

MIGRATION, WORK AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER

Edited by Ronaldo Munck,
Carl-Ulrik Schierup and Raúl Delgado Wise

RETHINKING
Globalizations



Migration, Work and Citizenship in the New Global Order

Any consideration of global migration in relation to work and citizenship must necessarily be situated in the context of the Great Recession. A whole historical chapter – that of neoliberalism – has now closed and the future can only be deemed uncertain. Migrant workers were key players during this phase of the global system, supplying cheap and flexible labor inputs when required in the rich countries. Now, with the further sustainability of the neoliberal political and economic world order in question, what will be the role of migration in terms of work patterns and what modalities of political citizenship will develop? While informalization of the relations of production and the precarization of work were once assumed to be the exception, that is no longer the case.

As for citizenship this book posits a parallel development of precarious citizenship for migrants, made increasingly vulnerable by the global economic crisis. But we are also in an era of profound social transformation, in the context of which social counter-movements emerge, which may halt the disembedding of the market from social control and its corrosive impact.

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**Ronaldo Munck, Carl-Ulrik Schierup and
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Migration, Work, and Citizenship in the New World Order

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Any consideration of global migration in relation to work and citizenship must necessarily be situated in the context of the Great Recession. A whole historical chapter—that of neoliberalism—has now closed and the future can only be deemed uncertain. Migrant workers were key players during this phase of the global system, supplying cheap and flexible labour inputs when required in the rich countries. Now, with the further sustainability of the neoliberal political and economic world order in question, what will be the role of migration in terms of work patterns and what modalities of political citizenship will develop? While informalization of the relations of production and the precarization of work were once assumed to be the exception, that is no longer the case. As for citizenship we posit a parallel development of precarious citizenship for migrants, made increasingly vulnerable by the global economic crisis. But we are also in an era of profound social transformation, in the context of which social counter-movements emerge, which may halt the disembedding of the market from social control and its corrosive impact.

While the global economic situation remains largely in flux there is a broad consensus that the economic model prevailing in the 30 years prior to 2008 has now come to an end. The embedded liberalism of the Keynesian era had ceased to be effective in the mid 1970s and now the efficient market model of neoliberalism is seen to be exhausted as a viable model for sustained capital accumulation. Massive state intervention was needed to stave off the imminent collapse of the banking system. A massive counter-cyclical effort was mounted, and there were even calls for a ‘return to Keynes’. Business as usual was not an option, and there were calls for a financial regime change. The much more integrated global system created by globalization resulted in a truly global crisis even if some zones recovered more quickly. A Latin American style 1990s’ structural adjustment policy which would have simply unloaded the crisis on the population was not viable politically in the affluent North. Thus the present economic contradictions will continue and probably deepen. At best there will be a stable equilibrium established with little sign of a new expansive phase of capitalist accumulation (at least in the affluent North) on the horizon.

As Robert Wade puts it: ‘The world feels itself to be in transition, but to what is unclear’ (Wade, 2009, p. 539). It now seems that it is not only the economic model of neoliberalism which is in question but the whole logic of the market system. It is doubtful that some judicious re-regulation on its own will overcome the crisis. Inter-state cooperation is patchy at best and a viable global alternative from above is unlikely. There will be more tipping points for the world economy as talk of double dip depressions continue. While US hegemony over the global order is fractured, China is clearly not in a position to take over that role. If we take a broadly Polanyian approach to the current world conjuncture we can see a sign that counter-movement is emerging but it is very diverse and unevenly spread. Certainly the alter-globalization movement has gained in intellectual credibility but so have a range of reactionary (as in backward looking) alternatives not only in the South but also in the core countries. Nativist and xenophobic backlashes are perhaps a predictable reaction to financial instability. While we are not at a 1929 or even 1945 inflexion point for the capitalist order as such, there is much more space for alternative discourses than was the case when neoliberalism ‘ruled OK’ and ‘there is no alternative’ prevailed.

In terms of the impact on migration patterns it is still not clear what effect the Great Recession will have. For some observers it will represent a temporary interruption of current trends whereas for others we are now going to see a structural change. What does seem clear is that migrant labour cannot be turned off and on as though it was controlled by a tap. The capitalist cycle in the rich countries will not be able to treat migrant labour as a safety valve this time round. The overarching economic inequality between the global South and the North has been aggravated during the long neoliberal phase of capitalism since around 1980. Economic remittances have become increasingly important for the economies and governments of the South. For both sectors it is unlikely that migrants will become ‘guest workers’ always already to be packed off ‘home’ when recession hits. It is the global nature of this recession compared, say, to that of the mid 1970s, which marks its specificity. The attempts to manage migration at a global level do mean, however, that if the recession persists it may, as Philip Martin argues, ‘shift the focus from ever-increasing migration and remittances to cooperation to ride out the downturn in ways that do not prompt a backlash against migrants abroad and set back development in migrant countries of origin’ (Martin, 2009, p. 15).

The New Migration

The current instability of the global order will impact on a migrant world very different from what it was in the past. What we call globalization—really an accelerated internationalization of economic, social, and cultural relations—has undoubtedly encouraged a new wave of migration which matches that which occurred in the 50 years preceding World War I. The early nineteenth century saw an unprecedented scale and pace of people movement. The cost of a trans-Atlantic passage dropped by half and in the century following 1820 about 60 million Europeans left for what they called the New World (Hatton & Williamson, 2008, p. 51). The disruption caused by two world wars and the great depression of the 1930s in between saw that flow decline to miniscule proportions. Following World War II, there was another wave of expansion of migratory flows, feeding the economic acceleration in the North Atlantic countries. The global economic downturn of the mid 1970s led to a closing of borders in Europe in particular, but the immigration controls of the 1980s were relaxed somewhat in the 1990s as globalization encouraged another expansionary phase.

It is estimated that nowadays some five million people cross an international border from South to North (UNDP, 2009, p. 5) every year. There is, of course, a much greater degree of

human mobility within the North and within the South. Clearly people would become more mobile with cheaper transport and much better communications. Globalization had greatly accelerated capital accumulation on a global scale but it had also opened up the gap between the affluent/dominant North and the dependent/dominated South. Uneven development on a global scale was clearly a spur to those seeking to improve their quality of life through moving. Of course it is not purely economic factors which create migration, and current theoretical frameworks now focus more on the social decision-making framework and the household livelihood strategies as a context. Nearly half of all migrants today are women, and it is necessary to take into account the impact of migration on the gender division of labour as well as in realm of production. There is a general consensus that while migratory flows will inevitably slow down during the current recession (for example in the construction sector) migrant flows will continue to be a major feature of the global economy.

For those who take a positive view of globalization in terms of achieving development and ameliorating poverty the main benefit of the new migration comes from the economic remittances sent home by the migrants. From a modernization theory perspective, return migrants are also important agents of innovation and transformation. This optimistic view was based on the experience of the first globalization (pre-1914) rural-urban migration from Europe to the Americas. However, it is a view that has been challenged by critical development theory, in particular the Latin American dependency approach. From this perspective, migration can be seen to deepen the problems caused by uneven development with the main benefits going to the already developed or wealthy regions. Migration provides a ready-made labour force that is also quite 'flexible' in that its rights can be restricted and its mobility enhanced. In the South the export of labour can be seen as a brain drain for regional economies and a loss of valuable labour power. Indeed migration then becomes perpetuated through dependency on remittances and on the ability to access the labour markets of the North. Though somewhat deterministic at times, this perspective is a useful corrective to the Panglossian modernization theory view of migration.

Finally, from a very broad vantage point we need to consider whether international migration is today manageable by nation-states or even by a transnational body. Significantly there is no World Migration Organization comparable (even remotely) to the World Trade Organization which, ironically, is the only body to have actually approved a transnational migration measure. At one level 'managing migration' is a short-hand for the securitization of people in movement following the attacks on US symbols of power in September 2001. At another level, however, it is ironic that people flows are not subject to transnational management as are commodities, finance, and intellectual property. At the moment, as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) puts it 'Despite the prominence of migration on international agendas for more than a decade now, efforts to achieve global consensus on the governance have proven elusive' (IOM, 2005, p. 369). For now the international movement of people will remain a critical issue for the nation-state.

Efforts to maximize global human development through greater control of migration (as called for in UNDP, 2009) and to put in force an agenda where elementary labour rights are acknowledged as basic human and migrants' rights (as called for in the ILO Decent Work Agenda) is not liable to come about of its own accord, through intergovernmental agreement or feelings of corporate social responsibility, in so far as it would undermine the very market forces that provide the dynamism of uneven global development. Hope has, however, been placed on the EU as a trend-setter in respect of setting up an agenda for 'fair globalization' and a human rights based management of migration. However, that is hardly what we see in

practice with an inevitable European acquiescence to the fundamental propositions of the Washington or even post Washington consensus that continues to co-opt and dominate the development of an emerging global governance regime on migration.

From the vantage point of a grand retrospective and prospective overview of migration between Europe and Africa, Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, in their contribution to this special issue, set the current situation in historical perspective. There is hardly, they contend, any truly trustworthy compact today for making migration a dynamic driving force for sustainable development on the agenda of the European Union. Rather, once unpacked from the glossy ceremonial rhetoric of ‘win-win’ cooperation between equals, the present EU-African ‘partnership’ is firmly embedded in a postcolonial discourse. It posits a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship tailored for sustaining an unequal global political economy. In truth, they argue, the language and terms of the current EU-African development partnership discourse paradoxically legitimizes an ongoing scramble for cheap and flexible African labour, marked by concerns of securitization, hyper-exploitation, continued clandestinity, and bereavement of human rights, through a demographic discourse that shares some key similarities with the one that once legitimized European colonial exploitation and settlement in Africa. Consequently, the EU’s current migration policy towards Africa must be understood in its historical context. Throughout the period of the 1920s onward, the authors go on to demonstrate, the migration policies devised within various frameworks of European integration have been shaped by demographic projections, almost always framing Europe and Africa as constituting a single unit, that is, as *Eurafrica*. Each time demography was installed as the logic governing European migration policy vis-à-vis Africa, what was first introduced as a mutual interest was soon transformed into a geopolitical relationship, where one partner channelled migration to its own benefit. In conclusion, Hansen and Jonsson thus argue that as long as scholars persist in following policymakers’ disregard of European integration’s colonial history, current power asymmetries between the EU and Africa will not only remain obscure; we will also fail to recognize the continued, or even increasing, currency of colonial ideology in today’s EU-African relations.

The contribution by Branka Likic-Brboric, in turn, examines the complex problematic of contemporary migration in the context of a neoliberal political economy and supranational governance along an east-west axis, focusing on the EU and migration from the Other post-communist Europe. Facing the accession of new member states in Central and Eastern Europe in 2004, the EU’s regional model of integration—posing the European Social Model as a politics for an inclusive citizenship and ‘fair globalization’—was seen as a potentially powerful vehicle for squaring the so-called ‘liberal paradox’ (Hollifield, 2004), understood as the tension between economic transnationalization and free movement, on the one hand, and national closure towards increasing migration, on the other. Likic-Brboric evaluates the realism of this contention along two main axes or processes: EU enlargement and the formation of the EU migration regime. With all due respect towards good intentions and determined efforts towards cohesive policy development, there is still every reason to be critical, Likic-Brboric maintains, as long as we experience an overall development dominated by one-sided politics of employer-friendly asymmetrical integration of the new member states into the Union, a securitization and management of migration dominated by concerns for flexibility through re-commodification, and the shrinking of labour rights in sending as well as receiving societies, all accompanied by an erosion and segmentation of frameworks of citizenship in general. In this perspective, prospects remain dim for promises of a non-discriminatory migration process, beneficial to old and new member states alike, as well as to those crisis ridden societies in Eastern Europe that still remain in the waiting room for potential accession. The EU’s political elites’ pursuit of global competitiveness

through the implementation of neoliberal policy measures has not only eroded the promises of the European Social Model, it has also exacerbated an already evident democratic deficit that characterizes the EU. As a final point, Likic-Brboric argues that the only way to address multiple liberal paradoxes, inherent in the neoliberal project of Europeanization, is to forge Europe-wide strategies to reclaim and mobilize for an alternative that promotes European solidarities in terms of European social citizenship and moral cosmopolitanism.

From this perspective on a European regional integration model—step-by-step sliding towards neoliberal free market dominated governance and packaged together with processes of securitization, discriminatory migration management, and laxity concerning social, labour, and human rights—it hardly appears far-fetched to project an increasing convergence between the EU and NAFTA relating to the approach to an emerging global governance regime for migration. On the ground, increasing similarities can be observed as to processes of securitization and migration management in the borderlands of, respectively, the EU to the South and to the East, as well as to the relationship of the United States with Mexico and Meso-America. The dangerous endeavour of crossing the so-called Mediterranean Wall or the border between the Ukraine and the territories of the EU-15 will, if present trends continue, become increasingly similar to that of crossing the Rio Grande. This is the ‘The Dark Side of Globalization’, as Rodolfo Casillas calls it in his contribution to this volume, describing the political economy producing the conditions that the most wretched among contemporary transnational migrants are forced to cope with, pursuing the hazardous passage from Meso-America, across Mexico, to the United States. They are conditions marked by systematic risk, wrought by asymmetric trade relations between North and South, predatory strategies of transnational companies, combined with selective and exclusionary US migration policies and exacerbated through the preying of criminal networks all along the track. These networks are swelling in pace with societal decomposition in Mexico, the author argues, given the perceived obstacles for national government and civil society to take decisive action, and we see a continuation of a massive migratory trajectory devoid of human or social rights.

Precarious Work

The informalization of production and irregular work practices is most often attributed to Third World situations. It is no coincidence that Ulrich Beck in rethinking the postmodern world of work in Europe referred to the ‘Brazilianization of the West’ to capture the rise of informalization there: ‘the heartlands of the West would, through neoliberal globalization come to resemble the patchwork quilt of the South, characterized by diversity, unclarity and insecurity in people’s work and life’ (Beck, cited in Polanyi 2010, p. 1). The German pattern of stability and a job-for-life would be disrupted as social relations once predominantly from the global South now made their presence felt. There is now a vast literature on the complex processes of informalization (see Slavnic, 2010) which lie at the root of the precarious work which is now the norm. Non-traditional forms of employment, beyond any regulation by the state and where trade unions had no role came to prevail as a major tool whereby the neoliberal model imposed the rule over workers in the North as much as in the South. To understand the relationship between the formal and informal economies we would be best to go back to Brazil itself in the early 1970s and the debate on ‘marginality’.

In the 1960s ‘marginality’ was a term coined by the dominant ‘made in the USA’ modernization theory to describe the lack of integration of shanty-town dwellers in the industrialization process. This was usually attributed to the lack of modern attributes of those who were marginalized. In the