The Migration and Development Prism: A Lens on Vulnerabilities and Capabilities

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The inexorable link between migration and development is paradoxically both taken for granted and a challenging puzzle. Describing interdependent dynamic processes, the study of both offers opportunities to theorize and observe social change. The body of knowledge that has come to include studies of both migration and development has enriched the individual fields of migration and development. In the development field, concerned with the processes that underlie economic growth or contribute to improved livelihoods, adding a migration focus has broadened observations about development to include those about vulnerability and security, for example. A migration lens on the development process also reveals the presence of social networks and the selectivity of behaviors and events. In both cases, such observations have enriched our understanding of development processes. The same epistemological process is at work when migration scholars consider development in relation to migration. A development lens means attention to the institutions that regulate the production of goods and services and the related distributional processes. The migration of populations and experiences of migrants elucidate both the potentialities and vulnerabilities that accompany development and globalization, while simultaneously introducing a new conceptualization of class.

Now more than ever, global shifts can resonate locally. The changing tide of the world market carries millions of people in its wake as they search for opportunity, often many miles from home. These swells of human traffic bring with them not only labor, but also traditions, beliefs, and practices that may or may not exist or be accepted at the point of destination. The resulting cross-pollination opens up space for both increased tolerance and potential conflict, as identities become splintered and resources are allocated in new ways. In the transitory space of migration, gender, race, religion, family and class all become increasingly complex. Often, channels that appear to be oppressive can simultaneously provide autonomy, and work seen as tedious, poorly paid, or painstaking can offer refuge from traditional roles and expectations.

At the same time, migration is borne primarily from economic motivations to minimize risk or advance the well-being of oneself or one's family. Most moves are deliberate, and the locations of both origin and destination are rarely accidental. Disadvantaged populations with few local opportunities constitute the bulk of migrants, and economies with a surplus of low paying jobs provide a destination. Origins and destinations also reflect legacies of dependence and interdependence between societies, their interrelationships often originating through practices of trade, colonization and war.

The acts of migration, settlement and incorporation can be enormously challenging for both the migrants themselves and the families they must leave behind. Migration is transformative at the level of the individual, his or her identity and consciousness, but also at the level of the family, community, and myriad other aggregations. In the dust of this movement, attitudes and behaviors enter unfamiliar territory, opening up a new range of vulnerabilities for those who participate, and leaving researchers with new questions: How do the effects of development, wrought through the lives of migrants, manifest within a construction site on the urban landscape, the interior of a restaurant, or the composition of a neighborhood? How does development filter down to agricultural household's choices about cultivation and the harvest? What impact does development have on the well-being and lifestyles of those people facing the hard fact that they must leave home to find work? Or, how does individual desire for opportunities then manifest itself in the contradictory position of migrant vulnerability and development postponed?

The papers that comprise this special issue of the *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* (APMJ) address these very questions, as we invite the five selected essays to engage in dialogue with each other, offering a collective prognosis on the health of the development process as read through migration. Geographically, the research covers Indonesia, India, Thailand

and the United Kingdom, all complicated environments encompassing origin and destination communities for both international and internal migrants. Most of the essays address internal migration, but draw on the rich theoretical frameworks proposed by much of the research on international migration, re-enriching the study of internal migration. Theoretically, these essays problematize strict notions of class as well as development language that focuses on the most deprived populations. After all, it is not generally the poorest of the poor that are migrating, but rather those who can afford to move or lose a family member to out-migration. This new class of people, defined by the undesirable jobs they perform, faces huge risk and are therefore placed in a precarious position as they wrestle with difficult choices.

This narrative begins on the rice fields of Nang Rong district in Northeast Thailand. Remittances have been the focus of much discussion around migration and development, but little has been written about their relationship to labor trends in origin communities. Financial support in the form of money sent home can certainly alleviate some of the stress families experience in a changing economy, but the impact of migration on an origin community and a household is more complex than a simple exchange of money for labor. James Hull explores this impact in his paper, "Migration, Remittances and Monetization of Farm Labor in Subsistence Sending Areas." He illuminates the absence felt in origin communities, and the way in which out-migration and monetization of agriculture alters a host of traditions, from ancient farming practices to family structure and consumer attitudes.

Hull locates his study in the larger theoretical approaches to migration, paid labor and remittances. As he explains, although research on this relationship is not new, many prior studies fail to examine the specifics of changing labor and agricultural choice when monetization is introduced. Equally explored is the nature of the relationship between this increasing monetization and an out-migration trend. The relationship is a dramatic one, and it affects a variety of aspects of village life. For those who can afford to send a family member away to work, potential remittances from that migrant serve not only to pay a replacement laborer, but often times, fuel purchases of another kind. Disposable income introduces an entirely new value system and sense of consumer power. Increased options, as Hull explains, can have tremendous sway over traditional approaches to labor, living arrangements, and economic exchange.

If we were to accompany one of the migrants leaving the Nang Rong district for work in an urban area, we might find ourselves in the space of the second study, Aree Jampaklay and colleagues' "Residential Clustering Among Nang Rong Migrants in Urban Settings of Thailand." This essay

offers insight into the potential networks migrants find at their point of destination. How much do factors such as education, skill and gender determine settlement choices upon arrival? While much work has been done on enclaves formed by migrants in developed countries, such as the US and Canada, Jampaklay and her co-authors add to a relatively small number of research studies focusing on these living arrangements for internal migrants in poorer countries. Specifically, they focus on the Isan population migrating from Northeastern Thailand, the most economically disadvantaged region in the country, to Bangkok and the Eastern Seaboard. The theoretical and historical approaches to this topic are conflicted and varying in their assumptions. If migrants participate in settlement patterns, what determines this choice, and is it beneficial or detrimental to individual well-being and social relations between middle-class natives and working class migrants?

Enclaves can be understood as a sanctuary in the midst of a traumatic relocation. It seems only natural that migrants from a particular ethnic group would seek out the transitional cushion of a culturally familiar enclave upon arrival in an unfamiliar landscape. The point of departure for different schools of thought on this issue seems to surface when it comes to question of how these enclaves function. For this study, Jampaklay and her co-authors examined the residential patterns and neighborhood composition of 1,114 internal migrants living and working in major metropolitan areas of central Thailand. The results support the claim that these Isan enclaves do in fact exist, but the overall picture regarding their function and the nature of their formation remains mixed. Clustered living arrangements appear to both absorb some of the stress related to migration while also inhibiting assimilation and/or mobility. Although the enclaves can provide a wealth of social and economic networks, it is those migrants with less education and skill that tend to rely most heavily on these living arrangements. Even more, they face little opportunity for upward mobility. So, is it possible that migrants can become tangled in their own safety net within these new environments, or are the mixed results of the research symptomatic of the ambiguity that accompanies unfamiliar terrain, signaling a need for more studies in this area?

Neither Jampaklay et al. nor Hull disentangles the possibilities that men and women experience migration, and contribute to development, differently. This very issue is picked up and expanded upon by Sanghita Bhattacharyya and Kim Korinek in the third article, "Opportunities and Vulnerabilities of Female Migrants in Construction Work in India." Through their research, they attempt to show how women experience both migration and stress differently from their male counterparts, even in cases where couples are moving together to work in the same occupational sector.

Basing their work on the rich collection of existing research on women and migration, Bhattacharyya and Korinek infuse quantitative data on the region with information from in-depth interviews with 110 female migrant construction workers in Delhi. One of the main questions informing this study is whether or not geographic mobility lends itself to greater social and economic mobility. As was the case with the previous three essays, the answer to the opening question is a convoluted one. In fact, the structure of the study itself, along with the results, illuminates the difficulty in collecting such data. Two points that surface in this study are of particular interest. The first is that, according to national surveys of the formal economic sector, the female share of all migrant labor is on the decline in India. In a newly established open market economy, this would seem contradictory, unless it is understood in relation to the growing share of labor that is concentrated in the less visible informal sector of the economy. Perhaps women's participation in this sector has increased, rendering traditional methods of data collection and reporting problematic, if not obsolete.

The second point of interest has to do with cultural attitudes toward women's migration and the impact of such attitudes on data collection. Of the 110 women interviewed for this study, only one had traveled alone to work in the construction industry. The other 109 moved with a spouse. This is, in large part, due to widespread suspicion and discrimination aimed at single women who migrate. Consequently, if a woman migrant finds employment, and is then asked about her experience, the responses available to her may be limited. In the case of this study, women often reported themselves as 'passive,' moving only because their husbands move, but the vast majority quickly become wage earners. With the increased demand for unskilled labor in certain fields, it is more likely that a woman will participate in paid labor, so perhaps what is advertised as 'passive' is actually 'active,' but hidden behind the veil of traditional role playing. So, if women in this informal labor sector are experiencing enormous amounts of stress from this dual role of traditional wife/mother and wage earner, they may not have the freedom to describe it. Cultural, political and economic institutions may impede their access to such rhetoric.

This theme is continued in Catharina Williams' study, "Women's Mobility, Changing Gender Relations and Development in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia." Sharing in the qualitative approach of Bhattacharyya and Korinek's piece, Williams explores the feminized labor sectors that contribute to women's migration in contemporary Indonesia. Here, it is the fields of teaching and nursing that are of interest. Williams employs a largely ethnographic approach in order to provide a more three dimensional picture of a female migrant's reality. More specifically, she draws from extensive interviews with fifteen women from the East Nusa Tenggara

region who are situated at different points along the migration continuum. Three of the four women she discusses at length in the article have settled in the urban locales of Makassar and Surabaya. Unlike Bhattacharyya and Korinek's effort to capture the vulnerabilities female migrants face, Williams chooses to focus on the potentially subversive nature of the migration experience, and the small ways women can expand the confines of their role through movement. This study also builds on the notion that economic necessity is not the only motivator behind women's migration. As is demonstrated in the stories of the four women, the opportunity to break from traditional expectations is equally relevant.

Enhancing her underlying argument with the help of feminist geography perspectives, Williams suggests that power operates through complex and often conflicting channels. On the level of women's everyday lives, gender can be seen as discursive. It is specific in its definition and performance, and with a change in place comes a change in definition. This study, unlike the others thus far, describes a deliberate and informed choice on the part of a migrant to relocate. The women here chose to leave home and pursue an occupation in the city, even if that choice was shrouded in claims of religious duty. Although this is not a story of women challenging patriarchal structures outright, it does demonstrate one way women can reconstruct their identity in order to expand their choices and autonomy.

If the women in Williams' study of Indonesian migration could be understood as 'performing' traditional gender attributes by working as caregivers, then the final essay by Patreeya Kitcharoen, "An Ethnography of Restaurant Workers: Thai Women in England," recasts that notion onto an international stage. An ethnographic investigation into the operation and hierarchy of a Thai restaurant chain in Britain, this piece delves further into gender performance and the commoditization of culture. Told through the eyes of a student and part-time waitress, this is a self-reflexive study on how power functions within a service industry environment. Similar to some of the other pieces, Kitcharoen highlights the theme that although migration brings with it a certain amount of increased freedom, particularly for women, it is often leveled by the emotional currency required upon their arrival. Feminine attributes especially, are demanded and commoditized in a way that limits empowerment. In these new roles on foreign soil, those attributes can carry loaded meaning, as culture becomes a brand to be consumed by wealthier populations.

What began as a collection of journal entries for Kitcharoen grew into the contents of this study, as she observed the inner-workings of a restaurant chain and the personal became the political. Fully conscious of her own advantageous position, she described the hierarchy within the business, ranking full time waitresses lowest on the food chain. Those employees who

were in Britain for academic pursuits and participated in the workforce for disposable income were deemed better ambassadors of Thai culture, and as such actually had greater earning power and authority. The full time waitresses on the other hand were typically from poorer families in rural areas and often possessed less education and skill. This is where Kitcharoen highlights notion of class contradictory mobility, one of the most important points of the essay. The term refers to the migration of individuals in order to increase their income, but with the denial of upward class mobility. In essence, the migration is toward higher wages of low wage service work in more developed regions or countries.

This concept serves as unifying theme and common thread that ties together the diverse analyses presented in all the papers of this issue. While all of the pieces focus on a particular cultural group, region, or aspect of migration, the underlying issue is one of vulnerability and class. Through each of these five studies, the common thread is intimately related to this point. The constant flux of migration introduces a new conceptualization of class, as those who move become increasingly defined by the segmented labor market they inhabit, rather than by a particular income level or quality of life. An equally powerful defining characteristic is the risk that is inextricably linked to the unique choices they face.

What then, is the prognosis these studies offer to the development world? It appears that many deprived areas are not receiving the relief they so desperately need, and recovery is not available solely through relocation to, say an area with greater blood flow. A deeper shift needs to occur in the way we see and understand the combined parts of this global body and their relationship to one another. We believe this special issue contributes to that effort, revealing that the answer is not in the vast differences across cultures, but in the alarming similarities. In fact, the migration lens provided by each study reveals how development processes yield simultaneously contradictory instantiations of vulnerability and capability. Consequently, these insights raise challenges for contemporary development agendas focused solely on one or the other.