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Non-Migration Policies and Mobility Decisions

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Abstract

This paper explores theoretical and empirical research examining the ways in which different policy arenas affect people's decisions to migrate. We propose an analytical framework to assess various qualities of non-migration policies in a systematic way. We then focus on four diverse policy areas: agricultural policy, transport policy, education policy and social welfare policy, and analyse evidence for their direct impact on migration decisions or their indirect effects as they shape the decision-making context. These policy areas are chosen as examples of different types of policies in terms of their source of impact, level, locus and logic of impact, and – effectively - mechanisms through which they shape decision-making of migrants. Our review is not comprehensive, it rather sets ground for further systematic theoretical and empirical thinking about the role of non-migration policies in migration decision-making.

Keywords: migration, policy, mobility, decision-making, agriculture, transport, education, social welfare

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Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Non-migration policy and migration: an analytical framework	6
2.1	Field	7
2.2	Source	7
2.3	Nature of impact	8
2.4	Locus of impact	8
2.5	Logic of impact	8
3	Building conceptual bridges between non-migration policy and migration decisions	9
4	Empirical examples: a non-migration policy and migration decisions	10
4.1	Agricultural policy	10
4.2	Transport policy	12
4.3	Education policy	13
4.4	Social welfare policy	15
5	Concluding remarks	17
6	References	19

1 Introduction

Since the turn of the century, social, political and economic concern about the scale and impacts of international migration has grown across the world, especially in Europe and North America, where migration – in particular, migration from poorer regions of the world – has risen to the top of the political agenda. This has stimulated huge interest in finding the most appropriate and effective policy responses to regulate and control immigration. European states have invested huge amounts of money, time and political capital in policies to manage migration including changing visa regimes and monitoring compliance, strengthening border controls, and operations to counter smuggling and trafficking.

Alongside the plethora of policy initiatives, there has also been a growing body of academic research that critically examines their impacts and effectiveness. Some conclude that attempts to control migration are often ineffective in the face of structural drivers that perpetuate its growth. Others contend that increasingly sophisticated policies are making it ever more difficult for people from poor regions of the world to reach wealthy countries. Others note the profound but often unintended consequences of migration policies (see De Haas et al., 2018; De Haas et al., 2019; Crawley and Hagen-Zanker 2019; Robinson 2020; Czaika et al. 2023). Among these studies on migration policies, there is a widespread acknowledgment of the critical role of other areas of policy that shape the wider social, political and economic context in which migration takes place, in particular the systemic inequality within and between nations. Diverse policies in areas ranging from trade to human rights, may drastically change the incentives and costs of potential migration. However, while the importance of these non-migration policies may be noted, there is no systematic way of assessing how these different policy areas actually affect people's migration decision and the patterns of mobility across the world. This paper aims to fill this gap by proposing a framework for comparative analysis of the impact of non-migration policies on migration.

In this paper, we explore how policies which are not focused on migration issues can influence people's decisions about mobility, their behaviour and the outcomes of migration. In some instances, the relationship between non-migration policy and migration has been well documented. Looking from the perspective of origin countries, for instance, European fishery policy has resulted in overfishing and collapse of many small-scale West African fisheries. This has devastated the livelihoods of many West African fisher folk. Providing transport for irregular migrants to cross towards the Canary Islands or elsewhere offers a profitable alternative use for their skills and capital (their boats). This helped stimulate the increase in irregular sea departures from West Africa (Belhabib, Sumaila and Le Billon, 2019: 87). Similar arguments can be made about agricultural policies that subsidise EU farmers and thereby drive down the global price of agricultural production which harms producers in developing countries. As farmers are impoverished, some feel they have little choice but to move off the land in search of a better life elsewhere (Matthews 2015).

It is also necessary to consider policy that changes the situation in a potential country of destination, perhaps easing people's access to the labour market, changing welfare regimes, opening or closing routes into education and so forth. Any such policies may both shift the calculus for those considering migration, making it more feasible, or shutting off options. Social welfare policies in destination countries are perhaps the most controversial and best documented example of such policies. Welfare policies are believed not only to shape migrant choices about preferred destinations, but also indirectly influence the benefits migrants are likely to accrue having successfully moved, which raises the incentives to migrate (Borjas, 1999, Giulietti, 2014, Barrett and Maître, 2013, Nannestad, 2007). This welfare magnet hypothesis, which implies a direct relationship between decision to migrate and access

to welfare benefits, has been tested mainly in the wealthy Western European democracies, as they have comparatively more developed and generous welfare systems (Brochmann and Dølvik, 2018, Brücker et al. 2002, Geddes, 2003). Increasingly researchers have also looked at countries of origin, where welfare policies can play an important role in changing the macro-level environment in which people make their migration decisions, as well as people's individual motivations, aspirations and capabilities to migrate (Kureková, 2013, Adepoju, 2008).

While arguments such as the welfare magnet hypothesis may have an intuitive appeal, the interactions between any policy and migration decisions are extremely complex and the chains of causal attribution so long that it is impossible to sustain any such general claims (for example, see Matthews 2015). Thinking about these examples starts to reveal the rather complex array of linkages that we could be discussing here. On the one hand, we can think of a policy that destroys people's livelihoods, increasing the incentives to move. This is concerned with policy affecting the conditions in which people live. When it comes to fishing policy, because fishing boats also represent a form of transport, the policy is changing the market price of a form of travel – albeit an extremely dangerous one.

Analysing the interactions between different areas of policy can be extremely complex. For example, social welfare policies are closely related to labour market structures. In more liberal welfare states, labour markets tend to be also more segmented and open to migrants, which makes it difficult to disentangle the effect of welfare policy on the decisions of migrants from that of labour market regulation. Moreover, a body of research points to strong complementarities between minimalist welfare provisions, open migrant admission policies, and underdeveloped integration policies, demonstrating the interrelated nature of different national level migration and non-migration policies (Bommes and Geddes, 200, Menz, 2010, Ruhs, 2011).

In spite of these intricacies, there seems to be a consensus across different strands of migration literature, that non-migration policies matter and may play an important role in migration, even if not intentionally designed to do that (de Haas et al., 2019). Perhaps we could suggest that while the account of the role and effectiveness of migration policies in shaping migration decisions and migration outcomes has been mixed (Crawley and Hagen-Zanker, 2019, Czaika and de Haas, 2013), the actual impact of some non-migration policies can be established quite clearly, either in terms of shaping the context in which migrants make decisions or by directly changing incentives to migrate or to stay.

There is a growing literature on that seeks to explain how a wide array of policies adopted by states shape migration processes and how they interact with other migration determinants in sending and receiving countries (De Haas and Vezzoli, 2011; Vezzoli, 2014, Kureková, 2013). While this literature maps out some of the important areas of policy that that can play a major role in explaining migration outcomes, we are still missing a systematic and structured way of assessing the plethora of non-migration policies, their relative impact, and the exact line of causality or the mechanisms of their effect.

This paper reviews some of the theoretical and empirical research that examines the ways in which different non-migration policy arenas affect people's decisions to migrate. Our endeavour to understand the role of non-migration policies in the decision-making of migrants could rapidly become a very complex picture, including policy on everything and involving all sorts of connections. Therefore, in the first part of this paper, we will develop an analytical framework to put bounds on our interest, identify the sort of non-migration policy that we should consider and provide for a more structured assessment of the selected policies. The conceptual part of the paper also includes a discussion of how we establish a link between non-migration policy and migration decisions. In the second half of the paper, we will look more closely at the existing literature around some of the connections between selected non-migration policies and mobility, looking at agricultural policy, transport policy, education

(policy) and social welfare policies. Our work should not be seen as a comprehensive endeavour, but more as an impetus to expand recent theoretical accounts about migrant decision-making specifically to the realm of (selected) non-migration policies.

2 Non-migration policy and migration: an analytical framework

We begin by defining what we mean by a non-migration policy. This becomes a particularly pertinent issue, when we see how wealthy states have funded development interventions with a view to delivering migration outcomes. For example, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa has made large investments in technical and vocational education and training with a view to reducing the incentives for young people to migrate through irregular routes (see Bakewell and Sturridge 2019). Here we can see a non-migration policy being put to the service of a broader migration agenda. Does this transform policy on youth employment into migration policy? For the purposes of this paper, we say no. We will take a non-migration policy to be concerned with areas that are not directly related to migration and mobility, even if the policy is being driven by concerns about migration and mobility. This will no doubt leave us with grey areas, which will need further reflection.

It is also important to clarify what we mean by a policy for the purpose of this paper. In very general terms, policy can be understood as a way of formalising or standardising responses to particular issues or problems. This entails a process of persuading others to subscribe to both the definition of the problem and the proposed solutions. In practice,

[p]olicies do not normally tell you what to do; they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed. A response must still be put together, constructed in context, off-set against other expectations (Ball, 1993: 12).

Given our focus on the impacts of policy rather than process of its formation, it is perhaps more pertinent to see it as a standard set of actions adopted by a body in response to a proposed solution to a given issue. We define policies as a set of laws, regulations, procedures, or administrative actions of governments and other public institutions, adapted at the national or supra-national level. Given the focus of PACES at the decision-making along the whole migration journey, we consider policies both in origin and in destination countries in the first instance.

To be relevant for our discussion, any policy has to have been implemented in some visible way. It is not just about policy declarations but seeing things changing on the ground – perhaps in terms of new practices, new institutions or changed resource allocations. Only then may we plausibly expect to see any impact on migration decisions. This means we are not concerned with international agreements until we see these declarations of intent actually being put into action. This is seen most clearly when we see that a policy is associated with resources for its implementation.

As noted in the introduction, there are many different ways in which non-migration policy may affect migration outcomes. We suggest five different qualities of a non-migration policy that may help make sense of many possible configurations and areas of their potential impact. At least it may give us a way of comparing the different policies, helping to ensure we are comparing like with like as far as possible. Going further, it may even help us map out how particular configurations of these qualities give rise to particular outcomes.

Importantly, our analytical approach is guided by the overall conceptual framework of the PACES project, namely the temporal multilevel analysis (TMA), which links a social transformations framework (macro-level) with a life-course perspective (micro-level) to understand how changes across

social dimensions and their specific interactions shape people’s livelihoods and may lead some segments of society to aspire to migrate and others to stay (Vezzoli, Kureková and Schewel, 2024). PACES research is focused on African migrations to the European Union, along the whole migration journey, that is including transit migration within the EU.

With this in mind, we need consider policies in different fields (economic, social, technological), considering which actors are driving the policy (such as the country of origin or the EU), which part of the process they affect (from initial decision-making to life after migration), where they make a difference along the migration journey (origin, transit or destination), and how far they have a direct or indirect impact at micro or macro level. We capture these in five qualities, which we refer to as field, source, nature of impact, locus of impact and logic of impact. These are summarised with some examples in Table 1 below and they are then elaborated in the subsequent text.

Table 1. Analytical dimensions of non-migration policies

Field/Area	Source	Nature of impact	Locus of impact	Logic of impact
Transport	EU	Aspirations to migrate	Areas of origin	Levels: macro or micro level
Agriculture	Individual destination states	Ability to migrate	Destination areas	Type: intended or unintended
Fisheries	Origin countries	Life after migration	Transnational	
Education	RECs/Regional trading blocs			
Security				
Social welfare				
Labour policy				
Trade policy				

Source: authors

2.1 Field

There are potentially lots of blurred boundaries here as policy areas overlap. It is not the aim of this paper to attempt to delineate policy fields and were we to try, we would find this a fruitless task as any field of policy would almost inevitably intersect with others. For our purposes, the idea of the field is simply as a way to identify plausible avenues through which policies may have an impact on migration. For this paper, we take this as the primary quality to organise our exploration of the policies. We will limit ourselves to just four fields: agriculture, transport, education and social welfare. These are selected because they have quite plausible links to migration, they have received considerable attention in the literature and they are also quite diverse in their qualities.

2.2 Source

Here we are thinking about the actors or stakeholders who are driving both the creation of a policy, its direction, funding, implementation and enforcement. Where a policy is captured in a discrete policy text, this may appear relatively straightforward as we can see who is responsible for publishing it and there may be documentation recording its evolution. This may at least reveal who is claiming to be the owner of the policy and who is responsible for its implementation. Perhaps we also need to ask who is paying, especially when we are concerned with policy in countries receiving official development assistance (ODA).

When it comes to migration policy across Africa, there is a growing debate about how far it is a product of European concerns about migration, especially migration from Africa, or is it now owned by African states that have adopted global policy norms (Adam *et al.*, 2020). The same is true of many policy fields; any clear lines about the source can easily become blurred. For example, the EU may demand particular standards for agricultural production – perhaps relating to the environment, food hygiene, or workers’ rights – if goods are to be sold in the European market. The EU may then provide aid to enhance the capacity of poorer nations to meet those standards, which duly become established in domestic policy, with the technical support of experts trained in Europe. The source of this policy will be both in Europe, which has created the standard, and the developing country that has a strong interest in meeting it.

2.3 Nature of impact

When a policy leads to changes in people’s incomes, their freedoms, the opportunities for the future, it may have a marked impact on how they feel about staying in place or moving. Here, we are thinking about things that may affect people’s aspirations to migrate – where they see their future.

Some other policies, such as changes in transport infrastructure, the opening of new air routes, new technologies that make travel easier and cheaper may change people’s ability to move, should they have the aspiration. Of course, aspirations and ability are related but they are not the same. It seems less likely that you will have your aspiration to go somewhere determined by a reduced air fare – but if you have the aspiration, a reduced air fare will make it more likely you will actually go.

When it comes to life after migration, we are concerned with things that may change people’s experience as migrants. This could be minimum wage legislation, tightening up on health and safety, social welfare, education policy, money transfer policies (in origin or destination). Here we have in mind policies that are not really considered as people think about or plan their movement, but they may have marked impact on migrants. In due course, these changes may become part of the calculus for people’s movement so the impact affects aspiration. For instance, as news filters back to origin countries about the very high costs of healthcare in a destination country along with the very bad experiences of people suffering for lack of treatment, those who may have hoped to move to that destination may look elsewhere.

2.4 Locus of impact

This is simply trying to specify where the direct impact is felt. Very often it may match the source of the policy but not always. For example, the EU Common Agricultural Policy will affect global farm prices so have an impact that reaches far beyond Europe. By contrast, we would expect the direct impact of a minimum wage policy to be seen in the country where it is implemented.

2.5 Logic of impact

Non-migration policies might impact migration at different levels of analysis, while having intended or unintended effects on migration decision-making and migration outcomes. For example, development policies of Western European countries might provide credit to local farmers with the hope of improving their livelihood chances in origin countries, attempting to encourage more sedentary lifestyles (Haggen-Zanker and Mallet, 2013). Such a policy is intentionally designed with the idea of reducing migration from Africa to Europe by improving living conditions and opportunities at the local level. An example of an unintentional impact is seen in social welfare policies in destination countries, which are designed with the aim to mitigate labour market and social risks of citizens. These policies, which are not originally designed to manage migration, might indirectly impact opportunities and motivations of migrants attracted to these countries.

3 Building conceptual bridges between non-migration policy and migration decisions

Non-migration policies have been linked to migration decision-making quite explicitly in recent studies about the factors driving migration, often also termed as "determinants" or "root causes". In the recent past, various researchers have proposed detailed and synthetic evaluations of migration drivers (Aslany et al. 2021, Czaika and Reinprecht, 2022, Van Hear et al. 2018, Pitoski et al., 2021). While they employ different methodologies, these studies agree that drivers interact and combine, and cannot be strictly separated from each other. Moreover, drivers are not to be understood in a deterministic manner, but rather as "making certain decisions, routes or destinations more likely and bringing them within the orbit of people's capabilities." (Van Hear et al. 2018, p. 928). Non-migration policies are either directly or less directly – in the form of reference to origin or destination country "factors" - often included among the considered drivers. For example, Czaika and Reiprecht (2020) view education services and training opportunities as human development drivers, while Aslany et al. (2021) refer to satisfaction with public services as part of country and community-level development drivers.

A distinct body of literature that engages with non-migration policies (or migration-related policies, cf. Kuschminder and Koser, 2017) is the research looking at the link between migration and development. By now there is a consensus in migration studies that development processes which expand local opportunities in the origin countries might have ambiguous effects on migration aspirations (Bakewell, 2013, de Haas, 2010, 2012, Skeldon 2014, Castles, 2009, Hagen-Zanker et al., 2023). On the one hand, development decreases aspirations by providing wider opportunities and prospect of better life at home; on the other hand, the concomitant modernization empowers individuals to seek new ways of life abroad. De Haas et al. (2019) identified that wider public policies in areas such as education or public health but also social welfare tools including unemployment benefits decrease relative deprivation and mitigate risks, and thus lead to lower migration aspirations. On the other hand, income received through social transfers can for some people provide capital needed to migrate, and might mobilize migration (ibid). Another macro-level account of how social transformation and development change migration aspirations and mobility patterns is proposed by Vezzoli (2020) in her study of an agricultural town of Cisterino in Italy. This shows that state-driven sectors and safety net provisions resulted in a significant shift in mobility patterns – from long-distance migration to commuting within a region – and also incentivized return migration.

Finally, within PACES, migration decision-making is embedded within a temporal multilevel analysis (TMA) framework. This is a dynamic framework that considers migration factors at multiple levels (macro and micro-levels) and studies them over a longer time perspective (Vezzoli, Kureková and Schewel, 2024). The macro-level approach in PACES is informed by the social transformation framework (de Haas et al. 2020), which identifies the political, economic, technological, cultural, and environmental areas as key foci of major societal transformations, in which incremental or more abrupt changes effectively alter the fundamental principles of communities' or countries' organization. The micro-level perspective builds on life-course elements, envisaging a non-linear role of non-migration policies along the life-cycle, and vis-à-vis individuals with different characteristics (see also Czaika and Reinprecht, 2022; de Jong and de Valk, 2020). In PACES, the critical life-course junctures include events such as: finishing studies; job entry and exit; finding a partner, marriage or divorce; child birth; caring for parents; deaths, etc. Thus, for example, education policies are more important from the perspective of young people, while labour market policy might impact people over a longer time span,

and at different points of life-course transitions. The PACES framework thus opens many avenues for considering non-migration policies at different levels, and across policy fields.

Our approach to reviewing non-migration policies in this paper builds on the above bodies of literature by having a comprehensive perspective on migration as a phenomenon that is embedded in broader social processes, and on migrants as individuals who make informed decisions taking into account many factors at different levels that are life-course and time-specific. We expand this literature by selecting a specific group of non-migration policies – which have been already been considered within “drivers” and “migration-development” debates – and review their features to allow for their more structured understanding, using the analytical framework described above.

Furthermore, non-migration policies seem to be particularly relevant when thinking about immobility, and many are designed or sustained – directly or indirectly – in relation to decreasing motivations of (African) migrants to leave their origin countries (Schewel, 2020). The fact that non-migration policies are often linked to migration decision-making by their explicit link to *mitigating or decreasing* migration (aspirations) sets the non-migration policies conceptual discussion apart from the accounts of migration policies that obviously directly target the aspect of moving/mobility, rather than staying. It thus seems that non-migration policies could be particularly informative about the factors that retain, repel, and constrain migration processes.

4 Empirical examples: a non-migration policy and migration decisions

In this section, we outline some of the ways that different policy fields may affect people’s mobility decisions and practices. For the purposes of this paper, we applied two main criteria for the selection of policy areas. First, the selected policy areas have gained considerable attention in the literature, and we can directly draw from these empirical studies. Second, we focus on those non-migration policies which may be of particular importance for the PACES project and may help inform its further research.

As already noted, the boundaries between different policy areas are blurred and there can be slippage between non-migration and migration policy. Here we focus on four broad policy fields where we may expect to see some plausible connections to migration decision and behaviour: agriculture, transport, education and social welfare. By using these few non-migration policy fields and specific examples within these, we hope we can illustrate the sort of questions or approach that might be used if we extend the analysis to other policy areas.

4.1 *Agricultural policy*

Many links between agricultural transformation and migration have been recognised for generations and there is a well-established body of research to explore some of them. We can start by looking back at European history. The pace of change in patterns of land tenure and agricultural practices in Europe in the late 18th and 19th centuries were important determinants of the scale of migration from the land. In the UK, the policy of enclosure pushed peasants off the land, stimulating large scale migration to urban areas helping to create the population ready to be incorporated into new industries (Wardley-Kershaw et al. 2022). By contrast, in Spain, there is some evidence that the potential for future land ownership was an important factor discouraging the landless poor leaving some rural areas, even when higher wages were available in the cities. In this way the policy on land tenure inhibited rural-urban migration and contributed to the slow pace of Spain’s industrialisation in the nineteenth century (Silverstre 2005).

Similar associations between agricultural policy and mobility were evident in many parts of colonial and post-colonial Africa, for example as white settlers forced black Africans off their land and urban

centres, or when state control of farm prices or farm subsidies dramatically changed the cost and benefits of staying on the land or moving to cities. A key puzzle for colonial administrators was how to find the appropriate mix of incentives to keep sufficient Africans on the land to secure food supplies while ensuring a sufficient number move towards the urban areas to provide wage labour for businesses, administration and the military. Such debates were central to the work of the Rhodes-Livingston Institute and the Manchester School of Anthropology through the mid-twentieth century (for example, Watson, 1958; Pottier, 1988). This puzzle continued for the governments of newly independent states as their policies of agricultural reform both stimulated and demanded mobility; for example, the collectivisation and villagisation of 1960s Tanzania, 1980s Ethiopia or 1990 Rwanda (van Leeuwen 1990).

These historical examples demonstrate that agricultural – or perhaps more correctly agrarian policy – can shape mobility. In these cases, it seems reasonably easy to surmise how policies might affect people’s migration decisions. When agriculture is the mainstay of households’ way of life and livelihood, policies that effect their access to land, the prices of input or production change the incentives for people to change their way of life – perhaps by relocating – or not. It may also change their connection with the land, undermine or transform tradition (Van Velsen, 1960).

Of course, all the examples are mainly concerned with internal migration, although across Southern Africa, agrarian policy played an important role in creating the workforce for South Africa and the Copperbelt, which drew in migrants from across the region. Analysing these policies may help explain why people want to leave their places of origin. The question is how far agricultural policy affect people’s decision-making about where to go. We can think of Cote d’Ivoire that has relied on the agricultural labour from Burkina Faso for decades. Or the extensive agriculture of Eastern Sudan that has relied on the labour of Eritrean refugees and Ethiopian seasonal migrant labour (at least until the war broke out in April 2023). Another example is the impact of national land policies on changing patterns of migration between Brazil and Paraguay between 1960s and 1980s (Estrada, 2015).

Things may get more stretched if we want to explore how far agricultural policy in Europe affects the decisions of potential migrants. Matthews (2015) suggests that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reduces the flow of imports from some developing countries so it may feed through to greater economic hardship and increased pressure for emigration. However, there is insufficient evidence to conclude there is any direct impact on migration. Nevertheless, the CAP essentially heavily subsidizes agricultural production within the EU, and so sustains a critical demand for labour in this sector (Olper et al., 2014). Europe’s agricultural workforce is highly migrant-dependent, coming both through legal and irregular pathways, and to many EU countries (King et al., 2021, Kasimis et al. 2003). According to Rye and Scott (2018), this type of low-wage labour migration arguably embodies the main populations inflows into European rural areas; these inflows from global economic peripheries – caused by social transformation processes in origin countries - have been transforming the European semi-periphery.

Whatever the source of agricultural policy, it has important implications for people’s mobility. It seems plausible to suggest that those policies that change the conditions for farmers in largely agrarian societies are more likely to have impacts in countries of origin and affect people’s aspirations and ability to migrate. For the most part, while these may sometimes have intended impacts on internal migration (thinking of resettlement or collectivisation), their impacts on international migration tend to be unintended. Few states have desired their farmers leave their country but their agricultural policies may have helped them on their way. When it comes to regional policies such as the CAP, there was perhaps even less intention to affect migration but it has dramatically changed the possibilities for migrants

arriving in Europe, opening up jobs as agricultural labourers. In time, this has become an almost structural dependence on cheap migrant labour, which changes both the incentives for and the outcomes of migration to the EU for millions.

4.2 Transport policy

Migration is intrinsically linked to urbanisation and industrialisation when populations have moved from the rural to economically more advanced urban areas (Bras, 2003; Hochstadt, 1999, Francis et al. 2006). Technological advancements in transportation that could be observed over the past decades have enabled to move over longer distances for work or tourism purposes. Especially transformation of air transport markets with deregulation of fares, easier market entry and open skies policies have seen a massive expansion of air transport routes and reduction in the price of travel (Francis et al., 2006). The low-cost model in the airline industry was firstly introduced by Southwest Airlines in the United States and has been then emulated by other North American, European, and Australasian airline companies (Graham and Goetz, 2008). So far, the low-cost flight revolution has barely reached into the developing world. In particular, much of Africa is served by limited numbers of expensive flights and travel within the continent often requires lengthy journeys transiting through hubs outside the continent (Europe, Turkey, Middle East). Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to expect a strong correlation between long-distance migration and air transport routes. There is evidence that the demand for migrant labour and the existence of well-established migrant populations is an important stimulus for the creation of new airline routes. For example, the reliance of the countries of the Arabian Gulf on migrant labour and the large numbers of emigrants from the region have created a huge demand for air travel, which has helped stimulate the growth of new routes and lower prices (Bowen, 2019).

However, for our purposes, the more relevant question concerns the opposite causal direction: how do changes in air transport policy shape migration? Button and Vega (2008) have conducted one of the few studies to focus on this question. They suggest a number of avenues for effects. First, upsurge in transport choices and accessibility changes the timeframe for migrants; i.e. cheaper transport makes it possible to think about return as a realistic prospect whilst greater opportunities for mobility tend to reduce the incentives for permanent migration. They make long distance temporary migration feasible - e.g. Mexican agricultural workers taking up contracts in Canada. The change of timeframe and shortening the distance also has an impact on conducting family life (Burrell, 2008). This goes hand in hand with technological changes in telecommunications. Second, new transport routes and availability of travel might change attitudes to flying, encouraging some to apply for jobs abroad and consider long distance commuting, which is an option for the higher skilled individuals or so-called “lifestyle migrants” from wealthier countries seeking a different way of living abroad (Button, 2008; Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). In terms of the commercial and technological facet of migration infrastructure, liberalisation and modernisation of the air transport industry, both in terms of newly built airports and an intensity of airline connectivity, appears to be positively associated with the mobility for tourism and work purposes (Burrell, 2011; Bojczuk, 2006; Button and Vega, 2008).

Indeed, mobilities need to be explored within the broader context of infrastructural and technological transformations (Hannam et al., 2006; De Haas et al. 2020). New technologies and innovations may enhance mobilities of some individuals while, at the same time, they may constrain and make costlier the mobilities of others (Wood and Graham, 2006). These new factors fostering or hindering mobilities often reflects structures of power and hierarchies of power, while they may strengthen disadvantages based on gender, race, class and others (Tesfahuney, 1998). On the other hand, in some circumstances, the market changes may bring a more inclusive outcome, enhancing mobility for the poorer strata of the society. For instance, in the study of the Southeast Asia, Hirsh (2017) shows that infrastructures of low-tech transportations significantly shaped the spatial and social trajectories of tourists, retirees,

students and labour migrants on the threshold of middle class. He then documents how the big city airports adapted their policies to cater to this rapidly expanding but socio-economically disadvantaged group of travellers, who had previously lacked the basic resources to fly, such as credit cards, internet access, the means to get to the airport or familiarity with airport procedures such as check-in. Hirsh (2016) also argues that the expansion of the low-cost carriers in Asia made air travel more accessible for the less-privileged populations as it brought fares down to levels they could afford. Yet, while the internet has spread widely across the globe reaching global populations, the possibility of cheaper and easier travel remains much more unevenly distributed among migrants, with massive differences in the infrastructure and fares depending on the origin and destination countries (Burrell, 2011).

Such changes in the aviation industry enabled migrant workers to move back and forth more easily and cheaply, making it realistic for them to visit their families in the home country more regularly (Button, 2008). The case of the Poles living in the United Kingdom in the post-EU accession period clearly illustrates this (Burrell, 2008; Gössling et al., 2009). The qualitative interviews with the Polish migrants conducted by Burrell (2008) showed that more accessible and affordable low-cost air travelling has become an important part of their migrant journeys; not only did the low prices reduce the cost of travel but, by enabling more regular trips, it also helped migrants maintain their family ties, and bring home material possessions. Alongside the huge advances in information and communication technologies the greater ease of transport has played a critical role in enabling migrants to sustain transnational relationships and conduct their family lives at-a-distance (Urry, 2007; Allan and Crow, 2001).

In addition to the expansion of air travel, road transportation also has an important impact on migration routes. Teunissen (2020) points out that Flixbus, the discount network of coaches operating across Europe, is being widely used by irregular migrants, attracted by the low fares and the lack of passport controls, which enables them to move across Europe largely undetected without travel and identification documents.

The studies generally conclude that these changes, especially in air transport, have facilitated the growth and diversity of migratory behaviour, but they are not a primary driver of it. In terms of nature of impact, it impacts the ability to migrate whilst the logic of impact is indirect and takes place at the macro-level. Its locus of impact is transnational as transport connects different dots along the migration journeys, including facilitation of return, pendulum migration and transnational lives. The source and funding of policy is mixed, as different travel systems are state-funded in some countries, and privately owned in others, but access to different transport means is conditioned on resources highlighting inequalities across class, education and skills, or ethnicity.

4.3 Education policy

Countries across the world have been increasingly investing in their education systems, as education is seen as public good as well as an economic value. Education policy has been recognized in some studies as part of welfare state's policy package (Kureková, 2013). While primary and secondary education is provided universally and freely in the Western hemisphere, universal access and quality education still present a challenge in many African countries. Many wealthy countries fund various education programmes in developing countries, with the broad goal of mitigating migration pressures by improving development at the origin. How far such education programmes can deliver these migration goals is a subject of some debate (cf. Weber and Van Mol, 2023; Bakewell and Sturridge, 2019). At the same time, advanced economies use student mobility pathways as one of the key – and most effective – routes for attracting high skilled migration (Li and Lowe, 2016; Gribble, 2008).

Education as an individual-level characteristic is typically conceived as a main driver of migration as different returns to education in origin and destination country provide a key stimulus for pursuing migration. For example, Schewel and Fransen (2018) find that in Ethiopia, even just primary levels of educational attainment are associated with greater mobility desires. On the other hand, failure to achieve higher levels of formal education incentivizes a significant proportion of young Ethiopian women to seek migration in the Gulf (Schewel, 2022). In general, however, higher levels of education are generally associated with greater capabilities to migrate.

Specific mechanisms and link between education attainment and migration decisions might be intricate. For example, Docquier et al. (2014) find that college graduates exhibit greater emigration rates than their lower-educated cohort, not due to greater intentions to migrate, but due to better opportunities and chances of realizing international migration. Czaika and Reiprecht (2020) view education services and training opportunities as human development drivers. In their systematic review of past research, they find that good quality higher education in destination countries drives student mobility, due to reputation but also other related factors such as scholarships, costs and future labour market prospects. Professional training and professional education to advance one's career are often cited by high-skilled people (e.g. health professionals) as reasons for emigration (Bartolini et al. 2017).

Schewel's account of female mobility in Ethiopia presents their choice as embedded in a life-course perspective where young women decide between migration or marriage once education is no longer a viable option. In European countries, poor quality higher education linked with unmatched labour market opportunities might stimulate high outflows of students to study at university programmes abroad (Balaz, Williams and Kollar, 2004, Bahna, 2018). Relatedly, a mismatch between attained education or skills and job opportunities – caused by vast socio-economic transition following the demise of the socialist regimes in the Eastern Europe – motivated a considerable number of young people to see work opportunities abroad (Kureková, 2011; Kaczmarczyk and Okolski, 2008). A similar mismatch has also been seen in other regions of the world (Villarreal, 2016, Quinn and Rubb, 2005).

Importantly, education opportunities matter also for other migrants, including those seeking asylum, whose movement may be precipitated by both security and labour market reasons (Czaika and Reiprecht, 2020). Education policies might shape parental decisions between staying or returning, as education policies may increase the child's life chances and eventually the quality of life. For example, Ślusarczyk and Małek (2021) in their research among Polish migrants in Norway show how the education system in the destination country can play a significant role in decisions to stay. Once children are enrolled in school, the inclusive Norwegian education system is seen as positively shaping their life chances and integration prospects, not only by giving them formal education and skills but also acting as a means of securing social capital.

In sum, education (policy) is linked to migration in multiple ways. Dustmann and Glitz (2011) postulate that, first, differential returns to education in the country of origin versus destination country present a main driver of migration. From a temporal perspective, the aspiration to migrate might shape educational choice before the actual migration is realized, implying a complex two-way relationship between education and migration. Second, the desire to acquire skills and education with returns either in the country of origin or destination country may in itself be a reason to migrate. Furthermore, education is often associated with skills as well as higher socio-economic class or strata and thus higher aspirations and capabilities to migrate. Third, remittances may also play an important role by providing resources to support education of children or other family relatives in a country of origin by means of relaxing financial constraints, pointing to an unintended link between migration and education policies.

Finally, access to schooling in a destination country opens opportunities for successful integration and complex inclusion into host societies, and might change what once was a temporary plan into permanent migration.

Education policy is an example of a non-migration policy with relatively substantive levels of state investment for reasons not related to migration, whereas at higher levels individual funding might matter, and can be secured via remittances. While gaining education may be a primary cause for migration (for example, among higher education students), even when it is not, access to education shapes significantly both aspirations and capabilities to migrate, and it also shifts integration prospects in destination countries. Thus, education policies affect migration decisions unintentionally, primarily at the individual (micro) level. However, country level policies, especially related to the university studies, are an important route for attracting talent. Its locus of impact materializes in origin as well as in destination countries.

4.4 Social welfare policy

Perhaps the most studied non-migration policy is social welfare. There is a vast body of literature investigating the “welfare magnet” or “welfare tourism” hypotheses, with very mixed results about welfare systems as (causal) determinants of migrant decisions (for a review see: Nannestad, 2007, Kahanec and Guzi, 2022). These studies are conceptually embedded in the neo-classical models of migration where potential migrants compare the expected utility from income at the point of origin to the expected utility from net income at possible migration destinations (Harris and Todaro, 1970, Borjas, 1999). Access to social welfare support in destination countries is weighed up against its relative lack at the origin to assess the direct financial benefits rising from migration. Therefore, it can be expected that differences in welfare state arrangements across countries influence migration decisions. While the theory is linked to individual-level decisions, it is interesting that most studies investigating the link between welfare and migration take a macro-level perspective, looking at indicators such as aggregate social expenditure or the level of unemployment benefits to capture cross-national differences in welfare generosity (Giulietti et al. 2013, Giulietti and Wahba, 2013).

Recently, more balanced and comprehensive accounts point out that welfare systems are built as a complex set of policies and institutions whose impact varies over migrants’ life-courses (Andrejuk et al. 2021, De Jong et al., 2020, De Jong and De Valk, 2020) and across social welfare policies, such as health, pensions, or social assistance (Duman et al. 2022). Welfare systems are defined as sets of institutions and policies that directly or indirectly intervene in the functioning of labour markets in addressing various market failures, and so shape migration (Devitt, 2011, Eugster, 2018). This reflects the conceptualisation of welfare as a safety net that broadens the options of individuals in domestic labour market if facing labour market and other risks and thus mitigates migration as the only “choice” when faced with unemployment and a lack of income (Kureková, 2013).

There has been much less systematic research into how social welfare policies in origin country may shape patterns of migration. Existing studies tend to focus on single countries or single programmes to establish the link between social welfare policies and migration decision. For example, in a historical study of Bismarck’s social legislation, Khoudour-Casteras (2008) documents a strong link between the emergence of the German welfare state and decline in labour mobility from Germany to the United States before the World War I. He argues that social benefits introduced during Bismarck’s administration constituted a form of social remuneration that partly offset low levels of wage rates in Germany vis-à-vis the United States, and resulted in a significant decline in the emigration rate. Jolivet (2020) in her temporal multi-level study of changing migration patterns and preferences in the south of Morocco discusses the role of welfare provision and the rising aspirations of people to have social

rights. She finds that as the region experiences social transformation, reliance on and expectations of the state grow; when social rights desires are unfulfilled, migration to Europe is seen as a way to secure their rights. Similarly, a study about the impact of the social insurance coverage in Mexico (as a key indicator of job formality) on migration to the United States indicates that social security coverage poses a crucial factor in migrant decision-making (Sana and Hu, 2007). Workers who lack social security are more likely to migrate to the US. However, long-term migration (10 years and more) allows workers without social security who had migrated to match the retirement prospects of the native population with social security coverage; this indicates that long-term migration acts as a substitute for social welfare.

Other studies document how social assistance programmes empower individuals to move out of poverty and by enabling young people to set up independent living, might or might not result in (internal) migration. Through a household-level study of 70 municipalities involved in the unconditional cash transfer programmes in Central America (Honduras and Nicaragua), Winters, Steklov and Todd (2007) show that access to social protection programmes allows young people to move from the family households and form a new household within the community, rather than to migrate internationally or to other parts of the country. Similar findings can be found in counterfactual study carried out by Rubalcava and Teruel (2006) analysing the impact of the conditional public cash transfers (PROGRESA interventions) on the livelihood choices of the beneficiary households in Mexico. The results show that the transfers enable particularly young individuals to move away from the parental households, which results in internal migration outside the community of origin.

A systematic literature review of 22 impact evaluation studies, covering Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Mexico, South Africa, and the USA, examines the effect of social transfers on domestic and international migration (Adhikari and Gentilini, 2018). Social transfers serve as enablers of pre-existing household inclinations towards migration but are not direct determinants of mobility decisions. Their study proposes clustering of social assistance programmes into three types: (1) place-based social assistance which implicitly deter migration, (2) social assistance that implicitly facilitates migration by relaxing liquidity constraints and reducing transaction costs, and (3) social assistance that is explicitly conditioned on spatial mobility and thus enhances migration. It is thus relevant to consider the nature and design of social programmes and their purpose in understanding their likely impact on migration decisions.

The impact of social insurance policies on the composition of migrants was studied in several research studies. In a macro-economic study of 82 countries of origin, Greenwood and McDowell (2011) found that if more social insurance programmes are accessible in the country of origin, the average skill level of migrants tend to be lower. That indicates that those who have a higher level of skills are able to contribute to social insurance schemes and then draw its benefits when needed, and thus, are less likely to make a decision to migrate outside the country.

Angelucci's study (2012) models the effect of the anti-poverty cash transfer programme *Oportunidades* on international labour migration from Mexico with the sample of 506 rural villages. The results of the study show that the transfers affect the decisions to migrate in varying ways. On the one hand, the transfers seem to ease credit constraints which enable poorer individuals to undertake international migration with high upfront costs. On the other hand, receipt of cash transfers in the form of partial subsidies appears to reduce migration in those families, where recipients transfer from employment to schooling. Additionally, cash transfers increase future migration to the destinations with high returns to schooling. The effect of the cash transfer may therefore change over time; the findings indicate that cash transfers relaxing financial constraints may induce migration after some time, since households may need time to save sufficient amount of money to undertake international migration. At

the same time, the cash transfers related to schooling may result in a fall in the migration rate due to a preference for schooling over migration. However, this drop is followed by a surge as more people graduate. The individuals diversify their activities not merely in terms of the income (difference sources of income) but also informal insurance.

A systemic literature review of 76 papers covering 86 low- and middle-income countries (Hagen-Zanker, Gagnon and Himmelstine, 2023) shows that social programmes are highly contextual, when the policy design, conditions, funding, and other policy features differ from country to country. All these aspects need to be considered when exploring the impact of social programmes on decisions to migrate. At the same time, the effect of the social programmes on any individual may vary over time. For instance, investigating specific target groups does not reveal any clear trends in the relationship between the welfare programmes and migration outcomes. Social welfare policies are state-funded macro-level policies which impact migration decision-making at the level of individuals. Their relevance has been shown in destination as well as origin countries; specifics of the given social welfare programme, its design and policy intentions shape the type of effect it has on mobility. Thus, the logic of impact can vary from intended to unintended, whilst it most significantly impacts ability to migrate in origin countries and life after migration in destinations. The empirical examples presented in this section underline that similar mechanism - i.e. social assistance programme – might lead to different migration behaviours, highlighting that other factors inevitably come in. Furthermore, individual decisions might reflect on broader processes of social transformation in the given community or country, future prospects in the given community and the perceptions of what is available if one stays versus if one leaves (Vezzoli, Kureková and Schewel, 2024).

5 Concluding remarks

In this paper, we have started to map out the ways that a few non-migration policy fields may have an impact on people's migration decisions, behaviour and outcome. We have discussed these different policies in terms of a simple set of analytical dimensions, which has started to open up some possible avenues for comparison and, perhaps at some later stage, development of theory.

The paper has been prepared in the framework of Horizon Europe project PACES which studies decision-making of (African) migrants. Its objective was to think in an unconventional way about the role of non-migration policies in shaping decisions to migrate, migrant behaviour and migration outcomes. Conceptually, non-migration policies are implicitly discussed in two significant bodies of migration literature focusing on a) determinants or drivers of migration; and b) discussing the migration-development nexus. These works inform our enquiry by acknowledging that non-migration policies matter and may play an important role in migration, even if not intentionally designed to do that (de Haas et al., 2019). This paper brings non-migration policies to the analytical core and starts to evaluate systematically selected areas of policy by reviewing a body of empirical evidence to identify source, nature of impact, locus and logic of impact on migration decisions.

We tentatively summarise these dimensions for some of the policies that we have discussed in Table 2. This is for the purpose of illustration to show how the assessment varies between policies. A key observation is that non-migration policies matter, and they matter in different ways, as is revealed by structured analysis across analytical categories which we have defined. It is clear that non-migration policies are interrelated and might act in the same direction or have opposing effect on migration outcomes. At times the same non-migration policy may create incentives for migration for one group of potential migrants, while discouraging it for another group. It is beyond our aim and scope to

disentangle these effects here, but where relevant, we have highlighted the respective links to other policies.

Table 2. Analytical dimensions of non-migration policies

Field/Area	Source	Nature of impact	Locus of impact	Logic of impact
Agrarian reform	Origin country	Aspirations Ability to migrate	Areas of origin	Intended
CAP	EU	Ability to migrate	EU destinations	Unintended
Budget airlines	Origin & destination	Ability to migrate Life after migration	Origin	Unintended
Vocational training	Donor states & origin	Aspiration Ability to migrate	Origin	Intended
School policies	Destination	Life after migration	Destination	Unintended
Social assistance	Origin	Ability to migrate	Origin	Unintended

Source: authors

We have shown that non-migration policies yield intended as well as unintended consequences along different phases of migration journeys. Importantly, different state policies (education, social welfare, agriculture) or technological developments, e.g. in transport, play a tangible role in shaping aspirations to migrate, ability to migrate, and life after migration. While policies are typically designed and funded at national (macro) level, their impacts are felt most acutely at the micro-level (social welfare, education, agriculture). Although a policy might be sourced in destination country, its effect might be felt strongly in an origin country, as is the case with specific education programmes targeting young people at origin via student mobility routes to study in a destination country. Another example is social welfare which offers a set of universally designed programmes at national level, from which migrants can benefit either through enhanced incomes or reduced risk; this can be factored in when they select a certain destination relative to another one. Social welfare in an origin country, however, might deter migration by widening a range of opportunities at origin.

Identifying these links and mechanisms of impact of non-migration policies in terms of logic, locus or nature can contribute further to understanding how factors at different levels might interact over time to stimulate or reduce migration at various stages of migration journeys. In this paper, we have only been able to take a few small steps towards building this understanding of the causal relationships between diverse areas of policy and migration. We hope we have provided a systematic route to expand this analysis, first to other policy fields, such as trade, and then to take in policies and actions materialized at supranational level, such as EU initiatives and policies developed by regional political and economic blocs in Africa.

6 References

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