

Editorial

Migration and Mobility – Insights from Africa and Europe

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The movement of people from one place to another have profoundly influenced history. It has shaped communities and identities, spread culture, technology, and religion. It has also created diasporas. Historically people have travelled over vast distances in search of land, trade and settlement. War and political upheaval have also facilitated migration. History is replete with examples. The Mediterranean region and North Africa has traditionally been centres of trade and cultural assimilation. In the contemporary period migration have become a key issue globally, not least in Africa and Europe. In Africa there have been both internal and outward migrations, with people moving across to Europe and others migrating to other African states. This has largely been fueled by the usual ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors.

In Europe, the ‘migration crisis’ has made international headlines and has generated intense political discourses on notions of identity, citizenship and belonging. Since 2015 Europe has been characterized by high numbers of people arriving in the European Union (EU) from across the Mediterranean Sea. The Arab Spring of 2011 and the Syrian wars led to millions of people fleeing to Europe. This created what was known as the ‘migration crisis’ or ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe changing the political, cultural and socio-economic dynamics of the region. According to Migration and migrant population statistics there are 22.3 million non-EU citizens living in the EU on 1 January 2018 (Eurostat 2019). The Mediterranean region has become a key pathway for many, fleeing parts of North Africa. Between 2014 and 2015 it is estimated that over a million people crossed this region. During this period 170 000 migrants arrived from Libya to Italy. Whilst some remained in Italy others

found their way north to places such as Sweden and Germany (Diez 2019). In the flight to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea routes to countries such as Italy, Greece and Spain, there have been numerous tragic narratives, with many losing their lives in trying to cross the seas. Women and children being the most vulnerable.

In South Africa, since the dawn of democracy in 1994, several ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors has also led to increased migration to the country. South Africa is seen by some migrants as a popular destination, with a stable economy and opportunities to seek out a better livelihood. But historically migration shaped and defined the movements of people in Southern Africa as labour was recruited from the reserves and neighbouring countries to work on the mines (Tati 2008).

Migration in Europe and Africa, as in other parts of the world, has brought multiple consequences. It has started debates around integration, assimilation and multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is not a new phenomenon. Historically in Europe, since the Second World War, migration of peoples varying in ethnicity, religion and language was common, but to some extent restricted to a few places, such as Turkey to Germany, Algeria to France. However, this has changed. Migrants flocking into Europe embrace multiple religions, language and consisting of both highly skilled and low skilled individuals. According to scholar, Steven Vertovec, this is ‘super diversity’ (Diez 2019). According to Diez,

Many migrants are ending up in cities where they intermingle with people from earlier waves. This also has consequences for integration and social policy. While the trend in much of the world has been to loosen up the regulations for high-skilled migrants and tighten the rules for low-skilled migrants, Europe has made few such adjustments (Diez 2019)

Clearly in Europe and in South Africa, the arrivals of new migrants and refugees has led to political discourses on policy, identity, assimilation, and citizenship. In Europe, countries like Italy, who have been at the forefront of the migrant influx in Europe, are calling for redistribution of migrants across the European Union. The anti-immigration sentiment has also, according to some scholars, nurtured the rise of Far-Right parties in European countries (Davis & Deole 2017: 10-14). According to Davis and Deole (2017),

The rapid rate of European immigration has breathed life into far-right political movements which, if they continue to gain power, may come to pose fundamental challenges to Europe's governing institutions and to its continued development as a modern, post-ethnic society. Broadly speaking, the potential for immigration to alter the political equilibrium within European countries suggests that immigration policy should not be considered in a vacuum ((Davis & Deole 2017: 15).

In Europe and Africa, the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment and populism has led to outbreaks of violence and legislation. Violence and islamophobia against Muslim immigrants has been noted in several European countries. Anti-hijab laws were for instance enacted in Austria and France. According to Belgium's Mahinur Ozdemir, the youngest and first hijab-wearing member of the European Parliament,

There are ongoing policies against Muslims (in Europe). Since 2008, we have seen the rise of populism-not only right wing but also left-wing populism....Traditional parties, as they become unable to answer the people's needs through traditional ways, instead of getting more democratized, get more populist and grasp racist rhetoric (Osmandzikovic 2019).

In South Africa, anti-immigrant sentiments have led to periodic outbursts of violence. Some scholars have argued that 'The persistent anti-immigration climate has resulted in South Africa's being ranked the most xenophobic country in the world as it transpired from a cross country comparison to rank national attitudes to immigration around the world' (Tati 2008: 23). Negative stereotypes have also played a significant role in perpetuating xenophobic attacks on immigrant communities. According to Tati (2008).

... the rise in xenophobia over the past years found root in the strongly entrenched negative stereotyping of foreigners (reflected in the use of *amakwerekwere*, a derogatory term used at the grassroots level) as persons with a certain propensity to get involved in criminal activities, a tendency to displace jobs 'deserved' to locals, to 'poach' local women and to bring in diseases. The negative stereotyping does not

make distinction of migration status (whether legal or illegal) when the individuals of concern are of African origin. Nor did it differentiate the type of contribution –positive or negative-arising from immigrants.

The outbreak of xenophobic attacks in South Africa has led to death, displacement and anger. It has led to the destruction of foreign-owned shops and business and the torching of cars and properties. Migrants are blamed for lack of jobs, poverty and increasing crime. The outbreaks of xenophobic violence have drawn criticism from many beyond South Africa's borders. Recent attacks in Johannesburg in 2019 drew sharp critic from Nigeria,

The continuing attacks on Nigerian nationals and businesses in South Africa are unacceptable...Enough is enough. Nigeria will take definitive measures to ensure safety and protection of her citizens (*Daily Maverick* 2 September 2019).

Whilst the South African government has condemned the violence, there are calls by many for stronger intervention policies to be instituted.

Both in Europe and South Africa, there are attempts to find a solution to the arrivals of migrants and refugees. The need to engage constructively on issues such as pluralism, displacement, xenophobia, citizenship are some of the challenges faced by policymakers both in Europe and Africa. The articles in this special collection speak to these very critical issues.

Fred Bidandi in his article, highlights the plight of refugees in the Great Lakes Region. Bandi highlights the profound refugee crisis in this region as a result of geopolitical factors. He argues that refugees often tend to be ignored whilst in exile, they are vulnerable and are constantly faced with security issues. This article highlights the underlying factors which shaped the histories and political terrain of the Great Lakes Region in Africa and its implications on migration. Millions of people have been displaced from the Great Lakes Region, including from Burundi, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Sudan. This has given rise to regional political instability in the region. It has also led to high levels of forced displacement, asylum seekers and a refugee crisis. Its implications is most severe on women children. The author highlights these complex and perennial issues and calls for further empirical research to inform policymakers in bringing stability in this region.

Katherine Pillay and **Subashini Naicker** examine the lives of Chinese migrants in South Africa. Whilst the beginning of the millennium led to cordial Chinese diplomatic and commercial ties with South Africa, historically Chinese migration can be traced as early as the twentieth century. Shortage of labour on the gold mines in the Transvaal, in Johannesburg, led to the importation of Chinese indentured labour. They were followed by free or non-contractual Chinese immigrants. Early Chinese migration was predominantly male-centred and like contemporary immigrants experience multiple challenges in terms of trade, language barriers, social and cultural assimilation. Pillay and Naicker trace the arrival of the 'new wave' of Chinese migrants in Durban. Here, 'China Malls' are visible, and a popular space for shoppers who are seeking bargains in a very retrained economic climate. They argue that this 'new wave' of immigrants are largely endogamous community. Friends and family play a pivotal and significant role in sustaining social and business networks. However, the authors argue that there are limitations to their social interaction with the larger South African community, particularly in Durban. Crime, language barriers, distrust and prejudices have limited their interaction largely in 'Chinese shops'.

Marius D. Mbetga highlights migration issues in the context of family, sexual relations and marriage. His study focuses on the challenges, constraints and opportunities regarding marriages, cohabitation and sexual relations between South Africans and African migrants living in the City of Cape Town. He argues that for some individuals, common backgrounds are significant for a lasting and successful relationship, but for others they are not obstacles. In this study, xenophobia, to some extent is explored in the context of personal and familial relations and how they shape and define individual experiences. Cape Town, one of the largest and well-known cities in South Africa, there has over the years been a gradual settlement of immigrants from Europe, Asia and other parts of Africa. This has led to assimilation and acculturation at varying levels. Mbetga study highlights the dominant issues in current migration studies in the context of globalization, citizenship, xenophobia and multiculturalism and how they shape immigrants' experiences in the host country.

Susan Lindholm highlights migration issues in the context of popular culture in the Nordic countries, in particular Sweden. She explores the notion of multiculturalism and how it shapes and defines Swedish society. She states that in Sweden, multiculturalism became an important element of welfare-state

politics in the mid-1970s. Whilst Sweden is internationally known for its multicultural policy approach, since the post-war period, Sweden has also developed into one of the most statistically segregated and segmented societies. This is most noticeable in housing and labour, with immigrants from non-Western countries having a significantly lower income and being more likely to live in low-income areas than Swedes without such migration backgrounds. These issues are further intensified, as patterns of segregation seem to be 'inherited' by the Swedish-born children of non-Western migrants. The article discusses what may be called narratives of belonging created through hip-hop culture by the children of Chilean refugees who came to Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s.

The article by **Gabisile Mkhize** and **Nokuthula Cele** examines anti-immigrant sentiments in the context of xenophobia in South Africa. Since 2015 there have been sporadic outbreaks of attacks on immigrants which has gained both local, national and international interest. This study largely based on qualitative methods, which includes critical discourses of media reports, and interviews not only highlights the complex contextualization of xenophobia but also the response of the South Africa state. This article alludes to the nexus between state, politics and immigration. The reluctance or disinclination to deal with anti-immigrant sentiments can create an enabling environment for the emergence of right-wing politics. This is not only confined to the South African borders but is also quite profound in Europe. Over the past few years, scenes of anti-immigration protests have been common throughout Europe and America. Mkhize and Cele argue that in South Africa, the government's intervention 'was not effective enough'. More needs to be done to stem these outbreaks of violence. The authors call upon the state to address issues of poverty, unemployment and facilitate dialogue between communities and government officials. It is only through constant dialogue and tolerance can one respect the rights of South Africans and even non-South Africans and uphold the rule of law.

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