



# Working Papers

Paper 142, January 2018

## International Migration

Trends, determinants and  
policy effects

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DEMIG paper 33

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# IMI Working Paper Series

The IMI<sup>1</sup> working paper series presents current research in the field of international migration. The series was initiated by the International Migration Institute (IMI) since its foundation at the University in Oxford in 2006, and has been continued since 2017 by the International Migration Institute network (IMI<sup>n</sup>). The papers in this series (1) analyse migration as part of broader global change, (2) contribute to new theoretical approaches, and (3) advance understanding of the multi-level forces driving migration and experiences of migration.

## Abstract

What have been the main trends and drivers of international migration over the last century, and to what extent have migration policies been effective in shaping the volume, direction, timing, and selection of immigration and emigration? This paper reviews the insights on migration trends, determinants and policy effects gained through the DEMIG (Determinants of International Migration) project. Questioning popular perceptions of accelerating international migration, the increase in global migration has remained proportional to the increase in world population. The main migratory shifts in the second half of the twentieth century have been directional, particularly through the decline of Europe as an area of origin and the emergence of Europe and the Gulf as new global destinations. This shift in migration movements towards Europe has been associated by an overall liberalisation of migration policies, which have increasingly focused on the selecting of migrants rather than controlling numbers per se. Most rules around legal entry, stay and exit of migrants have been relaxed, but a combination of visa and border control policies have served to prevent the entry of asylum seekers and other ‘unwanted’ migrants. Our analysis shows that it would therefore be excessive to conclude that borders are ‘beyond control’ (cf. Bhagwati 2003), and that migration policies are generally effective. Yet several ‘substitution effects’ limit or undermine the effectiveness of migration controls by (1) redirecting migration through other geographical routes and destinations (spatial substitution), (2) diverting migration through other legal and unauthorized channels (categorical substitution), (3) “now or never” migration surges in anticipation of restrictions (intertemporal substitution) and (4) discouraging return and interrupting circulation (reverse flow substitution). These expose fundamental policy dilemmas as well as the importance to look beyond migration policies. Our results show the importance of accounting for the complex and often counterintuitive ways in which structural social, economic, and political factors affect migration in mostly indirect, but powerful ways that largely lie beyond the reach of migration policies.

**Keywords:** *international migration, migration determinants, migration policies, policy effectiveness, state, development*

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## Funding

The research leading to these results is part of the DEMIG project and has received core-funding from the European Research Council under the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) / ERC Grant Agreement 240940 (see [www.migrationdeterminants.eu](http://www.migrationdeterminants.eu)). The International Migration Institute (IMI), where DEMIG was conducted, is member is a member of the Oxford Martin School (OMS) at Oxford University, and received additional funding from OMS founder Dr James Martin (1933-2013) to match the ERC grant and expand the DEMIG project activities, particularly with regards to extending the coverage of the DEMIG databases. The paper has been finalized thanks to the MADE (Migration as Development) project funded by the European Research Council under the European Community's Horizon 2020 Programme (H2020/2015-2020) / ERC Grant Agreement 648496.

## Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the crucial support received from a large number of people. At IMI, we would like to thank Zoe Falk, Claire Fletcher, Sally Kingsborough, Ingrid Locatelli and Briony Truscott for essential administrative and organisational support. We are grateful to Oliver Bakewell, Agnieszka Kubal, Lucia Kureková, Tineke Fokkema and Hans van Amersfoort for their important analytical insights and informal association to the project. For the collection of the DEMIG C2C database, we have received essential support from Olinka Caunerová, Anaïs Ressayguier, Laura Wright-Robbins, Anne-Marie Jeannet (collection, digitization, formatting and verification of data); we thank Ondrej Kosata, Robert Didham, Attila Meleg, and Béatrice Tardif du Pouget (support at statistical offices and libraries) for providing data and, in some instances, for data entry. For DEMIG POLICY, we express our gratitude to the country reviewers for their generous and extremely useful feedback on the initial versions of the dataset: Adolfo Sommaribas, Agnes Hars, Alan Gamlen, Amparo Gonzalez Ferrer, Antero Leitzinger, Aurelia Segatti, Axel Kreienbrink, Aysen Ustubici, Biao Xiang, Camila Baraldi, Camilla Devitt, Christel Baltés-Loehr, Cristian Dona Revecó, Daniel Ghezelbash, Daniel Naujoks, Didier Ruedin, Eduardo Domenech, Eivind Hoffmann, Elaine Moriarty, Electra Petrakou, Eva Janska, Ferruccio Pastore, Frida Thorarins, Garbi Schmidt, Henrik Emilsson, Irina Muetzelburg, Jeanne Batalova, Junichi Akashi, Khadija Elmadmad, Ki-seun Chung, Laura Robbins Wright, Lucia Kureková, Magdalena Lesinska, Miguel Vilches Hinojosa, Neza Kogovsek, Olga Chudinovskikh, Reiko Ogawa, Saskia Bonjour, Serge Slama, Sonia Pires, Stephanie Mayer, Sylvain Besch, Tally Kritzman-Amir, Vladimir Grecic and Wayne Palmer. For the compilation of DEMIG VISA, we thank the Toronto Reference Library Staff, without whose support the compilation of the DEMIG VISA database would not have been possible; for data entry, we have received essential support from Olinka Caunerová, Anaïs Ressayguier, Lena Wettach, Krizia Delgado-Fernandez, Stacy Topouzova, Michal Podolski, Alena Shlyk and Rachael Owhin.

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## 1. Introduction

What have been the main trends and drivers of international migration over the last century, and to what extent have policies been effective in regulating migration patterns and trends? Are states generally effective in controlling migration? These questions go to the core of contemporary debates about migration. In wealthy countries, immigration, in particular of low-skilled workers and asylum seekers from poorer countries, has been increasingly viewed as a problem in need of control. A common perception is that migration policies have become more restrictive while international migration has accelerated (Castles, de Haas and Miller 2014; Massey et al. 1998). These two assumptions underpin the frequent assertion that migration policies have failed or that their effectiveness is limited (Castles 2004). For instance, Bhagwati (2003: 99) argued that “the ability to control migration has shrunk as the desire to do so has increased. Borders are largely beyond control and little can be done to really cut down on immigration”. Immigration control sceptics tend to argue that international migration is mainly driven by structural factors such as labour market demand, income inequalities, and conflict in origin countries, factors on which migration policies have little, if any, influence, while migrant networks, employers and other intermediaries (such as recruiters, lawyers and smugglers) create the social structures that give migration movements their own momentum (cf. Castles and Miller 2009; Krissman 2005; Massey 1990; Xiang and Lindquist 2014).

Others have contested the popular assumption that immigration policies have become more restrictive by arguing that immigration policies of Western liberal democracies have a built-in tendency to become more liberal (Freeman 1995; Hollifield 1992a; Joppke 1998). Although modern states have unprecedented technical means to control borders, in practice they have limited resources, legal abilities and willingness to do so. According to this reasoning, the level of immigration restrictiveness is often limited because states are bound to human rights such as the right of family life, and the protection of asylum seekers, children and other vulnerable groups. Hypothesizing a ‘liberal paradox’, Hollifield (1992b) argued that liberal democracies face embedded limitations in the form of constitutional norms and principles, which act to “constrain the power and autonomy of states both in their treatment of individual migrants and in their relation to other states” (Hollifield 1992b: 577). In practice, this implies that courts regularly overturn attempts by elected leaders to restrict immigration and travel of foreigners (cf. Joppke 2001).

However, this does not necessarily mean that migration policies have failed and that states are generally incapable to control migration. One could argue that immigration would have been even higher *without* migration restrictions. Because we lack a good counterfactual, the observation that immigration has continued or increased alongside migration restrictions is no proof that migration policies have been ineffective. Conversely, decreasing migration is no evidence for successful restrictions as this can also be the result of factors such as an economic recession in

destination countries, or rapid economic growth or the end of conflict in origin countries. Deriving conclusions merely based on (statistical) associations between migration policies and migration can therefore be misleading and subject to political manipulation. For instance, it has been contested whether the post-2008 decrease in regular and unauthorized migration from Mexico to the US was mainly the result of increased border enforcement and deportations or rather triggered by the economic crisis and concomitant slump in US labour demand, as well as improving economic conditions and a slowing down of population growth in Mexico. This example also points to a more general ‘receiving country bias’ in migration research, which tends to ignore the effects of the socio-economic conditions and emigration policies in origin states.

This debate shows the need for an empirical verification of the widespread assumptions that (1) international migration has accelerated and that (2) migration policies have become more restrictive. It also shows the need for better qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to enhance our insights into the causal links between migration policies and migration trends, and to disentangle the specific effects of migration policies from other structural migration determinants. After all, it is not really surprising if quantitative studies find that restrictions reduce immigration to some extent. The real question is *how big the role of migration policies is compared to- and in interaction with- other migration determinants* in origin and destination countries. Do migration policies have a small and temporary influence on long-term migration trends, or is their influence more structural and long lasting? How do such restrictions affect return migration, and to what extent do they have knock-on effects by diverting migration to other countries, by interrupting circulation, or by affecting the timing of migration, such as through triggering ‘now or never’ migration surges?

Instead of asking whether migration policies have failed or not, determining the *relative magnitude* of policy effects and assessing the political and economic conditions under which migration policies seem to be relatively effective seems to be a more realistic and useful way of assessing what policies can – and cannot – achieve. This analytical approach requires that we embed our assessment of migration policy effectiveness into a more comprehensive understanding of migration determinants. Although most researchers probably agree that macro-contextual economic and political factors, as well as meso-level factors such as networks, all play an important role in migration, so far there has been a lack of evidence on their relative weight and mutual interaction. However, we need such precision to move beyond rather generic statements and platitudes about factors playing some role in migration of the ‘push-pull’ genre in order to jointly assess long-term trends and patterns in international migration *and* migration policies. The key questions thus are:

- What have been the main international migration trends?
- What are the main drivers of international migration in origin and destination countries?

- What has been the nature and evolution of migration policies?
- What has been the effect of migration policies independently of and in interaction with other migration determinants?

These were the leading research question of the DEMIG project – *The Determinants of International Migration: A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment of Policy, Origin and Destination Effects*, which received core funding from the European Research Council (ERC). This five-year project (2010-2014), which was conducted at Oxford University’s International Migration Institute (IMI), aimed to generate new theoretical and empirical insights into the way policies shape migration processes in their interaction with other migration determinants in origin and destination countries. In particular, we investigated how migration policies of destination and origin states shape the volume, geographical orientation, composition and timing of international migration. The analysis of policy effects required the compilation of databases on bilateral migration flows (DEMIG C2C), total in- and outflows (DEMIG TOTAL), migration policies (DEMIG POLICY), and travel visa requirements (DEMIG VISA) with a wide — and unprecedented — coverage in terms of countries and years (for more details on the DEMIG databases, see Annex 1).

Drawing on the DEMIG POLICY and DEMIG VISA databases, we analysed the nature and evolution of migration policies (de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016; Flahaux 2016) and global visa regimes (Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2017). We used several empirical strategies to study migration patterns, their determinants and policy effects. While DEMIG TOTAL enables to understand the effects of migration policies on total immigration and emigration, DEMIG C2C was crucial in understanding migration trends and assessing the effects of bilateral policies (such as those in DEMIG VISA) on the volume and timing of immigration and emigration (cf. Czaika and Haas 2016; Flahaux 2014). Analyses of migration on a global level (Czaika and de Haas 2014a), as well as targeted studies focusing on Europe (de Haas, Vezzoli and Villares-Varela 2018), North America (Mahendra 2014b), Africa (Flahaux and de Haas 2014; Natter 2014a), Australia (de Haas 2011a) and the Caribbean region (Flahaux and Vezzoli 2017; Vezzoli and Flahaux 2017) drew on a combination of DEMIG data and other migration population (‘stock’) and flow datasets, in particular the Global Bilateral Migration Database (GBMD) (Özden et al. 2011). We also implemented micro-level analyses to understand the role of policies for return migration to Senegal, by combining DEMIG POLICY data with the *Migration between Africa and Europe* (MAFE) surveys (Flahaux 2016).

In addition to large-scale quantitative analyses, we conducted mixed-method, historical and comparative studies to capture the long-term interactions between migration determinants and the complex role of policies pursued by origin and destination states in shaping the volume, geographical orientation, composition and timing of international migration. Regional analyses

on the role of independence and the establishment of border regimes focussed on Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana (Vezzoli 2014b) and on the Maghreb states of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (de Haas 2014b; Natter 2014b). EU enlargement processes were studied to assess the effect of border liberalizations on short- and long-term migration patterns (de Haas, Vezzoli and Villares-Varela 2018). Finally, studies on the role of non-migration policies in origin countries (Mahendra forthcoming; Kureková 2011a; 2011b) provided new insights into the important, but often ignored role of origin-country factors such as economic development, trade, inequality, social security and welfare in migration. The remainder of this paper presents and discusses the main insights that emerged from DEMIG and DEMIG-related projects and how these relate to other recent scholarship on this issue.

## 2. Trends and patterns of global migration 1945-2010

### *The changing geography of world migration*

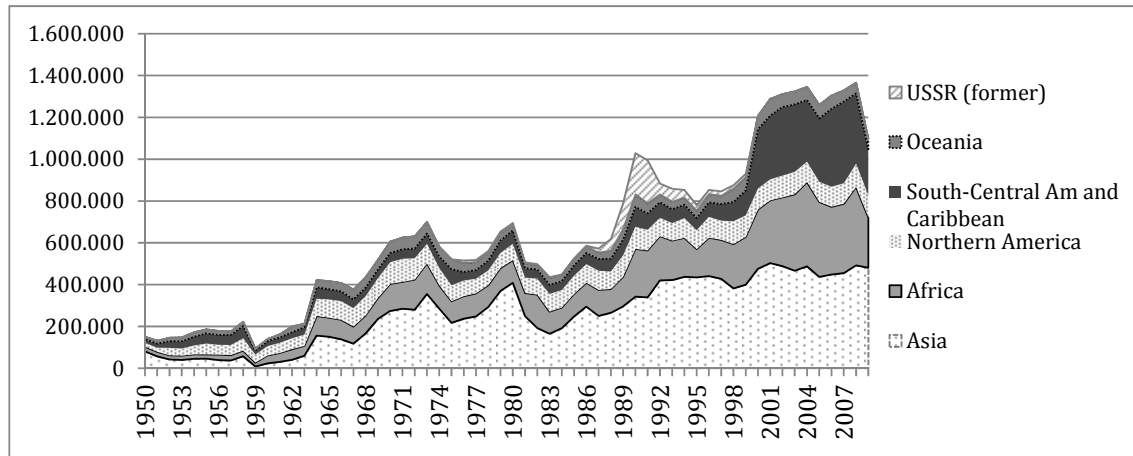
Our research challenges the widespread idea that the volume, diversity, geographical scope, and overall complexity of international migration have increased as part of globalization processes. It is commonly thought that international migration has accelerated over the past decades, that migrants travel over increasingly long distances, and that origins and destinations have become much more diverse (Arango 2000: 291) as a result of advances in transport and communication technology. Scholars have therefore argued that there has been a ‘globalisation of migration’, which is “the tendency for more and more countries to be crucially affected by migratory movements at the same time” (Castles and Miller 2009: 10). However, between 1950 and 2015 the proportion of international migrants has remained relatively stable, and has been fluctuating at levels of between 2.5 and 3.5 per cent of the world population. In other words, the total number of international migrants has increased at a roughly equal pace as the world population.

Migration patterns have nonetheless substantially changed and our analyses confirm that the main post-WWII migratory shifts have been *directional*. A key factor underlying this fundamental change in the global migration geography has been the transformation of Europe from a continent of colonizers and emigrants to a global migration destination since the 1950s (see Figure 1). While for centuries Europeans emigrated to conquer, colonize, or settle in foreign lands in the Americas, Africa and Asia, these patterns were reversed in the post-WWII era. Decolonization led to the rapid end of large-scale European emigration and more generally to the massive departure of European settlers, colonial administrators and military personnel, such as from ‘British Africa’ to the UK, from French West Africa back to the ‘metropole’, and from Portuguese colonies back to Portugal. At the same time, populations of European or mixed



European-native descent migrated to Europe, such as from Indonesia to the Netherlands (Lucassen and Lucassen 2012) or from Algeria to France (Collyer 2003).

**Figure 1. Estimated annual migration to EU15 countries<sup>1</sup> by region of origin, 1950-2008**



Source: DEMIG C2C Database

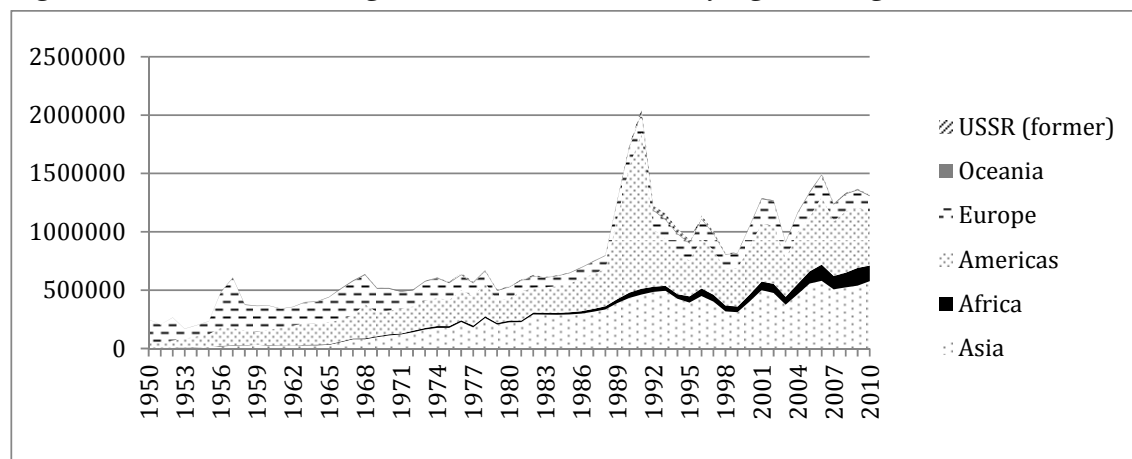
The emigration of European settlers and minority populations in the political and economic upheavals around independence processes in former colonies created social and migratory ties that subsequently facilitated the (recruitment-based or more spontaneous) migration of migrant workers in the post-WWII decades. Belgium and the Netherlands, which did not recruit labour in (former) colonies, and Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, which did not have a substantial colonial experience, all actively recruited labour, initially in southern Europe, and from the 1960s increasingly in Turkey, Yugoslavia and the Maghreb region (Berriane, de Haas and Natter 2015; Natter 2014b).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, formerly communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe also evolved into labour suppliers to Western European economies. This created a new ‘migration frontier’ (Skeldon 1997) on the European southern and eastern periphery. In the 1990s, the wars in the former Yugoslavia led to hundreds of thousands of refugees to seek refuge in Western European countries. Since the 2000s, immigration from Latin America to Europe has also increased, and while migration within and from African countries has remained low in comparison to other world regions, and African emigration to Europe has generally been dominated by the Maghreb, in recent decades Europe-bound migration from sub-Saharan Africa has increased (Flahaux and de Haas 2014). These trends have increased the diversity of migrant origins in Western, Southern and Northern Europe.

<sup>1</sup> The EU15 countries are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom

Decolonization, fast economic growth and demographic transitions since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century thus had fundamental impacts on the *direction* – rather than the relative size – of global migrations and is reflected in the changing composition of immigrant populations in Western Europe, North America, as well as in other advanced economies. With the drying up of Europe as a source of migrants in the 1950s and 1960s, the traditional European settler societies of the US, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand increasingly relied on immigration from Asia (for North America, Australia and New Zealand), Latin America (particularly in the case of the US), and, to a more limited extent, Africa (see Figure 2 and 3). This also revived much older migratory connections between Asia and the Americas (including the Caribbean) that were originally formed in the nineteenth century, partly through systems of indentured labour and other forms of colonial or ‘hegemonic’ recruitment (see McKeown 2004; Vezzoli 2015). This went along with an abolishment of racist ‘Whites-only’ immigration policies in European settler colonies of United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (FitzGerald and Cook-Martín 2014).

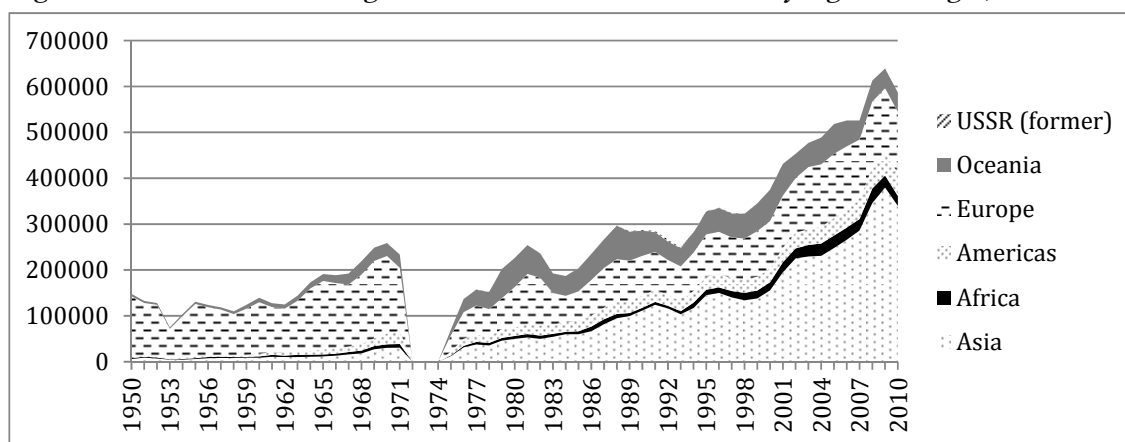
**Figure 2. *Estimated annual migration to Canada and USA by region of origin, 1950-2010***<sup>2</sup>



Source: DEMIG C2C Database

<sup>2</sup> Inflows from the Americas include migration from Canada to the USA, and from the USA to Canada;

**Figure 3. *Estimated annual migration to Australia/New Zealand by region of origin, 1950-2010<sup>3</sup>***



Source: DEMIG C2C Database

Particularly since the 1973 Oil Crisis, the Gulf countries as well as Libya emerged as new global migration destinations, initially for workers from oil-poor Arab countries but increasingly also from Asian countries, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Nepal, as well as from sub-Saharan African countries, such as Eritrea and Ethiopia (cf. Fargues 2011; Thiollet 2007). At the same time, the fast economic growth of East Asian countries, starting with Japan and followed by Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea, would contribute to redirecting migration within Asia towards those new growth poles (Skeldon 2006).

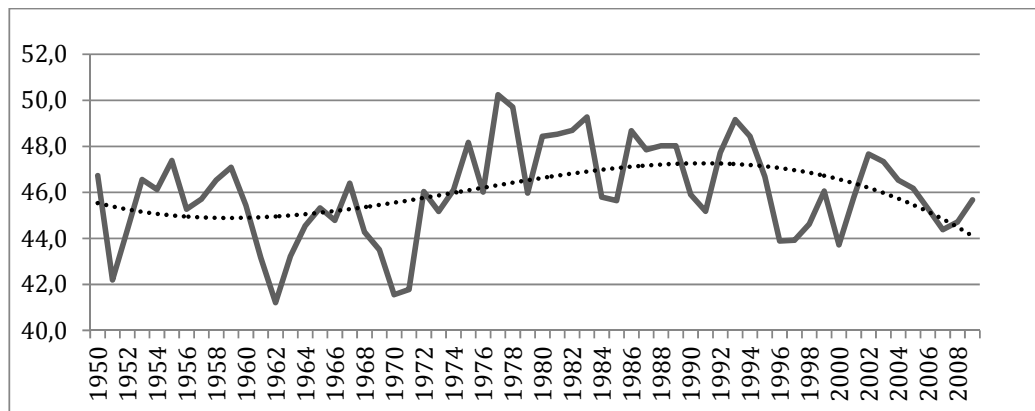
### ***The changing composition of world migration***

Most international migrants move for work and family reasons. Particularly during economic recessions, family migration can often outnumber labour migration, although family migration is often a consequence of the settlement of workers, so to some extent a “derivative” of labour migration. Refugee numbers are comparatively small and have shown more fluctuations, which mainly depend on the level of conflict in origin areas (Hatton 2009). Between 1990 and 2010, the number of refugees showed an overall declining trend, reflecting the decreasing level of violent conflicts, particularly in Africa and Latin America. Between 2010 and 2016 the total number of refugees in the world has increased again, from 16 to 22.5 million, mainly as a result of the Syrian civil war (UNHCR 2017). Through most of the post-WWII era, refugees have represented less than 10 per cent of the global migrant population. More than 80 per cent of all refugees are currently staying in developing countries (such as Kenya, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon), and this share has increased rather than decreased over recent decades (Czaika 2015a).

<sup>3</sup> Inflows from Oceania include migration from Australia to New Zealand and from New Zealand to Australia. Inflow data for Australia and New Zealand are not available for the years 1972-1974. This graph does not include immigrants to Australia from an unspecified origin.

Over the years, overall skill levels of immigrants have generally gone up. This largely reflects the overall increase in education levels worldwide, as well as the increasing demand for skilled labour in the highly specialized and segmented labour markets of middle- and high-income countries alongside a sustained demand for lower skilled migrant labour in agriculture, construction, catering and domestic and care work (Czaika 2018). A gender-specific analysis of DEMIG C2C data questioned the widespread assumption that international migration has undergone a process of feminization (see also Donato et al. 2011). In fact, the proportion of women in yearly inflows to OECD countries has fluctuated around 46 per cent over the last six decades and has actually slightly decreased in recent decades (see Figure 4). This suggests that the alleged process of feminization of migration primarily concerns the increasing visibility of – and attention to – the role of female migrants, and perhaps also the increasing percentage of women migrating as independent labour migrants and students, compared to a past in which most women migrated as ‘dependent’ migrants in the context of family formation or reunification.

**Figure 4. Women as percentage of total immigration, average of 28 reporting countries 1950-2009**



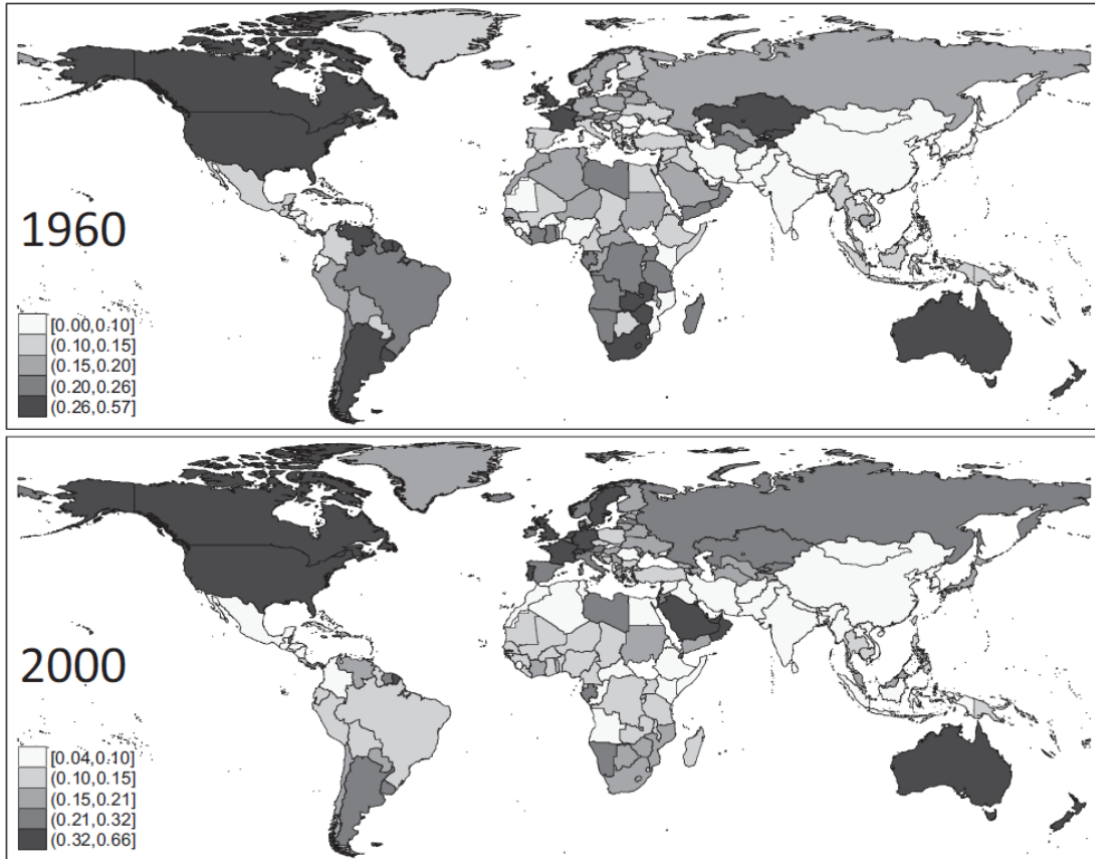
Source: DEMIG C2C Database. Trend line: third order polynomial.

### ***The asymmetrical globalization of migration***

To further investigate the changing geography of world migration between 1960 and 2000, we calculated country-level immigration and emigration diversity indices that simultaneously capture changes in the variety, distance and intensity of international migration. This analysis drew on the Global Bilateral Migration Database (GBMD) initially developed by Sussex University (Parsons et al. 2005) and extended by the World Bank (Özden et al. 2011) (for methodology, see Czaika and de Haas 2014a). Figure 5 depicts the diversity of *immigrant* populations in terms of the origin country variety, the average geographical distance to origin countries as well as the size of immigrant populations for each country of the world in 1960 and 2000. Figure 6 shows the diversity of *emigrant* populations in terms of the variety of destinations countries, the average

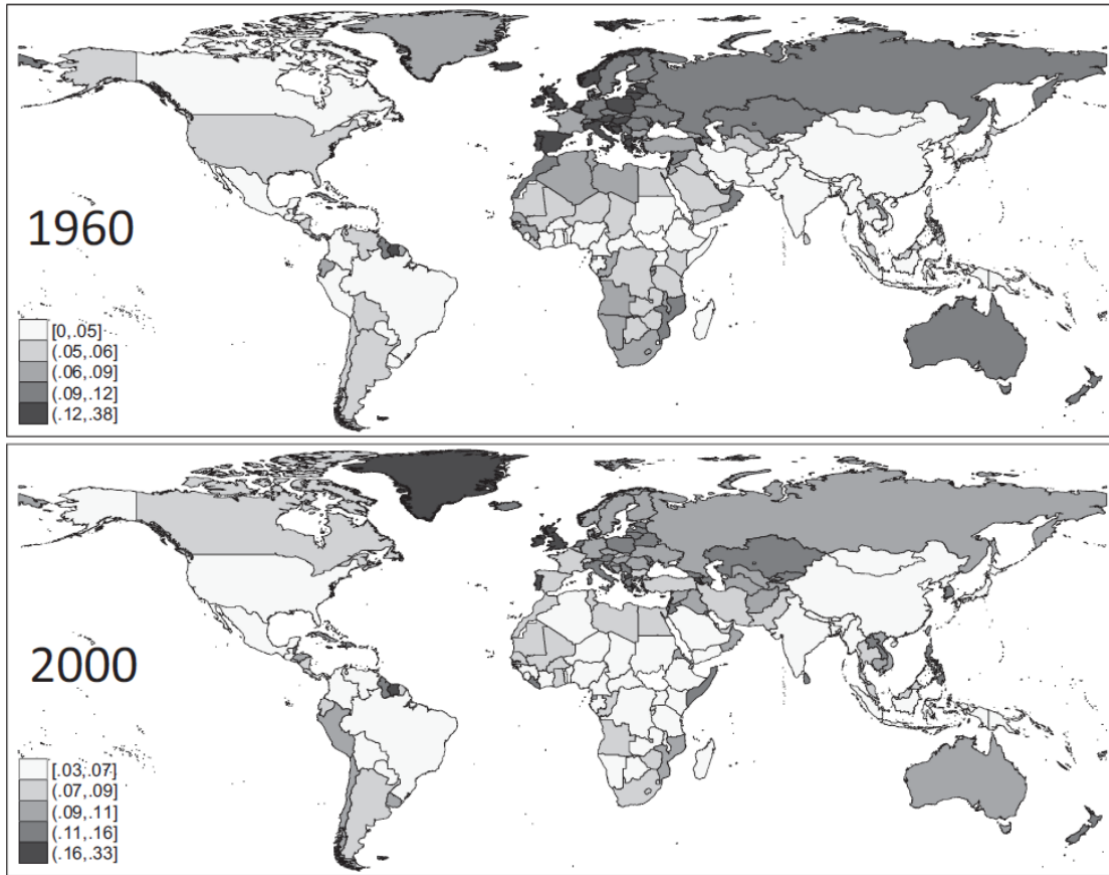
geographical distance to countries of settlement and the size of emigrant population for each country in the world in 1960 and 2000.

Figure 5. *Immigration Diversification Index Scores in 1960 and 2000*



Source: Czaika and de Haas (2014a)

Figure 6. *Emigration Dispersion Index Scores in 1960 and 2000*



Source: Czaika and de Haas (2014a)

Our findings challenge the idea that there has been a fast increase in volume, diversity, and geographical scope of migration. The average geographical distance between origin and destination countries has increased only slightly from nearly 3,000 km in 1960s to over 3,600 km in the 2000s. While several European and former European settler societies now indeed host an increasingly diverse array of immigrant groups, we cannot extrapolate this observation to the global level. In fact, the relative numbers and diversity of immigration has *decreased* in several regions, particularly in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Between 1960 and 2010, more countries have transformed from a net immigration country to a net emigration country than countries have made a reverse migration transition, which reflects a trend towards greater concentration of global migration movements towards a relatively limited (and shrinking) number of major migration destinations (Czaika and de Haas 2014b).

In Latin America, countries such as Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina have all experienced reverse migration transitions. While they previously attracted large numbers of migrants from a highly diverse array of countries (in Europe and beyond, including Japan, India, China and Lebanon), economic stagnation and political turmoil has diminished immigration and the diversity of Latin

American societies in recent decades. This coincided with an increase in the relative importance of intra-regional migrations and their transformation from countries of net immigration to countries of net emigration, with emigration particularly directed towards the United States, Canada and European countries such as Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom. In a similar vein, Figure 6 shows that the geographical scope, intensity and diversity of emigration from sub-Saharan Africa has rather decreased than increased over the post-WWII period.

The idea that international migration has accelerated and has become more diverse therefore primarily reflects a Euro- or Western-centric worldview. Migration has perhaps globalized from a European and North American destination country perspective, but hardly from a global and origin country perspective. In fact, migrants from an increasingly diverse array of non-European origin countries concentrate in a relatively small and shrinking pool of prime destination countries predominantly located in Western Europe, North America and the Gulf (Czaika and de Haas 2014a). The global migration map has thus become more skewed, rather than more diverse.

Rather than defying the idea that migration has ‘globalized,’ this seems to reflect the asymmetric nature of processes of economic globalization over the past decades. Instead of creating a more levelled ‘playing field’, globalization has disproportionately favoured particular countries – or rather cities and agglomerations within countries and certain social, ethnic, class and professional groups within them – while excluding or disfavoured other countries and groups (Castells 1996; ECLAC 2002; Florida 2005; Sassen 1991). As we will see, this is consistent with trends in immigration policies, which have increasingly privileged immigration of the skilled and wealthy as well as citizens of regional blocks, while maintaining (rather than necessarily increasing) high immigration and travel barriers for lower skilled migrants, asylum seekers and non-regional (‘third country’) citizens.

### **3. Determinants and drivers of migration**

Perhaps the most important theoretical observation of the DEMIG project is that we need to conceptualize migration as an *intrinsic part* of broader processes of development in origin and destination areas rather than an automated or passive reaction to economic, political, demographic and environmental “push” and “pull” factors or as a linear function of wage and other opportunity differentials. In other words, there is a need for a socially and economically embedded understanding of migration. This embedded understanding of migration and our empirical evidence shows that factors and processes such as state formation, development, labour market structures, inequality and social policies shape migration in complex--though structured--and often counterintuitive ways.

## ***Development in origin areas***

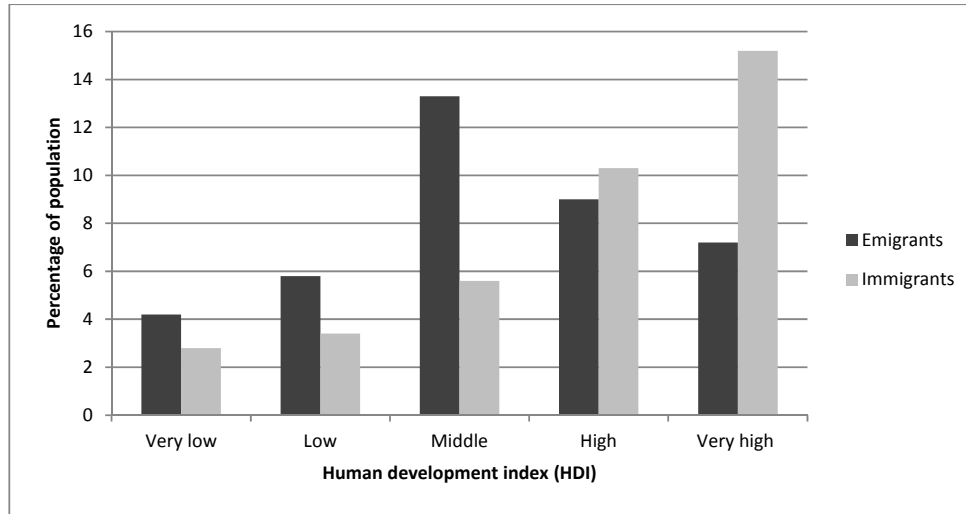
The popular idea that much ‘South-North’ migration is driven by poverty in origin countries ignores evidence that most migration neither occurs from the poorest countries nor from the poorest segments of the population. In fact, most emigration tends to occur from middle-income countries and most long-distance migrants tend to come from the relatively better-off sections of origin populations (Czaika 2012, Mahendra 2014a). Using new global migration data, our research provided an empirical validation of the migration transition hypothesis initially proposed by Zelinsky (1971) and further elaborated by Skeldon (1997). This hypothesis links phases of the demographic transition (from high to low fertility and mortality) and concomitant development processes to distinctive phases in a ‘mobility transition’, in which development initially leads to *more* internal (rural-to-urban) and international emigration. Only when countries achieve higher income levels, emigration levels tend to decrease alongside increases in non-migratory mobility – such as commuting – and immigration, which leads to their transformation from net emigration to net immigration countries.

Historical and contemporary experiences of countries in North America, Europe and Asia support the idea that countries go through such migration transitions as an intrinsic part of broader development processes (de Haas 2007; DeWind et al. 2012; Hatton and Williamson 1998; Skeldon 2012). Because of a lack of appropriate data, this hypothesis had not been subjected to a more formal empirical test and an analysis of the possible causal mechanisms explaining these complex associations. Using cross-sectional global migrant stock data from 2000 contained in the Global Bilateral Migration Database (GBMD), de Haas (2010a) provided a first comprehensive assessment of the relation between different variables capturing development on the one hand and levels of immigration and emigration on the other.

This analysis provided robust evidence for the validity of migration transition theory, finding an inverted U-shaped association between development and emigration. Both bivariate and multivariate analyses showed that higher levels of economic and human development – measured by GDP per capita and the Human Development Index (HDI) – are initially associated to higher levels of emigration, but that emigration decreases with the growth in prosperity and development (de Haas 2010a) (see Figure 7). At the same time, the relation between development and levels of immigration proves to be robustly positive and comparatively linear, confirming the idea that wealthy industrialized societies (inevitably) attract a substantial number of immigrants. These findings were confirmed by Clemens (2014) who estimated the relationship between income per capita and relative emigrant population size for the 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990 census rounds using the extended version of the Global Migrant Origin database (Özden et al. 2011).



**Figure 7. Association between levels of development and migration patterns, 2000 data**



**Source: de Haas 2010**

Interestingly, the same analysis did not find any significant effect of past fertility levels (measured by average total fertility rates over the 1970-1990 period) on immigrant and emigrant rates (de Haas 2010a). This challenges the emphasis theorists like Zelinsky (1971), Skeldon (1997) and Hatton and Williamson (1998) put on demographic factors in order to explain migration transitions. This highlights the need for alternative sets of explanations to understand the complex and non-linear relationship between development and migration.

At the micro-level, we can understand the positive relation between development and emigration if we conceptualize migration as a function of capabilities and aspirations to migrate (Carling 2002; de Haas 2003; de Haas 2014a). Human and economic development tends to be initially associated with increasing emigration, because access to resources – such as money, knowledge, and networks –, improved infrastructure, and awareness of economic opportunities and lifestyles elsewhere tends to give people the means and desire to migrate to urban areas or foreign lands. Processes of modernization, education, and exposure to new ideas change people’s preferences in terms of work, lifestyle and perceived material needs. This may lead to increasing aspirations to migrate either as an (instrumental) means to realize such new life aspirations or to fulfil the more innate, intrinsic meaning attached to the exploration of new horizons. As long as aspirations rise faster than local opportunities, we can expect emigration to increase even under conditions of fast development (de Haas 2014a).

At the macro-level, the growth and expansion of capitalist economies compels young people to migrate to urban areas and international destinations. Peasant livelihoods tend to be undermined as a consequence of mechanization, increasing scale of production and trade links, and the agrarian sector provides decreasing employment opportunities for a growing population.

Simultaneously, increasing education and infrastructure encourages migration to cities and abroad, where growing industrial and service-based economies provide job opportunities and alternative lifestyles to new generations of young people whose notions of the ‘good life’ have changed through education, media, and exposure to returning migrants. The transition from an agriculture-based economy to a more diversified, capitalist economy with growing industrial and service sectors, inevitably leads to a concentration of economic activities and population in urban areas. Although the degree to which such rural-urban transitions spill over in cross border movements depends on the rate of urban growth and the creation of domestic employment opportunities (de Haas and Fransen 2018), the underlying social and cultural transformation leading to changing aspirations and growing disaffection of young people with rural lifestyles is structural and therefore largely irreversible.

While transition theory focuses on *long-term* associations between development and migration, the idea of the ‘migration hump’ primarily refers to *short to medium-term* emigration hikes in the wake of such trade reforms and other political-economic shocks. For instance, within the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Martin (1993) and Martin and Taylor (1996) argued that adjustment to new economic conditions is never instantaneous and may therefore lead to economic dislocations and rising unemployment, for instance by driving Mexican peasants out of business through imports of cheap US agrarian products. Using a counterfactual empirical strategy, Mahendra (2014b) found that NAFTA created a ‘migration hump’ effect on Mexico-US migration in the first 15-20 years after the enactment of the trade agreement. This confirms the idea that even if the long-term effects of trade liberalization would be beneficial for the low and middle-income segments of the population (which remains to be questioned, and is strongly conditional on the vitality of —and state support for— domestic agriculture and industry - see Rodrik 2011) we can expect a short- to medium-term increase in emigration in the wake of trade and other economic reforms. Economic dislocations and concomitant unemployment can also be triggered by a sudden change of political-economic regimes, such as in Central and Eastern Europe (Kureková 2013) and the former USSR after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, or through liberalization of trade and capital markets.

### ***State formation, conflict and political shocks***

While states affect key migration drivers through economic, labour market, taxation, social, welfare, health care, education and other policies, they also shape migration processes in more direct ways, both intentionally and unintentionally. In fact, states often play a crucial role in the initiation of international migration, whether in the form of warfare, military occupation, colonialism, enslavement, labour recruitment, economic imperialism, political repression, or violence (Castles, de Haas and Miller 2014; Hoerder 2002; Massey et al. 1998; Penninx 1982; Skeldon 1997). Global migration is highly concentrated in a low number of migration corridors,

which to a considerable extent reflect colonial, cultural, and other historical ties between states (Czaika and de Haas 2014a; Flahaux and De Haas 2016; Flahaux and Vezzoli 2016; Natter 2014a; Vezzoli 2015).

The emergence of ‘migration politics’ is intrinsically linked to the emergence of modern states. More than for their feudal and agrarian predecessors, population represented an essential economic and political resource for emerging modern states in terms of taxation, workforce and military. It was the establishment of modern states that brought the need to define who is member of the citizenry, who is not, and to establish a set of rules to determine how such membership can be acquired. The right to control the ‘legitimate means of movement’ (Torpey 1998) of people has been central to the consolidation of centralised national governments in the nineteenth century. As a consequence, passports and visas have become key instruments of population movement control. While such controls were initially focused on controlling the departure of citizens, since the late nineteenth century there has been a shift from states controlling emigration to controlling immigration (de Haas and Vezzoli 2011) parallel to an ‘exit revolution’ (Zolberg 2007) through the increasing removal of exit controls. The demise of exit controls and the increasing adaptation of “diaspora engagement policies” by origin states (de Haas and Vezzoli 2011; Gamlen 2008) may have counterbalanced the potential migration-reducing effects of restrictions by destination country governments for particular migrant categories.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the creation and consolidation of new states often coincided with the expulsion, forced assimilation or genocide of unwanted ‘minorities’ that were threatening the official, unitary ideology of nation states (Dowty 1987). Particularly when notions of citizenship are strongly based on commonly imagined religious or ethnic affiliation (cf. Anderson 1983), states are often driven to expel minorities while encouraging the immigration of co-religious or co-ethnic population in order to create ‘homogeneous’ populations<sup>4</sup>. Starting from the 1950s, state-formation processes in the wake of decolonization and independence crucially shaped world migration. Historical, institutional, socio-cultural, and linguistic ties, as well as economic opportunities in the former colonial states encouraged the concentration of migration from many former colonies to the former colonising countries such as from the Maghreb countries to France; or from Jamaica to Britain (Flahaux and De Haas 2016; Flahaux and Vezzoli 2016; Natter 2014a). At the same time, however, former colonial

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<sup>4</sup> The ‘population exchanges’ in post-Ottoman Balkan states, the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey and the population exchange following the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan, the Palestinian exodus (the Nakbah) during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and the large-scale displacement and genocide during the 1991-1995 Yugoslav wars are some examples of such violent processes of ‘population homogenization’. States can also redefine who belongs to the nation, an extreme example of this being Nazi Germany, where in 1933 Jews were stripped of their citizenship and subsequently systematically murdered during the Holocaust.

states often acted to prevent emigration from former colonies and newly independent states to the former colonial state - particularly governments of socialist or ‘non-aligned’ countries such as Algeria, India, and many sub-Saharan African countries. For instance, the apparent *decline* in intra-African migration intensities over the 1960-2000 period seems to be related to the process of state formation, rising nationalism and the concomitant imposition of migration constraints in the wake of decolonisation (Flahaux and De Haas 2016).

The timing, volume and composition of these migrations varied depending on the level of violence, uncertainty and domestic tensions before and after independence. Intuitively, we would expect that authoritarianism and violence in origin countries encourages emigration. Analyses on forced migration do indeed find significant effects of conflict and violence on the number of asylum seekers and refugees (see also Czaika and Hobolth 2014; Hatton 2009; Moore and Shellman 2007). However, the effect of authoritarianism on migration is not as straightforward as it may seem at first sight. Our empirical analyses did not find a significant effect of levels of political terror (Czaika and de Haas 2012) or a lack of political rights (de Haas 2010a) in origin countries on the relative size of emigrant populations as a share of origin country populations. While this may be partly explained by the underrepresentation of refugees in international migration data, we would still expect that political oppression and violence also motivates non-refugees to leave. However, we can understand such counterintuitive findings if we conceptualize migration as a function of aspirations and capabilities instead of a response to “push-pull” factors. From this perspective, the hypothetically positive effect of authoritarianism on migration aspirations may be counterbalanced by the fact that autocratic states are more likely to create practical and administrative obstacles to the emigration of their citizens, thus reducing migration capability as aspirations to migrate increase.

We also found that a lack of political freedoms in *destination countries* has a *positive* effect on the size of immigrant stocks when controlling for other relevant factors (de Haas 2010a). One of the explanations for this paradoxical finding is that states that give fewer rights to their citizens – and even fewer to migrants—are less sensitive to domestic political pressure for immigration restrictions. Thus, states, like those in the Gulf region, have a higher ability to shape highly segmented labour markets that are dependent on high immigration but systematically discriminate against migrant workers.

### ***Global, international, domestic and community level inequality***

International economic inequalities in the form of wage gaps are the most common explanation for international migration, which fits within neoclassical “push-pull” models according to which the volume of migration is expected to be proportional to geographical opportunity gaps. While this may sound intuitive, our research showed that international inequality is neither a necessary

nor a sufficient condition for substantial migration to occur. In fact, “push-pull” models are unable to explain real-world migration patterns and can even be misleading, particularly because of their inability to explain development-driven emigration hikes. This does of course not mean that inequality does not play a role in migration processes, yet it is necessary to distinguish different forms and levels of inequality in their complex interactions with other migration determinants. While international (between countries) inequality can *motivate* people to migrate, it has limited explanatory power compared to the role of domestic and community-level income inequalities.

In fact, it is vital to distinguish between (1) global, (2) international, (3) domestic and (4) community-level inequality in origin and destination societies. At the macro-level, drawing on global migrant stock data from 2000, Czaika and de Haas (2012) studied how between- and within-country inequalities affect patterns of immigration and emigration. First, we found that absolute poverty is associated with *lower* emigration levels, which is consistent with the idea that resource constraints can deprive people from the capability to emigrate. Second, we found only small and somewhat ambiguous effects of origin country income inequality on the relative size of emigrant populations<sup>5</sup>. This seems to confirm the idea that the relevant social reference group in shaping perceived relative poverty are the communities in which people live rather than a country’s entire population<sup>6</sup>. This resonates with the “new economics of labour migration” (NELM) (Stark 1991), which hypothesizes that relative poverty *within origin communities* can provide important migration-motivating factors. This is supported by a body of survey studies confirming the role of relative poverty in motivating people to migrate (see for instance Bhandari 2004; Stark and Taylor 1989; Quinn 2006; Stark et al. 2009).

Our analyses also highlighted the importance of looking beyond gross, country-level income inequality, by considering inequalities along more concrete social lines within national populations, which can be strongly divided internally. In Suriname, for instance, tensions and power inequalities between different ethnic groups combined with the overall uncertainty generated by impending independence from the Netherlands in 1975, boosted migration from ethnically distinct groups such as the Hindustani and the Javanese (Vezzoli 2015). An analysis of migrant population data for a large set of developed and developing countries by Czaika (2013) showed that high levels of “horizontal” inequality *between* ethnic groups are associated to lower emigration while higher levels of ‘vertical’ inequality *within* ethnic groups are associated with higher levels of emigration. This seems to corroborate the argument that social comparisons are

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<sup>5</sup> Migration levels were measured as the percentage of emigrant and immigrant population on the total population of each country.

<sup>6</sup> People are more likely to make comparisons within their immediate social networks and pitch their own aspirations against the living standards and lifestyles of people within their own communities. They are less likely to draw comparisons to the living conditions of urban elites or foreign populations, with whom most people are less likely to identify, and whose lifestyles seem out of reach, or are largely unknown.

primarily made *within* concrete social groups. Czaika (2013) suggests that the positive effect of within-group inequality on emigration increases with skill levels. This suggests that education tends to increase personal life aspirations, which can increase migration aspirations, and that the higher skilled also tend to have higher capabilities to realize such aspirations through their access to money, knowledge, and social connections (Czaika 2013; de Haas 2014a).

Our research further shows that the role of inequality and poverty may differ for short- and long-distance migration, with poverty or other resource constraints typically precluding poor people from engaging in long-distance and international migration (Mahendra, 2014b). For instance, based on an analysis of nationally representative data from India, Czaika (2012) showed that relatively well-off households were more likely to have (male) members moving abroad for work or study (mostly in North American, European or Asian destinations), while short-distance internal migration is dominated by women from poorer households moving for family reasons.

### ***Labour markets and social welfare***

Among the most important factors driving migration is the changing structure of labour demand in destination societies towards increasingly complex, specialized and segmented labour markets, which have generated an intrinsic demand for migrant labour. Piore (1979), the pioneer of dual labour market theory, challenged the idea that immigration is fundamentally caused by ‘push’ factors in origin societies (such as low wage or unemployment) or wage gaps, and argued instead that the demand for migrant labour stems from the fundamental characteristics of labour markets in modern industrialized economies. The vital importance of labour demand in explaining long-term trends and short-term fluctuations in migration is highlighted by statistical evidence that levels of immigration are closely associated to business cycles and job opportunities in destination countries (Hatton and Williamson 2005; Czaika 2015b, Czaika and de Haas 2014a)].

Partly because of ageing and the increasing formal labour participation of women, the supply of natives willing and able to do manual agricultural, industrial and service jobs (such as catering, cleaning and domestic work) has decreased. Social status considerations also help to explain why native workers often shun arduous, manual jobs at the bottom of occupational hierarchies even in case of high unemployment and reasonable pay, while migrants typically agree to do such jobs as long as their primary social group of reference is their family and community of origin. The role of inequality in shaping migration processes points to the use of migration as a livelihood strategy, allowing families and households to diversify incomes. The idea that migration is a group strategy to reduce income risks and to secure future livelihoods falls under the new economics of labour migration (NELM) theory initially formulated by Stark (1978); 1991) as a

critique on neoclassical migration theories that see migration as a function of decisions by income-maximizing individuals. NELM seems particularly relevant for migration occurring in the contexts of poverty and economic and political uncertainty prevailing in many ‘poor’ societies, but also to explain migration of the relatively poor in industrialized societies. The idea that migration can be part of risk spreading rather than income-maximizing strategies provides another explanation for migration in the absence of significant wage gaps between origin and destination areas.

We can thus expect that welfare and social security policies in origin countries have an important indirect influence on migration patterns. While there is an extensive research literature testing the existence of a ‘welfare magnet’<sup>7</sup> as a migration determinant in destination countries (Borjas 1999; Giulietti 2014; Gordon and Handler 1999; Kureková 2013; Levine and Zimmerman 1999; UNDP 2009), the role of welfare and social security in origin countries has been largely ignored (Mahendra, 2014b). If we conceptualize migration as a function of capabilities and aspirations to migrate, the hypothetical effect of origin country social security and welfare on migration becomes ambiguous. On the one hand, we could expect that in areas with lower levels of social provision people would have higher incentives to emigrate in order to spread income risks (cf. Massey et al. 1993). On the other hand, higher levels of social security may also endow families with the resources and stability to afford the costs and risk of migrating, particularly over larger distances and across borders. Our findings suggest that not only the social policies of destination countries matter (as argued by Borjas (1999)), but that social policy regimes in origin countries play an equally, if not more important, role in shaping migration processes.

We tested the existence of a ‘reverse welfare magnet’ for ‘South-North’ migration using macro-level DEMIG C2C data from 19 destination countries covering the 1985-2010 period. The analysis showed that origin country public spending on education, health, and social protection reduces international emigration (Mahendra forthcoming). This complements Kureková’s (2013) study on the impact of welfare systems on emigration patterns in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), showing that in CEE countries where social protection figures have been lower, unemployment benefit schemes were less extensive and labour market mismatches remained unaddressed experienced larger out-migration of relatively deprived people than countries with better welfare provisions<sup>8</sup>. This resonates with the idea that the redistributive provision of (quasi)

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<sup>7</sup> The ‘welfare magnet’ hypothesis, initially proposed by Borjas (1999), posits that countries with generous welfare systems attract a higher number of (particularly lower skilled) migrants. Depending on empirical design, data and the specific migration context, empirical tests have yielded mixed results, with generally ambiguous – and in any case weak – effects of welfare provisions on immigration (Giulietti 2014; Gordon and Handler 1999; Kureková 2013; Levine and Zimmerman 1999; UNDP 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Similar conclusions were reached in the historical study by Khoudour-Casteras (2008, who concluded that the rapid decline of German emigration before WWI can be partly explained by the social benefits

public goods and services such as school vouchers, free public education, generous health benefits, accessible health facilities, unemployment benefits can decrease relative poverty as well as the aspiration to migrate as an alternative strategy to acquire such goods and services privately through remittances (Mahendra forthcoming).

Yet, studies using micro-level evidence show that the links between social policy and migration are more complex than macro-studies may suggest. Analysing Indonesian family life survey data, Mahendra (2014) shows that direct interventions in social policy, such as through cash transfers to poor people, can increase migration if their migration capabilities increasing income effects exceed their migration aspirations decreasing risk-reducing effects. In fact, cash transfers *increased* internal migration (presumably through releasing resource constraints on short-distance migration) within Indonesia but had no significant impact on international migration (where migration costs are much higher) (Mahendra 2014a). This is in line with other recent literature suggesting that social security schemes - such as various types of cash transfers - and the provision of public services such as education may influence short- and long-distance migration and that their short- and long-term effects may differ substantially (Angelucci, 2014; Phan 2012; Stecklov et al. 2005, Massey et al. 2010), which precludes sweeping generalizations on this issue<sup>9</sup>.

After this analysis of trends and determinants of international migration, the next analytical step of the DEMIG project was to assess the extent to which migration policies have affected migration processes in their interaction with other migration determinants. However, before embarking upon this empirical analysis, this required an examination of the nature and evolution of migration policies, which is developed in the next section.

#### **4. The nature and evolution of migration policies**

##### ***Defining migration policies and policy effectiveness***

Given our knowledge about the ways in which economic development, conflict and cultural changes, as well as various forms of inequality shape migration processes in complex and profound ways, what can we say about the role and effectiveness of migration policies? As the previous section highlighted, it is important to distinguish the preponderant role of *states* in migration processes from the more specific role of *migration policies*. To make this distinction, we define migration policies as rules (i.e., laws, regulations, and measures) that national states enact

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introduced by the Bismarck government during the 1880s, which from the perspective of prospective migrants offset the relatively low wages in Germany compared to those in the United States.

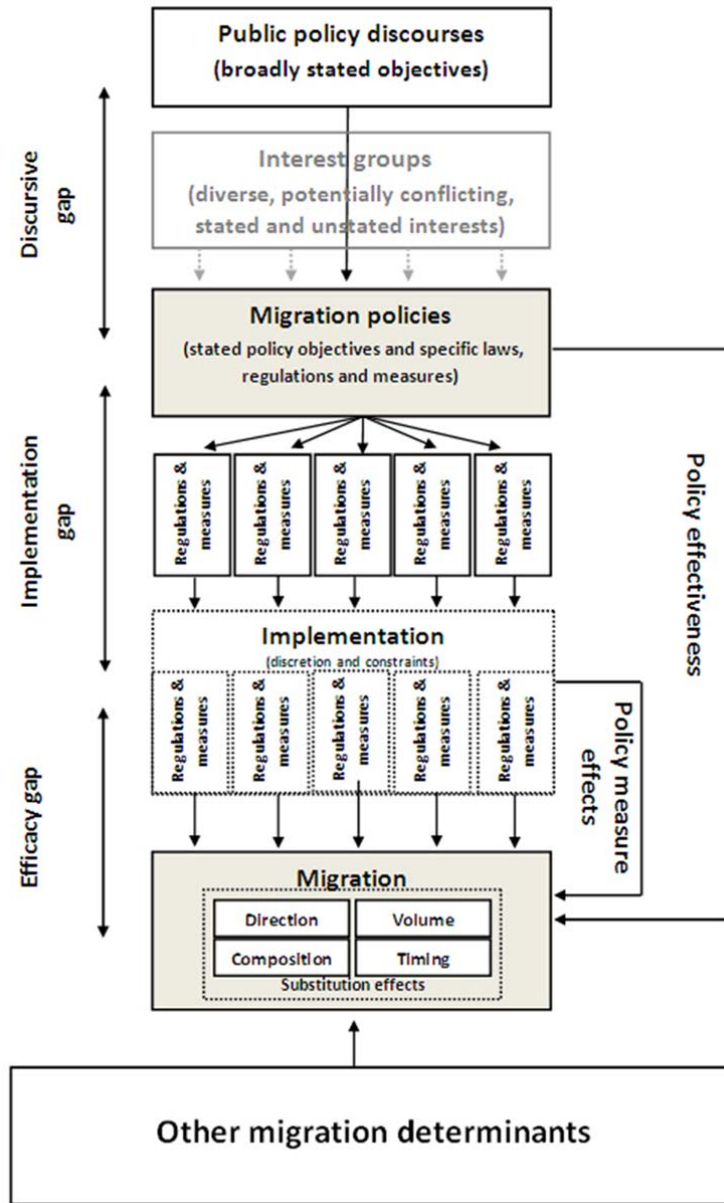
<sup>9</sup> This seems to echo mixed, and generally rather weak, evidence on the destination country ‘welfare magnet’ hypothesis.



and implement with the explicit objective of affecting the volume, origin, direction, and internal composition of migration (Czaika and de Haas 2013a; de Haas and Vezzoli 2011). Our focus on this *explicit* aim to affect migration is important as it can be difficult to draw a hard line between migration and ‘non-migration’ policies (Vezzoli 2014c). For instance, while labour market regulations, taxation, social welfare and foreign policies are not usually seen as migration policies, they may nevertheless affect migration in indirect, but powerful ways.

The debate – and controversy – on migration policy effectiveness is also haunted by a lack of conceptual clarity, in which ‘effectiveness’ is often confounded with ‘effects.’ While the ‘effect’ refers to the actual impact of a particular (implemented) law, measure, or regulation, ‘effectiveness’ refers to the extent to which the policy objectives have been met. Depending on whether public discourses or the stated objectives of policies on paper are used as benchmarks for evaluating migration outcomes, we may therefore reach different conclusions about policy effectiveness (Czaika and de Haas 2013a). Because there is often a considerable discrepancy between publicly stated and ‘real’ objectives of a migration policy, this adds an evaluative and, hence, subjective dimension to the analysis of the effectiveness of migration policies.

Figure 8. *Conceptual framework of immigration and emigration policy effects and effectiveness*



Source: Czaika and de Haas 2013a; de Haas and Vezzoli 2011)

To improve conceptual clarity, it therefore seems useful to distinguish four levels at which migration policies can be conceptualized: (1) public policy discourses; (2) actual migration policies on paper; (3) policy implementation; and (4) policy (migration) outcomes (see Figure 8). This distinction allows for the identification of three ‘policy gaps’ that can explain perceived or real policy failure. First, the *discursive gap* is the discrepancy between the stated objectives of politicians’ – often ‘tough’ – migration discourses and – the often more watered-down – concrete policies. Second, the *implementation gap* is the frequent disparity between policies on paper and their actual implementation. Third, the *efficacy gap* reflects the degree to which the

*implemented* laws, measures, and regulations have the intended effect on the volume, timing, direction, and composition of migration, independently and in interaction with other migration determinants (Czaika and de Haas 2013a; de Haas and Vezzoli 2011).

As with most policies, migration policies are typically a compromise among multiple competing interests, which explains why their objectives are often not singular and cannot be objectively defined (Bonjour 2011; Boswell 2007; Boswell and Geddes 2011; Czaika and de Haas 2013a, 2013b; Freeman 1995; Hollifield 1992a). For instance, while businesses typically lobby in favour of more liberal immigration policies, trade unions have historically seen immigration as threatening the wages and interests of native workers. Such competing interests also exist across and within political parties, governments and bureaucracies. Empirical analyses of DEMIG POLICY (see de Haas and Natter 2014) confirmed the hypothesis that the migration issue does *not* neatly cut across the left-right spectrum, but divides political parties internally (see also Massey 1999: 313; Odmalm 2011: 1076-1077; Schain 2008: 468).

Perhaps surprisingly, our analysis did not find a clear effect of the ideological orientation of governing parties in 21 European and North American countries between 1975 and 2012 on changes in immigration policy restrictiveness (de Haas and Natter 2014). While more right-wing inclined governments tended to slightly favour liberal entry policies, more left-wing inclined governments tended to slightly favour liberal integration (post-entry) policies. However, on the aggregate level these effects cancel each other out, and factors such as economic growth, unemployment, or previous levels of immigration were much stronger determinants of migration policy restrictiveness. To a significant degree, the perception that right-wing parties are 'tougher' on immigration therefore seems to reflect a 'discursive' gap between immigration rhetoric and immigration policy practice.

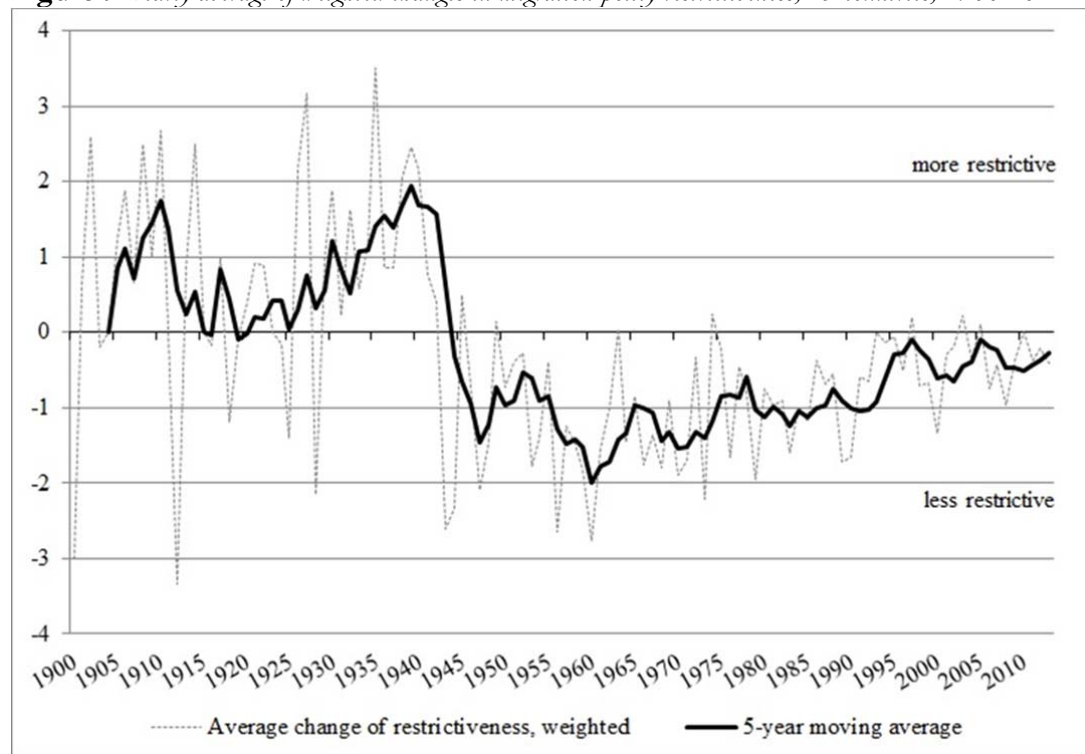
Also in the case of emigration policies, they are likely to reflect the outcome of power struggles within governments and bureaucracies of origin states, which should not be perceived as homogenous entities (de Haas and Vezzoli 2011; Natter forthcoming). Regardless of their position on the autocracy-democracy spectrum, the position of origin states towards emigration is often intrinsically ambivalent. They face a trade-off between the perceived economic and political benefits of migration, such as generating remittances and creating a political 'safety valve' by providing an outlet for discontent people, and the perceived costs and risks of migration, such as a 'brain drain' and the possibility that exiles may form a political opposition from abroad. Also here there are considerable gaps between discourse and practice. Political leaders may pay lip service to goals such as preventing 'brain drain' or 'combating illegal emigration' - be it to gain diplomatic leverage, to receive financial assistance, or to increase control over their own population -, while in practice doing little, either because they lack the capacity to do so or because of the economic and political benefits they see in emigration. In

addition, states' capacity to regulate emigration is fundamentally limited by legal (human rights), economic and political constraints (de Haas and Vezzoli 2011). In fact, Hollifield's 'liberal paradox' seems to apply to emigration policies even more strongly than to immigration policies. Only a declining number of authoritarian states with closed economies are willing and capable of imposing blanket exit restrictions, partly because leaving one's country is generally recognized as a fundamental human right – which is not the case for entering a country.

### ***The evolution of migration policies***

Analyses of DEMIG POLICY and DEMIG VISA clearly counter the assumption of a generic increase in migration policy restrictiveness. Drawing on the DEMIG POLICY databases capturing 6,500 policy changes, we conducted a detailed analysis of the evolution of migration policies of 45 countries (de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2014). Figure 9 depicts the yearly average direction of policy change between 1900 and 2014 and shows that since 1945 migration policies have overall become *less* restrictive, with yearly averages consistently below 0.

**Figure 9** Yearly average of weighted changes in migration policy restrictiveness, 45 countries, 1900-2014



Source: de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016, based on DEMIG POLICY data

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century portrays a clear trend toward more restrictiveness, reflecting the turn toward protectionism and nationalism affecting Europe and North America during and after the Great Depression (Timmer and Williams 1998). This period also coincided with the introduction of modern passport systems (Torpey 2000) and an increasing focus on immigration

policies, replacing the previous preoccupation with exit policies (Zolberg 2007). The period from the 1950s to the 1980s was characterised by an *accelerated liberalisation* of entry and post-entry rights for most migrant categories as part of major, liberalizing overhauls of national migration regimes. Since 1990, the proportion of more restrictive policy changes has increased. Besides measures targeting border controls, expulsion and irregular migration, this pertained to efforts by certain governments to restrict access to citizenship, the immigration of family migrants and asylum seekers. Yet, our analysis clearly shows that liberal policy changes have continued to outnumber restrictive ones. We should therefore speak of a *deceleration of liberalisation* rather than a reversal towards more restrictive policies (de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016).

These findings corroborate that there are clear legal and institutional constraints regarding the extent to which migrants' rights can be curtailed (Freeman 1995; Hollifield 1992a; Joppke 1998). For instance, governments have not succeeded in reversing or abolishing the general right to family reunification introduced in the 1960s, as attempts to enact restrictive policies have been regularly overturned by national and European courts (cf. Joppke 2001). This overall trend is robust for the 22 liberal democracies in Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand which are the traditional focus of migration policy research (see de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016).

Our analysis of migration policy trends in other countries covered by DEMIG POLICY revealed interesting regional differences. Migration policies of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, as well as of Morocco, South Africa, Israel and Turkey, show an increasing prevalence of liberalising policy changes up to the 1990s and a more balanced picture in recent years, more or less in line with the pattern in Western Europe. By contrast, Asian and Latin American countries covered by DEMIG POLICY portray an opposite pattern, with rather high levels of restrictiveness up to the 1970s, and an opening-up of their immigration regimes since then.

Fluctuations in migration policy restrictiveness are closely tied to broader economic and political trends and events. For instance, the peak in less restrictive measures in the late 1980s for CEE countries coincides with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the ensuing generic liberalisation of exit control policies characteristic of communist states. For the five Asian countries (India, Indonesia, South Korea, Japan, China) included in DEMIG POLICY, the dismantling of the protectionist economic policies in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with more liberal immigration policies in wealthier countries, while the poorer countries in the region decreased exit controls and embarked upon pro-active 'labour export policies' through recruitment agreements. This confirms the idea that liberal economic policies tend to coincide with liberal migration policies (cf. Kim 1996).

Migration policy restrictiveness in Latin America peaked in the 1970s and 1980s, in a period of military coup d'états and the predominance of autocratic regimes. Since the 2000s, however, Latin American countries have adopted - at least on paper - highly liberal and human-rights oriented migration policies through expanding refugee protections, granting socio-economic and family reunification rights to migrants and, in Argentina, even consecrating a right to immigrate in 2003 (Cantor, Freier and Gauci 2015; Acosta Arcarazo and Freier 2015). Although this tendency seems strongly linked to democratisation, this supposed link between democratisation and open migration policies cannot be taken for granted. As FitzGerald and Cook-Martín (2014) showed in their historical study on the evolution of immigration policies in the Americas between 1790 and 2010, democracies were the first countries to select immigrants by race, and autocracies the first to outlaw such discrimination. Gulf countries, for example, have remarkably open entry policies although they severely curtail post-entry rights to labour migrants (cf. Ruhs 2013). We can thus hypothesize that liberal immigration systems are a feature of liberal economic systems rather than a characteristic of democratic governance *per se*.

Although robust across a large number of countries, the overall liberalisation has not been linear over time and differs across policy areas and migrant categories: Entry and integration policies have consistently become less restrictive, while border control and, since the 1990s, exit policies have become increasingly restrictive (see Figure 10). Also, while policies towards unauthorized migrants, prospective asylum seekers and family members of low-skilled migrants have become more restrictive, a larger number of (generally less-visible and less-advertised) policies targeting higher and lower skilled workers, students and also asylum applicant<sup>10</sup> have become progressively more liberal (de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016). At the regional or national level, trends can however differ. For instance, analyses of migration policies targeting Senegalese migrants reveal a trend toward more restrictiveness over time - especially regarding entry (Flahaux 2016). As we will see below, this often accompanies increasing restrictions of travel visa regimes, which officially are not part of immigration regimes, but in function as a means to block the entry of potential asylum seekers and presumed visa 'over stayers'.

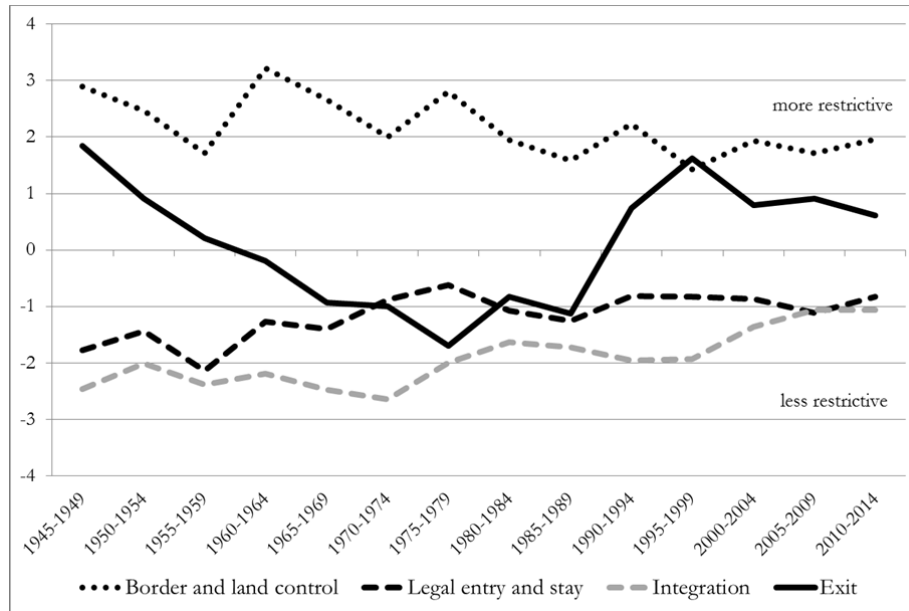
However, the overall liberalisation of policies towards low-skilled migrants confirms the existence of a significant 'discursive gap' between politicians' 'tough talk' and the actual policies on paper, which are often responsive to powerful business and trade lobbies who favour flexibility in immigration regimes (cf. Facchini, Mayda and Mishra 2011). This lends support to the idea that migration policies are often symbolic and are partly or primarily about giving the *appearance* of control (Massey et al. 1998: 288). The increasing deployment of control policies

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<sup>10</sup> While border controls have increasingly aimed to prevent potential asylum seekers from arriving and applying for asylum in the first place, the actual sets of rights of asylum seekers who have arrived in destination countries have actually increased. This exemplifies the importance of distinguishing the different policy instruments and policy categories.

such as border patrolling, the erection of fences, immigrant detention and expulsion exemplifies that migration policy discourses and practices have a strong ‘performative’ (Geiger and Pécoud 2010) dimension. The disproportionate exposure of the public to restrictive policy discourses contributes to the desired impression that policies have become increasingly restrictive *in general*.

Figure 10. *Weighted changes in migration policy restrictiveness by policy area, 45 countries, 1945-2014*



Source: de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016, based on DEMIG POLICY data

In reality, many migration policies are designed to attract certain migrant groups. This particularly applies to the increasing popularity of policies to attract skilled workers (Czaika and Parsons 2017). Analysing skill-specific migration flows from 185 origin countries into 10 major OECD destinations over the 2000–2012 period, Czaika and Parsons (2017) find strong evidence that (supply-led) points-based systems increase both the volume and, particularly, the average skill levels of high-skilled immigration. By contrast, demand-driven systems that are based on job availability, complemented by labour market tests and (shortage lists) assessments of labour market needs, have rather little and potentially even negative effects on the number of skilled migrants. The analysis also shows that skill-selective immigration policies are usually more successful in affecting the *skill composition* rather than the *volume* of skilled immigration. This suggests that skill-selective policy instruments are more effective in ‘filtering out’ or discouraging entry of low-skilled workers rather than in attracting the highly skilled (Czaika and Parsons 2017). This confirms our main finding that the essence of modern migration policies is not their growing restriction, but their focus on migrant selection (de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016).

## *The evolution of visa regimes*

While policies regulating the legal entry, stay and integration of migrants have shown a liberalizing trend over the past decades, restrictive policies have targeted migrants who are publicly portrayed as ‘less-desired’ (mainly asylum seekers and some categories of lower skilled workers) through a combination of border surveillance, visa policies, carrier sanctions, and deportation. These policies seek to prevent migrants from crossing the border in the first place, because, once on the national territory, they have access to a certain number of rights, particularly those belonging to vulnerable categories like asylum seekers, minors and pregnant women.

Although travel visa regulations officially target temporary visitors such as tourists or business people, since the 1970s governments see *and deploy* visas as instruments to curb migration (Czaika and de Haas 2014b; Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2017). For example, West-European countries introduced travel visas for ‘guest-worker’ countries such as Turkey and Morocco over the 1980s and 1990s in an obvious attempt to prevent people from finding work and joining family in Europe. Similarly, our study of the Caribbean region showed that while former colonial states introduced border regimes to curb immigration from their former colonies, the governments of other potential destination countries also introduced travel visas to discourage entry from these newly independent countries (Vezzoli and Flahaux 2017). Additionally, since the 1980s, destination countries progressively introduced carrier sanctions to prevent people without a visa from boarding airplanes and ships, herewith contributing to the increasing ‘privatisation’ of migration controls (Neumayer 2006). As visas can generally be imposed through directives, executive decrees or other administrative measures, and thus do not require cumbersome legal changes, they are seen as a quick, discrete and effective migration policy instrument (Czaika and Neumayer 2017).

Our analysis confirmed the importance of visas in international migration regimes. Based on DEMIG VISA, which provides global bilateral (country-by-country) coverage of entry visa end exit permit requirements between 1973 and 2014, we calculated country-level visa restrictiveness indices (see Figures 11 and 12)<sup>11</sup>. The *inbound entry visa restrictiveness index* provides yearly scores indicating the share of origin countries whose citizens need a travel visa to enter a particular destination country. For the *outbound entry visa restrictiveness index*, we reversed the procedure, calculating the share of destination countries for which citizens of each (origin) country need a visa (Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2017).

The analysis shows that overall levels of *entry* visa restrictiveness have remained remarkably

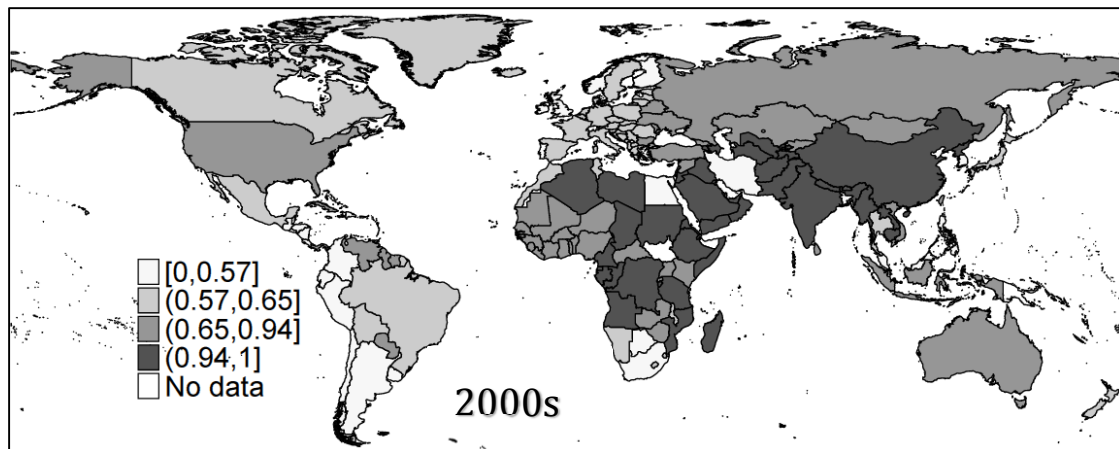
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<sup>11</sup> Visa on arrival was computed as visa required.



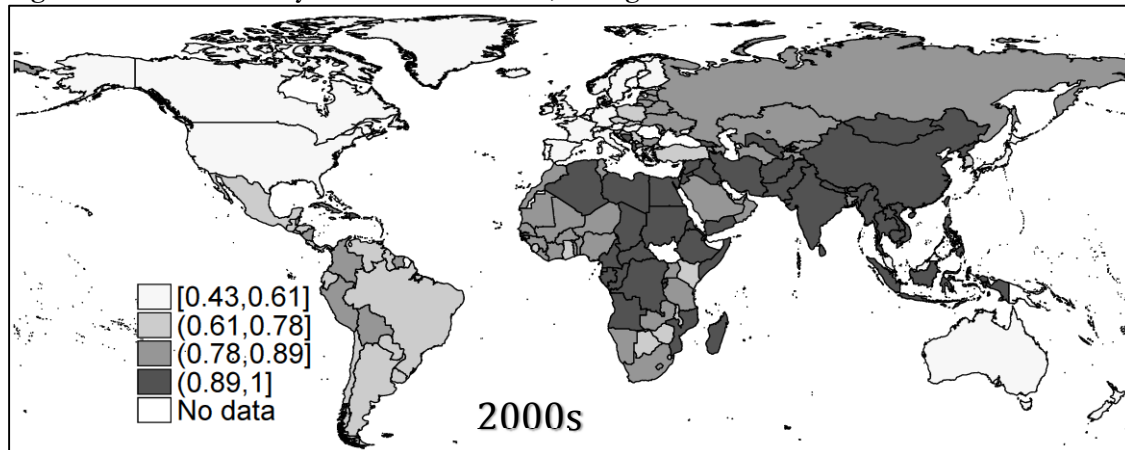
stable at high levels. Around 73 per cent of all bilateral corridors require a visa. Interestingly, levels of inbound entry visa restrictiveness are highest in Africa, Asia and Oceania, and significantly lower in the Americas and Europe. In fact, levels of visa restrictiveness that African and Asian countries impose on citizens from within and outside their own region are roughly equal to the levels of visa restrictions African and Asian citizens face themselves when travelling abroad. Thus, while OECD countries maintain high levels of entry visa restrictiveness for citizens from regions like Africa and Asia, developing countries in the so-called ‘global South’ - particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and South-East Asia - have some of the most restrictive outbound *and* inbound entry visa regimes.

**Figure 11 Inbound entry visa restrictiveness<sup>12</sup>, averages between 2003 and 2013**



Source: Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2017, based on DEMIG VISA data. Note: Dark shaded areas indicate countries with high levels of visa policy restrictiveness.

**Figure 12 Outbound entry visa restrictiveness<sup>13</sup>, averages between 2003 and 2013**



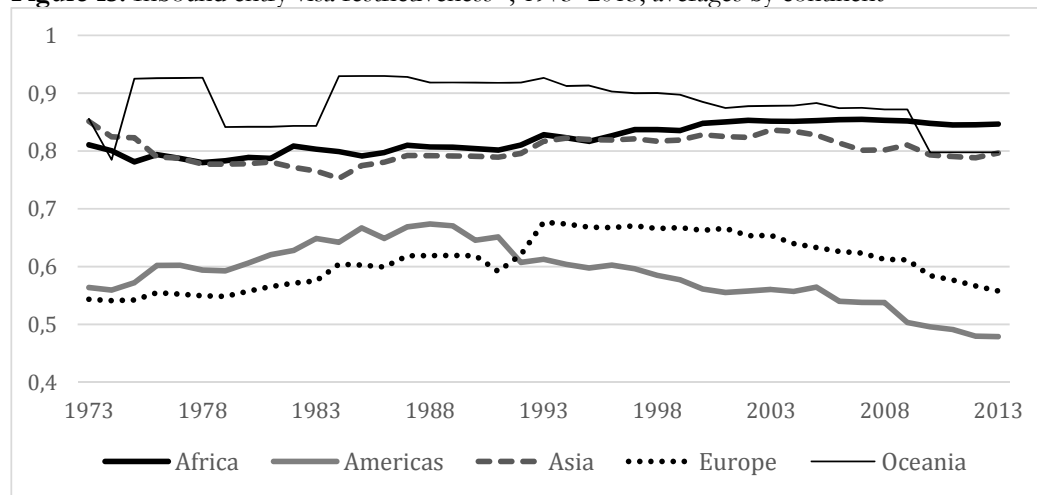
Source: Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2017, based on DEMIG VISA data. Note: Dark shaded areas indicate countries with high levels of visa policy restrictiveness.

<sup>12</sup> Percentage of foreign nationalities requiring an entry visa to travel to each country.

<sup>13</sup> Percentage of countries for which citizens of each country require a visa.

Figures 13 and 14 show how the levels of inbound and outbound visa restrictiveness evolved over the 1973–2013 period. Defying popular perceptions of increasing migration restrictions, levels of visa restrictiveness were already high back in the 1970s, and the general pattern has been one of stabilisation and slight decrease rather than an increase. Our analyses revealed an increasing restriction of entry visa regimes in Western Europe and Central and Eastern Africa, but a liberalization of visa regimes in Latin America and parts of Asia. At the same time, outbound entry visa restrictiveness (representing the degree to which citizens require a visa to travel abroad) has decreased for former Communist countries, but has increased for most African, South Asian, Middle Eastern and Andean countries. The most clear-cut trend has been the lifting of *exit* restrictions, down from 26 to 16 per cent of all bilateral corridors between 1973 and 2008, particularly in Europe and the Americas (Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2017).

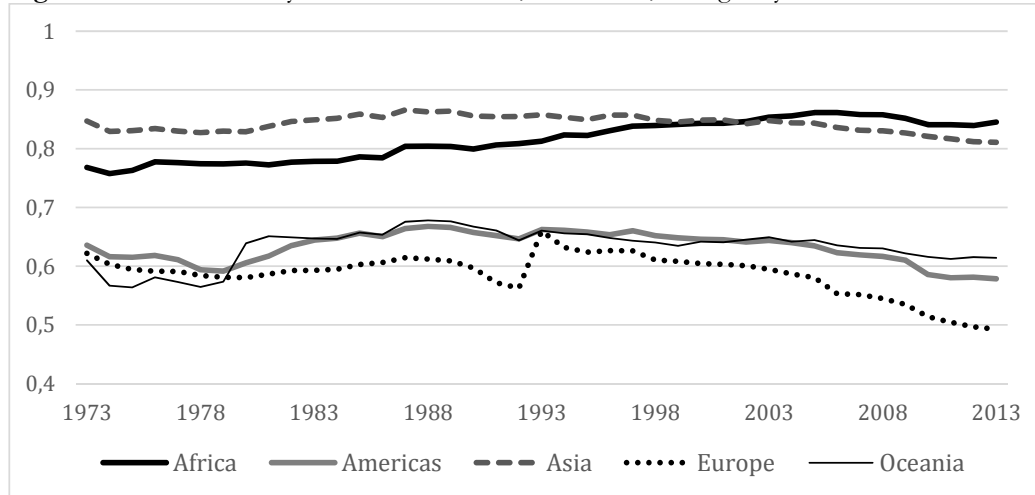
**Figure 13.** Inbound entry visa restrictiveness<sup>14</sup>, 1973–2013, averages by continent



Source: Czaika, de Haas, Villares-Varela 2017, based on DEMIG VISA data

<sup>14</sup> Percentage of foreign nationalities in the world requiring an entry visa in countries of each region (average for all countries in the region).

**Figure 14** Outbound entry visa restrictiveness<sup>15</sup>, 1973–2013, averages by continent



Source: Czaika, de Haas, Villares-Varela 2017, based on DEMIG VISA data

Regional bloc formation turns out to be a key dynamic in understanding contemporary global visa regimes. Our analyses of *visa reciprocity* show that 79 per cent of all country pairs have symmetrical visa rules and that levels of reciprocity have increased since the mid-1990s, which seems to mainly reflect the formation of regional free-travel blocs. Regional unions such as the EU, GCC, CARICOM, MERCOSUR, CIS, and ECOWAS have formed clusters of visa openness and external closure. Visa-free travel is predominantly realised within regional blocs, often coinciding with harmonisation of visa restrictions towards ‘third country’ nations, which also explains the slightly decreasing trend of global visa restrictiveness since the 2000s (Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2017). These findings challenge the idea of a growing North-South global mobility divide (Mau et al. 2015) and instead, suggest a more stable and complex image reflecting the multi-polar nature of international relations and regional bloc formation.

## 5. The effectiveness of migration policies

### *The unintended consequences of migration policies*

Based on available data and our insights into migration and migration policy trends, what can we say about the *effects* and *effectiveness* of migration policies? While a number of multi-country studies found significant effects of migration policy restrictiveness on the number of migrant arrivals (cf. Beine, Docquier and Özden 2011; Mayda 2010; Ortega and Peri 2013), the more relevant question is perhaps how policies affect the entire *process* of migration and the long-term patterns and functioning of migration systems. This requires the simultaneous study of the short- and long-term effect of migration policies on inflows and outflows. For instance, if we only focus on

<sup>15</sup> Percentage of nationals of each region requiring an entry visa in any other country in the world.

arrival, but ignore how restrictions affect return movements, we miss an important part of the analytical picture. Therefore, our analyses assessed how migration policies not only affect the gross *number* of arrivals but also how they may have unintended knock-on effects on the timing of migration, migration through other legal channels and geographical routes or return migration.

In our analyses, we identified four ‘substitution effects’ which can limit the effectiveness of immigration and emigration restrictions: a) *spatial substitution* through the diversion of migration via other routes or destinations; b) *categorical substitution* through a reorientation towards other legal or illegal channels; c) *inter-temporal substitution* affecting the timing of migration in the expectation or fear of future tightening of policies; and d) *reverse flow substitution* if immigration restrictions interrupt circulation by discouraging return and encouraging permanent settlement, making the effect of restrictions on *net* migration and the growth of migrant communities ambiguous (see de Haas 2011b).

#### **a) *Spatial substitution effects***

First, *spatial substitution effects* may occur either through the diversion or deflection of migration to countries with less restrictive regulations or through encouraging migrants to use other geographical itineraries without changing destination. Drawing on DEMIG C2C and DEMIG POLICY covering 38 destination and about 180 origin countries over the 1980 to 2010 period, we found robust evidence that migration restrictions significantly *deter* migration inflows in subsequent years but also *divert* some migration to other destination countries (Czaika and de Haas 2018). Yet, there is significant variation with regards to the size of such geographical diversion effects. Our analysis shows that ‘destination substitutability’ tends to be stronger when respective destination societies are more similar in terms of culture, language and opportunities, in which case ‘deterred migrants’ do not abstain from migration per se but rather consider alternative destinations (Czaika and de Haas 2018).

Such spatial substitution effects are confirmed by our case studies on the Maghreb (de Haas 2014b; Natter 2014b) and the Caribbean (Flahaux and Vezzoli 2017). In the Maghreb, and Morocco particularly, increasing immigration restrictions by France, Belgium and the Netherlands over the 1970s and 1980s contributed to a diversification of migration destinations, particularly to Spain and Italy and, to some extent, to the United States and Canada (Berriane, de Haas and Natter 2015). The evolution of trans-Mediterranean migration is also a compelling example of spatial substitution through the diversion and diversification of terrestrial and maritime migration itineraries. Until 1991, Moroccans, Algerians and Tunisians did not need a visa to enter several southern European countries such as Spain and Italy. The introduction of visa requirements by Spain and Italy in 1991 as part of EU integration and the establishment of the Schengen zone also kick-started unauthorized ‘boat migration’ by Moroccans, Algerians,

Tunisians and, since the 2000s, increasingly by sub-Saharan Africans. When Spanish coastguards started to patrol borders more intensively, this led to a diversification of (Saharan) terrestrial routes and maritime crossing points, an increasing reliance on smugglers, rising numbers of difficult-to-deport minors and pregnant women crossing (Barbulescu and Grugel 2016), and a huge – and unintended – increase in the area to patrol in a quest to control this migration (Brachet 2005; Bredeloup and Pliez 2005; Crawley et al. 2016; de Haas 2008).

In the Caribbean, countries whose borders with the former colonial state were ‘closed’ experienced a higher diversification of migration destinations than former colonies that retained free mobility with their former colonial state (Flahaux and Vezzoli 2017). Vezzoli’s (2015) study on the role of borders, independence and post-colonial ties in Caribbean migration provides detailed insights into how the specific timing and sequencing of border restrictions and independence can affect the spatial diversion of migration. While migration restrictions *after* independence encouraged the concentration of migration and the formation of migration-facilitating networks in the former colonial state (as in the case of Surinamese migration to the Netherlands) migration restrictions *before* independence enabled a diversion to alternative destinations. This was the case for migration from Guyana, which largely shifted from Britain to North America, facilitated by the fact that alternative destinations were also predominantly English-speaking. This explains why colonial ties not always lead to strong migration between former colonies and former colonial states.

### ***b) Categorical substitution effects***

*Categorical substitution effects* occur when entry through one particular migration channel becomes more difficult and migrants reorient toward other legal – or unauthorized – channels. Thus, the lack of legal immigration opportunities for low-skilled labour migrants has compelled people who primarily migrated for work to use family, asylum or student channels (Harris 2002; Massey 2004). This happened for instance when European countries cut off legal labour migration from former ‘guest-worker’ countries (Castles 2004; van Liempt and Doomernik 2006; Van Liempt 2007). After the suspension of ‘guest worker’ recruitment in 1973, Maghrebi migration to Northwest Europe saw an unexpected continuation largely due to a switch to family migration and irregular channels (de Haas 2014b; Natter 2014b). Additionally, while the 1976 US Immigration Act made immigration more difficult, migration from Guyana to the US continued through an increasing reliance on family reunification, marriage, and visa overstaying. In the case of Canada, Guyanese nationals also increasingly used the asylum channel (Vezzoli 2014a).

Restrictions can also divert migration into irregular channels. In a study of migration to 29 European states in the 2001-2011 period, Czaika and Hobolth (2014) found that while restrictive asylum policies reduce the number of persons claiming protection, a ten per cent increase in rejected asylum applications raises the number of (apprehended) irregular migrants by on average

about three per cent. Similarly, a ten per cent increase in short-stay visa rejections leads to a four to seven per cent increase in irregular border entries. So, while restrictive asylum and visa policies lead to a decrease in the number of asylum seekers arriving, this deterrence effect is partly counteracted by a considerable (and unintended) reorientation of asylum seekers into irregularity.

***c) Inter-temporal substitution effects***

Third, *inter-temporal substitution* or ‘now or never migration’ may occur if migration surges in the – realistic or imagined – expectation of a future tightening of migration regulations. For instance, when the Federal Republic of Germany tried to discourage family reunification in the late 1970s, family migration increased, since many migrants feared that, eventually, family reunification might be forbidden completely (Entzinger 1985). In a similar fashion, there was a surge in Caribbean (‘West Indian’) ‘beat the ban’ migration to the UK before 1962, when restrictions were introduced with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (Peach 1968). The long-term effect of restrictions can – under certain circumstances – become counterproductive when it is outperformed by the pre-measure surge in inflows. For instance, the Netherlands’ government pushed for Surinamese independence in 1975 primarily because it was seen as a way to prevent migration. However, this prompted about 40 per cent of the Surinamese population to emigrate to the Netherlands before visas were introduced in 1980 (Vezzoli 2015).

Not only impending migration restrictions, but also migration liberalizations can generate temporary migration surges. Within the EU, the removal of migration restrictions after the fall of Berlin Wall and as a consequence of the EU enlargement led to migration surges from countries such as Poland and the Baltic republics. However, these surges were temporary, as migration subsided and consolidated on lower levels after a few years (de Haas, Vezzoli and Villares-Varela 2018). The EU enlargement experiences suggest that increases tend to be temporary, particularly when potential migrants gain trust that borders will remain open, preventing ‘now or never’ reactions. Nonetheless, these very surges can make immigration liberalisations self-defeating if they increase pressure on politicians to ‘close the border’. In Ecuador for instance, the implementation of universal visa freedom in 20 June 2008 was partially reversed on 1 December 2008 and 3 September 2010 in reaction to the 28-30 per cent on average increase of immigration from newly visa-exempted countries, particularly from China, leading to public discontent (Acosta Arcarazo and Freier 2015; Freier 2013).

Inter-temporal substitution effects are confirmed by our multivariate analyses of the effect of lifting and introducing visa restrictions (Czaika and Haas 2016). Mirroring the experience with EU enlargement, migration flows respond almost immediately to the removal of travel visas and even ‘overshoot’ temporarily for a few years before stabilising at lower levels. Interestingly, such temporal substitution effects do not systematically occur in anticipation of the *introduction* of visas, which may well be explained by the fact that visa introductions are generally not

announced well in advance, unlike changes in immigration law, which are often subject to parliamentary discussions, and thus more likely to gain media exposure before being enacted, herewith giving (prospective) migrants more time to anticipate future legal changes.

**d) Reverse flow substitution effects**

*Reverse flow substitution effects* occur when immigration restrictions discourage return migration, push migrants into permanent settlement and therefore interrupt circulation. Several earlier studies have argued that restrictive immigration policies discourage return migration, such as in the case of Turkish and Moroccan ‘guest worker’ migration to North-West Europe, where many temporary workers eventually settled after the post-1973 recruitment ban (De Mas 1990; Entzinger 1985), as well as for Mexican migration to the United States (Massey, Durand and Pren 2016).

Reverse flow substitution effects were also confirmed by our quantitative analyses of the introduction and removal of travel visa requirements (Czaika and Haas 2016). Drawing on DEMIG C2C and DEMIG VISA covering 38 reporting countries and 190 origin countries over the 1970-2010 period, our results yielded robust evidence that, on average, the immigration-reducing effect of visa restrictions was largely or entirely counterbalanced by their emigration (return) reducing effect. Visa requirements significantly decrease inflows (67 per cent on average), but also outflows (88 per cent on average) of the same migrant groups, yielding a circulation-interrupting effect of 75 per cent on average (Czaika and Haas 2016).<sup>16</sup> We also found that the circulation-interrupting effects of immigration restrictions severely reduce the natural responsiveness of (unconstrained) migration to economic fluctuations and job opportunities in destination countries (Czaika and Haas 2016). Visa-free migration strongly correlates with business cycles in destination societies, with immigration surging during high economic growth and entries decreasing and returns increasing during economic downturns. By contrast, migration is much less responsive to economic cycles in visa-constrained migration corridors.

Our study also found that the effects of lifting and introducing migration restrictions tend to be *asymmetrical*, while liberalizing measures often have immediate effects, the effects of restrictions may be smaller and tend to take more time to materialize (Czaika and Haas 2016). So, migration policy change in a liberal direction does not have the reverse (‘mirror’) effects of a policy change in the opposite, more restrictive, direction. The strong migration-facilitating function of migrant networks (for recent quantitative evidence, see Beine, Docquier and Özden 2011) are a likely explanation for these lagged effects. Once a certain number of migrants have settled at the destination, migration processes tend to gain their own momentum over time, and can therefore, to a lesser extent, continue irrespective of their initial causes (de Haas 2010b; Massey 1990). This

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<sup>16</sup> These are average effects. The specific inflow-outflow trade-off is likely to vary according to contextual factors such as the strength of migrant networks, the ease of acquiring visas, and other migration policies.

exemplifies that restrictions tend to become less effective, and substitution effects are more likely to occur with an increase in the number of migrants that have already settled at the destination.

Reverse flow substitution effects were also confirmed by analyses combining DEMIG data with the *Migration between Africa and Europe* (MAFE) surveys conducted in Senegal. This study showed that Senegalese migrants in France, Italy and Spain became less likely to return with the increasing tightening of entry restrictions, while policies regulating the integration and return of migrants do not have an effect on returns. This suggests that the decision to return depends on the prospect of re-migrating again after return (Flahaux, 2016).

In the same vein, a DEMIG-related qualitative study based on 40 interviews with Indian researchers based worldwide showed that policy restrictions tend to reduce international mobility also among the highly skilled (Toma et al. 2018). Foreign researchers and academics with aspirations to move elsewhere, or to return to their countries of origin delay their subsequent moves and stay put in their countries of destination until they obtain permanent residency or citizenship rights as a means of ‘insurance’ for further mobility. This exemplifies the importance of policies in affecting the ‘retention’ and ‘redirection’ of migration. The acquisition of destination country citizenship sets migrants free to either return or move on without fear of losing their right to re-migrate. This suggests that extending rights to immigrants can thus paradoxically increase circulation on the longer term.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper reviewed trends and drivers of international migration over the post-WWII period, as well as the effect of migration policies on the volume, direction, timing, and selection of migration processes. The main insights from this analysis can be summarized as follows:

- Questioning popular images of rapidly increasing migration, *international migration has remained remarkably stable at levels of around 3 per cent of the world population*. Rather than a global acceleration of migration, evidence shows that main migratory shifts have been directional, particularly through the emergence of Europe and the Gulf as new global migration destinations. With the transformation of (Western) Europe as the predominant origin of colonizers and migrants into a major destination, an increasing share of the global inter-continental migrant population has become of Asian, Latin American and, to some extent, African origin. The idea that international migration has accelerated and has become more diverse therefore primarily reflects a Euro- or Western-centric worldview.



- *Migration needs to be seen as an intrinsic part of broader processes of development and state formation in origin and destination societies.* ‘Push-pull’ models and conventional neoclassical migration theories are unable to explain real-world migration patterns and can be misleading, particularly because of their inability to explain development-driven emigration hikes. Confirming ‘transition theories’ (Zelinsky 1971, Skeldon 1997), the relation between development and levels of migration is complex and fundamentally non-linear. From an origin country perspective, economic and human development in low-income societies tends to initially *increase* internal as well as international migration, essentially because it increases people’s capabilities and aspirations to migrate as well as the migration-facilitating function of improvements in transport, travel and communication infrastructure. At the same time, the increasingly structural complexity and segmentation of labour markets (Piore 1979) and concomitant increases in educational levels and occupational specialization encourage people to migrate for reasons of work, education and, consequently, family.
- *International inequality is neither a sufficient nor necessary condition for migration to occur,* and migration can therefore not be reduced to a function of wage and other international opportunity differentials. Most migration occurs between middle-income and high-income societies, with most migrants from low-income countries belonging to middle-income groups, and with the poorest and most vulnerable populations often lacking the resources to cross borders. This defies common perceptions in public debates and even some academic circles (cf. Collier 2013) which largely reduce the essence of global mobility to a movement from poor countries in the ‘South’ to wealthy countries in the ‘North’, ignoring much more complex migration realities. Absolute poverty is associated with *lower* emigration levels, which is consistent with the idea that resource constraints tend to deprive people from the capability to emigrate. In line with the ‘new economics of labour migration’ (Stark 1991) *relative poverty* within origin communities is a more relevant migration determinant than inequalities on the national or international level, which have weaker and rather ambiguous effects on migration.
- *‘Non-migration policies’ have profound effects on migration as they shape fundamental migration determinants* such as labour market structures, income levels, infrastructure, education and social security. Policies with regards to issues such as labour markets, education, health care, welfare and social security pursued by origin and destination states do not explicitly target migration. Nevertheless, they can have important and complex effects on migration by endowing people with resources that increase their capabilities to migrate, yet potentially decrease their aspirations to migrate. This points to the relevance of institutional-structural factors (beyond migration policies and income levels) in affecting

migration through their indirect effect on livelihood security, relative poverty, access to resources and people's life aspirations. Evidence for possible ('reverse') welfare magnet effects also suggest that public policies that do not directly target migration may have strong indirect effects on migration. Redistributive provision of public goods and services such as school vouchers, health benefits and unemployment benefits can decrease relative poverty as well as the aspiration to migrate. On the other hand, direct social policy interventions such as cash transfers to poor families could increase migration if their migration-capabilities increasing effect exceeds their migration-aspirations decreasing, risk- and relative deprivation-reducing effect. Additionally, while the establishment of schools in rural communities can reduce migration in the short-term, it can increase it in the long-term because of the migration-aspirations increasing effects of education.

- *Although 'tough' political rhetoric may suggest otherwise, immigration policies have generally seen a liberalising trend.* Rather than growing restrictiveness, the evolution of migration policy regimes is characterised by an increasing complexity through the development of more and more sophisticated sets of policy instruments targeting particular immigrant groups. The period from the 1950s to the 1980s was characterised by an accelerated liberalisation of entry and post-entry rights, whilst since 1990 the proportion of more restrictive policy changes has increased. However, our analysis clearly shows that liberal policy changes have continued to outnumber restrictive changes. We should therefore speak of a deceleration of liberalisation rather than a reversal towards more restrictive policies. On the one hand, this seems to confirm the theoretical argument that immigration policies of Western liberal democracies have a built-in tendency to become more liberal through a combination of 'client politics' and employers' lobbies (Freeman 1995), 'embedded constraints' in the form of constitutional norms and principles protecting the human rights of migrants (Hollifield 1992a) and the concomitant role of courts in overturning attempts by elected leaders to restrict immigration and travel of foreigners (cf. Joppke 2001). On the other hand, also various non-democratic regimes have seen a liberalisation of immigration policies. This suggests that liberal immigration systems are rather a feature of *liberal economic systems* rather than that they are a characteristic of democratic governance per se.
- *Modern migration policies are about selection rather than numbers.* The analysis highlighted the limitations of conceiving and measuring migration policies in terms of 'overall restrictiveness', which conceals the underlying structural changes that migration policies have undergone and the fact that migration policies tend to target specific migrant categories. Migration policies are typically 'mixed bags' of measures, containing multiple laws, regulations and decrees that target various national, skill, and income groups in

quite different and often contradictory ways. Rather than limiting the numbers of migrants coming in, the real aim of most migration policies is to increase the ability of states to control *who* is allowed to immigrate. New layers of selection, based on criteria such as skill, wealth or family background of migrants, has been superimposed on national or ‘racial’ origin criteria that dominated earlier policy making in the Americas (cf. FitzGerald and Cook-Martín 2014) and elsewhere. Migration regimes thus work as filters rather than taps.

- While rules around legal entry, stay and exit of most migrant categories have generally been relaxed, a combination of visa and border control policies (such as carrier sanctions, detention and deportation) have served to prevent the entry of asylum seekers and other ‘unwanted migrants’, such as prospective unauthorized workers. Visa policies play an important role in states’ attempts to prevent people from certain countries of origin from entering the national territory and have access to basic (human and migrant) rights upon arrival. Our analysis showed that visa regimes have been restrictive and rather stable over time (again defying the idea of growing restrictiveness), and that free mobility is primarily realised within regional blocks. This challenges the idea of a growing global mobility divide (Mau et al. 2015) between ‘North’ and ‘South’, and exemplifies the multi-polar and multi-layered nature of international relations.
- *Although media images and political discourses often suggest otherwise, borders are not beyond control and migration policies have not generally failed.* The large majority of migrants abide by the law and migrate through legal channels, in the possession of visas and other necessary paperwork. The fact that immigration to many countries has continued or increased over the past decades partly reflects a *de facto* liberalisation of immigration policies. In fact, the increasingly sophisticated and complex instruments of migration regimes seem to generally achieve their objectives, that is, to influence the selection (rather than volumes) of migrants. They increasingly follow an economically utilitarian and class-based logic and narrative in determining which migrants are given preferential access to legal opportunities for migration and settlement - and which not.
- *Although migration policies are generally effective, their capacity to ‘steer’ migration is limited, and under certain circumstances they can have unintended and sometimes counterproductive effects.* These ‘substitution effects’ can undermine the effectiveness of migration controls by (1) diverting migration through other geographical routes and destinations (spatial substitution), (2) other legal and unauthorized channels (categorical substitution), (3) “now or never” migration surges in anticipation of restrictions (intertemporal substitution) and (4) by discouraging return and interrupting circulation (reverse flow

substitution). Such substitution effects tend to be particularly strong if there is a discrepancy between migration policies and more fundamental migration determinants such as destination country labour demand and development, or conflict in origin countries.

- *These substitution effects expose the difficulties of reconciling various migration policy objectives, such as the wish to limit immigration on the one hand, and to encourage return and circulation on the other. Immigration restrictions simultaneously reduce immigration and return, which renders the effect on net migration and the growth of migrant communities theoretically ambiguous. This tends to be particularly the case where significant migrant communities have already been established at the destination, in which migrant networks tend to facilitate the various substitution effects. Besides bringing down overall levels of circulation, the circulation-interrupting effects of immigration restrictions also severely reduce the much-desired responsiveness of (unconstrained) migration to economic fluctuations and job opportunities in destination countries.*

This evidence does not necessarily mean that governments cannot or should not control migration. Rather, it shows that liberal immigration policies do not necessarily lead to mass migration and that ill-conceived migration restrictions can be counterproductive. Free migration is often strongly circulatory, as we see with migration within the EU. The more restrictive entry policies are, the more migrants want to stay.

Last but not least, the evidence in this paper shows the importance of looking beyond *migration policies*. A fundamental mismatch between structural migration determinants – such as low-skilled labour demand in the absence of legal migration channels, or violence and conflict in the absence of asylum channels – is likely to translate into increasing unauthorized border crossings and concomitant smuggling, as well as an increasing incidence of migrants ‘overstaying’ the duration of their visas. Shifting trends and patterns of migration are not uniquely, or not even mainly, the result of migration policies. We therefore have to examine the general role of government policies in explaining international migration. Future research should therefore aim to establish more comprehensive assessments of the ways in which economic regimes, labour markets policies, inequality, education and social security affect trends and patterns of immigration and emigration. If we achieve a better understanding of the ways in which processes of development and social transformation in destination and origin countries affect long-term migration patterns more generally, we are also in a better position to assess the specific role and effectiveness of *migration policies* adopted by origin and destination states.

Given the importance of structural migration determinants such as economic development, labour market structure, education, social stratification, income inequalities, relative poverty,

welfare and social security in shaping long-term migration processes, it is important to assess the extent to which migration policies can shape the volume, composition, timing or geographical direction of migration *independently* and *in interaction with* other migration determinants. In fact, perceived or real migration policy ‘failure’ is generally explained by an inability or unwillingness to take into account the complex and often counterintuitive ways in which structural social, economic and political factors affect migration in mostly indirect, but powerful ways, which largely lie beyond the reach of migration policies.

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## Annex 1. DEMIG databases

The DEMIG C2C ('country-to-country') dataset covers bilateral migration flow data for 34 reporting countries<sup>17</sup> over the 1946-2011 period. Data were collected from original national sources, cover flows by country of residence (COR), citizenship (COC) and/or birth (COB) and comprise about 50,000 country-to-country year dyads and over 2.5 million<sup>18</sup> data points. In addition, the DEMIG TOTAL dataset reports total immigration, total emigration and total net migration for up to 163 countries ranging from several decades to over one century, covering 15,792 data points. These databases provide unprecedented detail of flow data in terms of historical depth, the inclusion of several countries outside Europe and North America and gender breakdown (for more details on DEMIG TOTAL and DEMIG C2C, see De Haas, Vezzoli and Villares-Varela 2014).

In order to operationalize and measure policies, we also developed two policy databases. DEMIG POLICY captures over 6,500 changes in migration policies of 45 countries<sup>19</sup> between 1946 and 2013. Besides extending the geographical and historical coverage of other migration policy databases (among others: Beine et al. 2016; Bjerre et al. 2015; Ellerman 2013; Mayda and Patel 2004; Ruhs 2011), DEMIG POLICY attempted to overcome the 'receiving country bias' by also including emigration policies. It is based on an elaborate coding system that distinguishes between entry, post-entry (integration), exit and border control policies, categorises specific policy tools and target groups, and measures changes in policy restrictiveness weighted by their relative importance (for more details on DEMIG POLICY, see de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2015). DEMIG VISA tracks annual bilateral (country-by-country) entry visa and exit permit requirements for 214\*237 countries over four decades (1973-2014), covering 1,135,680 data points in total. Information on visa requirements was drawn from the IATA Travel Information Manuals and was entered manually (for more details on DEMIG VISA, see Czaika, de Haas and Villares-Varela 2017).

For more information on the DEMIG databases, and for access to the data itself see <https://www.imi-n.org/data>

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<sup>17</sup> Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA and Uruguay.

<sup>18</sup> The exact number of data points is 2,503,584.

<sup>19</sup> Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and Yugoslavia.

## Annex 2. List of DEMIG and DEMIG-related publications (until 2017)

### Peer-reviews journal Articles (20)

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