political pressure is exercised and political processes are influenced.

Technological development represents an important means by which established forms and legitimisations of citizenship can change. One example for this development is the recent debate about e-residency, an initiative pioneered in the EU by Estonia in the autumn of 2016. E-residency does not grant full citizenship rights, such as the right to vote, or entail obligations, such as paying taxes in the country. However, it provides for instance access to the EU single market, which might enhance opportunities for transnational businesses for citizens of non-EU countries (Adee, 2016).

The factors discussed above indicate the different ways in which migration and the activities of migrant organisations can be associated with institutional changes. However, there are still a number of issues to be addressed, such as the durability of institutional changes, the links between these formal shifts and migrants' rights, especially when considering different categories of mobile people, as well as feedback effects of political changes in places of origin to migrant organisations in places of destination.

4. Migrants' interactions in response to transformation

There are different ways of understanding the transformation and migration nexus by focusing on the interaction of individuals. Transformation processes often occur at the global level, yet their outcomes are experienced by individuals at the local level. Responses 'from below' or "counter movements" in the sense used by Polanyi (2001: 77) were considered by Castles (2001) in his social transformation approach, introduced above. He stated that contemporary forms of these counter movements include social, religious or nationalist movements but also "individual- or family-level livelihood strategies, including rural-urban or international migration" (Castles, 2010: 1576). In addition, as also discussed by Vertovec, the activities of indi-

vidual agents involved in transnational social spaces can be understood as another form of response to broader transformation processes, which in turn can induce transformation, such as the “basic structures of individual orientation, fundamental political frameworks, and integral processes of economic development” (2004a: 973).

The consequences of economic and political transformation processes, particularly in developing countries, might include disappearing labour opportunities and decreasing agricultural productivity, changes in access to land for housing and farming, and the realization of development projects (Castles, 2007). The potential of these processes to trigger outmigration has been discussed in detail above. From an actor’s perspective, migration has been understood as one potential livelihood strategy or adaptive response to worsening conditions in affected areas, particularly in the context of climate change (Black et al., 2011). This reasoning is theoretically based on the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) approach, which conceptualizes migration as an income diversification strategy and a means to decrease the risk of income failures for households (Stark & Bloom, 1985).

Local responses at the micro-level to global transformative processes can occur in both origin and destination regions and have various characteristics with respect to the role of migrants as actors and/or beneficiaries. First, they can be based on the mobilisation of parts of the local population for the benefit of all local residents, including migrants. One example of such grassroots initiatives is the recent emergence of food distribution cooperatives in response to the economic crisis in Greece (Rakopoulos, 2014). Second, there is an increasing number of local initiatives established with the aim to support the rights of migrants (MacKenzie, Forde & Ciupijus, 2012), but also to oppose their arrival and settlement (Dostal, 2015). Third, migrants in destination countries form migrant associations which are often based on their ethnic or national background. These organisations exercise civic engagement by offering social support but often also engage in political participation in order to initiate or to resist different forms of social change and transformation (Eggert & Pilati, 2014). Political participation includes various forms of protest, but also engagement with local political leaders. It can either aim at achieving general goals, including better school services and sports facilities and lower levels of neighbourhood crime, or address immigration-related issues, such as raising awareness of discrimination or protesting against immigration policies (Pilati & Morales, 2016).

In addition to these local civic and political responses to global transformation processes by migrants and non-migrants, transnational social spaces, enabling the “circular flow of persons, goods, information and symbols” (Faist, 1998: 214), have been considered to be another important realm for the development of responses to global transformation. The term

refers to sets of cross-border ties, which are transactions and communications between social agents, including individuals, groups, formal organizations and states (Faist, 2000).

The ways in which these transnational spaces relate to migrants' agency and activities have been addressed in different ways. Castles (2002) understands transnational affiliations as spaces of migrants' belonging, while he argued that perceptions of belonging in turn were often created through feelings of solidarity toward members of the same ethnic group across national borders. Besides these aspects of belonging and solidarity, transnational links can also be used for the exchange of goods and ideas between regions of origin and destination. In this vein, focusing on the links between realities in regions of origin and destination, Vertovec (2004a) employed the concept of 'bifocality' in order to analyse how social practices of individuals in both regions are interlinked, particularly in transnational families. Furthermore, transnational actors are discussed as agents of change who transform the conditions for individuals and communities in areas of origin and destination (Vertovec, 2004a), which might in turn lead to social transformation. Sometimes 'transnationalism from below' has also been understood as a form of popular resistance to hegemonic structures (Smith & Guarnizo, 2006). The agency developed by migrants and non-migrants becomes visible in different spheres of transnational social spaces, including political and social action, and embraces both adaptation to and changing of adverse conditions (Castles, 2002).

There are different ways through which responses to transformation 'from below' can be expressed and different channels through which they are maintained. The facilitation of long-distance communication through cheap telephone calls was already identified as the "social glue of migrants' transnationalism" (Vertovec, 2004b) more than a decade ago. More recent developments in communication technologies provided the pathway to what has been termed the 'digital diaspora'. The organisation of transnational activities through the Internet has been discussed in two ways: First, as a security threat with respect to the organisation of terrorist activities, and second, as a source of information and as a means for migrants to engage more easily in processes of economic and political development (Brinkerhoff, 2009). The use of social media for discussions about politics, for instance in online fora, has also been facilitated through the growing accessibility of mobile phones, as shown for the case of Indians in Singapore (Aricat, 2015).

Remittances have been identified as one important way through which migrants and their significant others can initiate and respond to transformation in countries, regions and communities of origin. For many families of migrants and other members of migrants' communities in countries of origin, individual and collective remittances represent an important source of income for the financing of personal everyday needs as well as for the development of the

community infrastructure. Individual remittances sent by migrants to their families for the purpose of investing in food, healthcare and education of the children have, from an optimistic point of view, been understood as “a significant kind of social, if not economic, transformation” (Vertovec, 2004a: 985). Collective remittances, often managed by hometown associations (HTAs), are mainly used for the construction or maintenance of public buildings and for offering services, for instance related to religion, health care and education. HTAs often also engage in income-generating activities at the community and personal level, including micro credits for small individual or family-based projects. Finally, they often provide aid to community members affected by natural hazards, such as earthquakes or hurricanes. Despite these positive effects, internal disputes about the use of money, the exclusion of some community members, particularly women, from decision-making processes, as well as confrontations with local governments are some of the negative aspects related to the work of HTAs (Vertovec, 2004a). Inequalities of power between migrants and those who remained in the communities can also be expressed through the links of HTAs to local governments. Bada (2016) argued that local governments in countries of origin increasingly rely on financial remittances as sources of income. As she showed in the case of Mexico, this might lead local politicians to prioritise the wishes of migrants over those of community dwellers in decisions about the investment of remittances. In a similar manner, Kane (2010) demonstrated that, in the case of access to health care in two villages in Senegal, migrant associations sometimes also take over the responsibility of governments in the provision of basic services for the population in regions of origin. Individual actors as well as formal and informal transnational organisations are thus considered as agents for the generation, promotion and implementation of responses to transformation processes. This is closely linked to conceptions of migrants and/or diasporas as agents of development, an idea which was already being promoted by the World Bank and other agencies in the early 2000s (Faist, 2008). According to this perspective, migrants are expected to engage in sending remittances, mainly in the form of money but also in the form of practices, ideas, norms, and access to social capital, which has been discussed under the concept of social remittances (Levitt, 2001).

The foregoing reflections on the role of migrants’ transnational agency in response to transformation lead to some questions. The first one is related to the growing importance of neoliberal understandings of the desirability of weaker governments and the related transfer of responsibilities for problem-solving to individual actors. This idea has most recently been discussed with respect to the framing of migration as adaptation in the context of climate change and has also been compared to previous debates about the migration-development nexus (Bettini & Gioli, 2016). A second set of currently unanswered questions addresses the issue of inequalities that might be produced and reproduced as a result of unequal access to

the benefits of individual and collective remittances by those left behind in the communities of origin (Faist, 2016b).

5. Conclusion

The previous discussion indicates that the transformation and migration nexus can be approached in very different ways and that consequently also a range of academic perspectives coexist. Fundamental global changes can induce social transformation processes in social systems, including in countries of origin. These dynamics can subsequently trickle down to particular localities and transform living and working conditions. Alongside other processes, they can also affect numbers and patterns in internal or international migration dynamics. Likewise, other types of social transformations in economically more developed countries can represent pull factors for international migration. In contrast, large-scale migration can also have an influence on certain geographies, especially when considering demographic and cultural shifts in localities in countries of origin due to outbound migration, transactions between migrants and non-migrants, or return migration. The discussion emphasises that migrants' heterogeneities related to gender, ethnicity and social class are of particular relevance for the analysis of transformation and migration.

The transformation and migration nexus at this level is linked to dynamics at the institutional level, because institutions respond discursively or in practice to social transformations. That institutional change as a response to immigration can also be a conflicting process is currently observable in the European Union with respect to incoming humanitarian migrants and the responses by different national governments. These diverging dynamics regarding questions of immigration entailed more general struggles, endangering the future collaboration and solidarity among several European countries. Institutional shifts can be also observed in many other realms; examples discussed above illustrated the inter-relations of citizenship rights and negotiations between home country and diaspora group representatives regarding development strategies in regions of origin.

Institutional shifts are also closely linked to individual migrants' agency in regions of origin and destination as well as in transnational social spaces. Migrants' transnationality has an important role to play in the linkage between transformation and migration, because through cross-border ties social, economic and political transformation processes can be influenced 'from below'. Individual and collective remittances as well as activities in the context of hometown associations have the potential to enhance economic development and social

change in regions of migrants' origin. However, they also pose the danger of internal conflicts and the reinforcing of inequalities between their members, as well as disputes with local governments.

Finally, it is worth noting that the outcomes of the transformation and migration nexus on different societal levels can be interlinked with each other. While some of these interrelations seem to be quite evident, others are less obvious, but nevertheless significant for understanding the transformation and migration link more deeply. One of the less visible interconnections is that between social systems and agency developed through the interaction of individuals. These are, for instance, related to the development potential of cross-border migrants. As discussed above, many governments of traditional sending countries discovered migrants' transnational ties and transfers as an effective strategy. This means that the onus of development performance is placed on the shoulders of migrants (Skeldon, 2008), whereby liberal states of the Global South are relieved discursively from their central and indispensable obligations (Delgado et al., 2013). However, the point is too often neglected that transformation processes on the national and institutional levels frequently foil these initiatives. It can therefore be argued that for understanding the transformation and migration nexus with respect to migrants' agency, it is indispensable to consider also the surrounding dynamics that can reinforce the outcomes, or rather hamper them, because they might embody social mechanisms that foster social inequalities, social conflicts or imply other types of unintended consequences.

As can be seen, there is a broad academic interest in the link between transformation and migration at different levels. The majority of these contributions focus on a particular phenomenon related to either systems, institutions or the interaction of individual agents and in so doing pay little attention to existing interlinkages on different levels. There thus seems still to be a research gap with respect to the effects of interlinkages on different analytical levels within the transformation and migration nexus.

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