

**INTERNATIONAL  
MIGRANTS  
AND THE CITY**

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AND THE CITY**  
BANGKOK BERLIN  
DAKAR KARACHI  
JOHANNESBURG NAPLES  
SÃO PAULO TIJUANA  
VANCOUVER VLADIVOSTOK

Marcello Balbo (ed)



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## FOREWORD BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UN-HABITAT

It is estimated that currently there are about 175 million international migrants and that this number is growing rapidly. International migrants are increasingly heading towards large urban areas, where they have more income-earning opportunities. In large cities, migrants can gain access to an expanding informal sector and can rely on migrant networks and ethnic enclaves for shelter and jobs. However, spatial segregation, social exclusion, labour exploitation, and discriminatory behaviour are also commonplace in cities with significant migrant communities.

International migration clearly raises new challenges for urban management. Local authorities have little if any say over national migration policies. Similarly, they have little capacity to control migratory flows into their cities. Yet they are faced with the end results of transnational migration that challenge their core mandate of providing housing, services and employment.

UN-HABITAT's Global Campaign on Urban Governance has teamed up with Università Iuav di Venezia to carry out case study research on '*Urban policies and practices addressing international migration*'. The research is based on a comparative analysis of 10 cities: Bangkok, Berlin, Dakar, Johannesburg, Karachi, Naples, São Paulo, Tijuana, Vancouver and Vladivostok.

This book gives an account of different policies, practices and governance models that are addressing this issue. It analyses the impact of national policies on international migration, the role of migrants in the local economy, the relationship between local and migrant communities, and the migrants' use of urban space. It reveals the importance and the advantages of promoting communication between stakeholders and establishing channels for representation and participation of migrants in decisions affecting their livelihoods. In analysing lessons learned, the book concludes that local authorities have a key role in promoting civic engagement, social integration, participation and representation

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## **FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR ITALIAN TECHNICAL COOPERATION**

among international migrants. The policies and practices required to do so are, in many ways, a litmus test of a city's political will to improve urban governance for the benefit of all of its citizens and for a better and more sustainable future.

We see this work as a first step. Further in-depth research is required to expand the range of case studies and governance models, leading to tools and policy options for peer-to-peer learning and city-to-city cooperation, especially between developing countries.

I wish to thank the Italian Government, one of the strong supporters of our agency, for its generous support to this initiative. I also wish to thank the Università Iuav di Venezia for taking the lead in this publication. Last but not least, I wish to thank the researchers and their national institutions for their effort in documenting and analysing the city cases.

I hope this publication will serve as a source of inspiration for those decision-makers and urban professionals who are committed to making their cities more socially, culturally and economically vibrant, by including international migrants as an integral part of their citizenry and urban wealth.



Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka  
Under-Secretary-General  
Executive Director  
UN-HABITAT

Urban economies are increasingly the engine of growth, both in developed and in developing countries. The World Bank estimates that also in developing countries the contribution of cities to the GNP amounts to between sixty to seventy five percent. Furthermore, urban growth features increasing complexity, mainly due to two new political trends: the shifting of urban management responsibilities from central to local governments, and globalisation becoming a major driving force in shaping urban development.

As a result of the raising economic attractiveness of urban areas, in the last decades the phenomenon of migration has grown considerably and the number of persons moving to cities from a different, often poorer country, has increased to significant figures.

Well aware of the challenges as well as opportunities migration raises on urban development, at the 1st World International Urban Forum held in Nairobi in 2002 the Italian Cooperation decided to promote a better understanding of the issue, entrusting UN-HABITAT and Università Iuav di Venezia with the task to carry out a research on the impact of international migration on urban development and management. In fact, through this project and the publication of the book, the Italian Cooperation intends to include among its priorities the issue of international migration and the actions that need to be taken to improve urban governance.

The research project main objective has been to highlight those urban policies and practices that promote positive values of urban citizenship directed to international migrants. In particular, the Italian Cooperation aims at encouraging the exchange of integration strategies at the local level based on the analysis on a number of case-studies both in the North and in the South, in the framework of a city-to-city co-operation perspective.

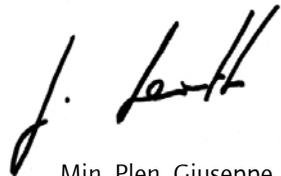
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The common analytical framework adopted for the ten case-studies that have been selected, permits a useful comparative analysis of issues, policies and instruments in cities with different characteristics. Based on the comparison of the institutional conditions, the policies promoted by the different cities and the capacities of local governments to implement them, the research provides a tentative set of guidelines for urban policy makers.

I believe that the results achieved by the research and in the book result in a better understanding of international migration to urban areas. I am also confident that the guidelines set forth provide very useful insights for future actions local governments need to take, in developed as well as transitional and developing economies.

I wish to thank UN-HABITAT and Università Iuav di Venezia for the scientific support and the strong coordination, which made possible the research and the publication of this book.

I would also like to thank all the researchers and professionals who contributed to the project, bearing in mind that this is only one of the many steps that we need to take in order to make cities more inclusive and sustainable.



Min. Plen. Giuseppe Deodato  
Director-General for Italian Technical Cooperation  
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# INTRODUCTION

*Marcello Balbo*

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*We cannot ignore the real policy difficulties posed by migration. But neither should we lose sight of its immense potential to benefit migrants, the countries they leave and those to which they migrate. And we must ensure that, in our approach to this issue, we uphold the values of tolerance and respect for human rights. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, World Economic and Social Survey 2004*

## 1. International migration and the city

It is widely acknowledged today that cities are the driving force behind economic growth and provide the best opportunities for improving living conditions. Whereas cities with high population densities are nearing saturation in developed countries, in many other parts of the world this process is bound to continue unabated through much of this century. In fact, according to UN projections, over the next 25 years the growth of the world population will concentrate exclusively in the urban areas of developing countries, where the number of residents will almost double, growing from under two billion to almost four billion (UN, 2004).

While in advanced economies the management capacities of both national and local governments are sufficiently developed to face the current changes even as problems abound, in the developing world inadequate financial, human and technical resources can only have serious consequences. In the South, the integrating role of the city seems increasingly to be giving way to an exclusionary trend, as highlighted by mounting social and economic segregation as well as spatial fragmentation. Exclusion, poverty and violence are on the rise as the sense of belonging, social cohesion and the very notion of citizenship are on the wane.

In the last decade, globalisation has come to the fore as a major driving force in both the shaping of urban development and the creation of new opportunities. In this process, globalisation has also posed new challenges to urban management, as its positive effects are unevenly distributed both across and within cities.

One of these challenges has to be the increasing flow of migrants crossing bor-

ders and settling permanently or temporarily in foreign countries. International migrants are defined as people who were born outside their countries of residence, including refugees who actually may not be foreign-born<sup>1</sup>. A second type of condition is referred to as 'transnational migration', where individuals belong to two or more communities at the same time. The difference between international and transnational migrants is often blurred; it is becoming increasingly so as more and more individuals reside in a host country while maintaining strong ties with their countries of origin. In addition, they may also be members of various types of networks (political, religious and other activism) that reach out into many countries.

The growing number of international migrants is clearly linked to two factors related to globalisation: the declining costs of transportation and the rising awareness of differences in living conditions linked to the nearly universal reach of the media. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have greatly reduced the barriers of space and time for the movements of goods and many services, boosting liberalisation of international trade, expansion of foreign investment and the related movement of business people. However, for all its promotion and nurturing of new rights for cross-border movement of capital, globalisation has failed to bring down many barriers to the free movement of individuals and has only marginally promoted migrants' rights to settle across borders: 'While goods, firms and money are largely free to criss-cross borders, people are not' (World Commission, 2004).

However, and regardless of a tightening of immigration controls, labour shortages in advanced and high-growth economies have nurtured labour migration. In some countries, migrants have taken over entire segments of the employment market – typically those combining low pay, poor work conditions and insecurity. This, in turn, has brought the emergence of a 'migration industry' in both sending and host countries, complete with recruiters, specialised travel agencies and lawyers, and this industry is spreading to cities in the South.

In Europe and North America international migration is a familiar phenomenon, but in developing countries it has received comparatively little attention. Nonetheless, in Buenos Aires as in Santiago or São Paulo migrants from countries like Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay contribute increasing portions of the

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<sup>1</sup> The present volume refers exclusively to those individuals who have decided on their own to move to a different country.

urban population. Although the bulk of migration flows across Mexico head to the USA, the numbers of people from Central America and the Caribbean moving into Mexico City or the assembly plants (*maquiladoras*) on the border with the USA are becoming an issue for the urban governments in northern Mexico. In post-apartheid South Africa, the numbers of workers arriving in Johannesburg (and more broadly Gauteng province) from Mozambique and Angola have increased rapidly. Further up north, large communities from Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea-Bissau and Niger have settled in Abidjan. In the cities of the Gulf area, migrants from Egypt and Jordan, as well as from the Philippines, Pakistan and India together contribute large shares of the local labour force. Finally, in Southeast Asia, extensive transnational communities have opted to live not only in Hong Kong and Singapore, but also in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok or Karachi. The United Nations evaluates the current total number of international migrants at some 175 million, including refugees but obviously excluding an estimated 15 to 30 million illegal or irregular migrants (United Nations Population Division, 2002) whose numbers are rapidly increasing. A breakdown by major regions shows that some 77 million international migrants reside in industrialised countries, 33 million in transition economies, 23 million in Eastern Asia, 21 million in the Middle East and North Africa and 14 million in sub-Saharan Africa.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of individuals residing outside their country of birth rose by one third (Martin, Widgren, 2002). About 45 per cent had moved to industrialised countries and 55 percent from one developing country to another – particularly to those rich in oil, diamonds or other natural resources. Notwithstanding the scarceness of reliable data, the many economic and social crises that have affected various developing countries these past several years are likely to have caused a significant increase in these flows.

Clearly, the current understanding of international migration in an urban environment is inadequate. Official census counts, surveys and registration schemes largely underestimate the real extent of international migration. As noted in the majority of the case studies included in this volume, the number of illegal/unregistered migrants seems to be far from negligible and on an upward slope.

Although they remain predominantly related to labour shortages in advanced economies, current international migration flows display three main features that make them significantly different from past experience – (a) the *direction* of the flows, (b) their *nature* and (c) their *focus on conurbations*:

- To a significant extent, what was once a predominantly South to North stream has, since the early to mid-1990s, come more and more to involve *flows between developing countries*, such as those from Southeast Asia to the Middle East, from sub-Saharan countries to South Africa or from Paraguay and Bolivia to Brazil, Argentina and Chile.
- International migration no longer involves just male labourers, but also *qualified professionals, students and, increasingly, female workers* who need to provide for their children without male help back home, or who want to escape from harsh family 'dependency' conditions. Women represent more than half of all transnational migrants (in the 1990s, 84 per cent of all Sri Lankan migrants to the Middle East were female, two thirds of Filipino migrant workers), in what has been called 'the female underside of globalisation' (Ehrenreich, Hochschild, 2002).
- International migrants are heading increasingly towards *urban areas*, particularly large cities, where they have more chances of finding income-earning opportunities. In such conurbations migrants can gain access to the large and expanding informal sector; in addition, the enhanced roles which many cities have acquired in the context of globalisation have produced a new demand for low-paid service workers for different types of jobs. Finally, the networks which migrants need to rely upon for shelter and jobs on first arrival can only be found in cities.

International migrants represent an essential economic resource for the urban economies that employ them; however, the countries of origin also receive tremendous economic benefits from migrants' remittances. Although the scale is largely underestimated, such financial transfers to developing countries currently amount to a combined equivalent of 75 to 100 billion US dollars per year,

cent of total GDP in Lesotho and Jordan, and between 15 and 20 per cent in Bosnia, Albania, Nicaragua, Yemen and Moldova (IMF, 2003). An estimated 34 to 54 per cent of the Filipino population is sustained by remittances (Salazar Parreñas, 2002). Migration also has the potential to stimulate the introduction of new activities and technologies in the countries of origin, as has been the case in several East Asian countries and India.

International migration clearly includes movements of well-paid, qualified professionals – Indian engineers to Germany, schoolteachers to the Emirates or Zimbabwean doctors to South Africa. However, the bulk of international migrants add to the low-income urban population rather than the well-heeled professional classes. In fact, the majority of migrants, including many skilled professionals, find employment in those low-paid sectors and positions eschewed by local residents and which require little training – typically the construction sector, services and domestic work, or in the expanding informal sector such as street trade and handicrafts production. In Thailand, the Labour Ministry allows immigrants to work only in a limited range of sectors, reserving several skilled and most unskilled jobs for Thai citizens. In some cases, as in Naples or São Paulo, migrants end up toiling away in workshops for very low wages, typically without any labour rights nor formal contracts either, due to the frequently informal or illegal character of their employment; moreover, numerous migrants are prevented from obtaining any kind of document which could be used to regularise their stay in the country.

As mentioned earlier, streams of illegal migrants represent a significant and growing share of international migration in the developed as well as in transitional and developing economies.

Commonplace as illegal migration appears to be, the reasons behind it can be quite diverse, as can the modes of entry into the country of destination (or tran-

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