

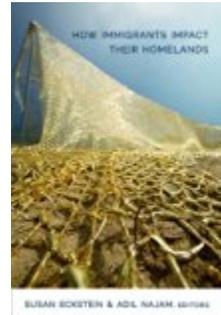


Susan Eckstein, Adil Najam, eds. *How Immigrants Impact Their Homelands*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. xvi + 261 pp. \$84.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-5381-2; \$23.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-5395-9.

Reviewed by Jeannette Money (University of California, Davis)

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## The Dark Side of Migration and Development

In 2009, the annual human development report (HDR), published by the United Nations Development Programme, tackled the topic of migration with a report entitled *Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*. It summarized the most recent research about the benefits associated with migration and development from the perspectives of the migrant, the host country, and the home country. Virtually all outcomes were positive. According to the report, migration provided better outcomes for all involved, with little or no negative side effects. This conclusion echoes the prognosis of the now annual conferences—the Global Forums on Migration and Development—that also highlight migration as a positive solution for development. In contrast, the book reviewed here, *How Immigrants Impact Their Homelands*, edited by Susan Eckstein and Adil Najam, reveals the many and varied disadvantages of migration for the migrant’s country of origin. This is a welcome and useful corrective to the previously propagated rosy picture.

One reason for the positive assessment is that the indicators employed in the HDR are mostly economic. Although economics is included in the analyses in this volume, many of the chapters highlight the “social remittances” of migrants on their home societies (p. 23). And, even on the economic dimension, this research stresses that the impact of migration on “development,” defined in terms of enhanced economic growth, is quite limited. These perspectives are neatly summarized in the September 20, 2012, issue of *Reporting Development in ASEAN*,

where Tess Bacalla also reports that remittances’ “real contribution to real domestic development ... is much more qualified if they are assessed in their broader social, economic and political context” (p. 1).

The various contributions are described below in more detail. In general, I do not enjoy reading edited volumes because I find that the quality of the contributions can vary substantially and some chapters usually fail to speak to the central theme of the volume. I have no such complaint here. Each of the chapters reports new or cumulative research on various dimensions of migration and how it affects the migrant’s country of origin. Moreover, all of the chapters emphasize a common theme highlighting the interaction of the migrants with the host state’s policies when assessing the migrant’s impact, both positive and negative. The home state and home society are not blank slates on which migrants write. Rather their impact is felt through the resilience (or lack thereof) of the home society and the choices of the state vis-à-vis management of the migration.

The economic perspective is the first presented in this edited volume and the most positive in terms of impact. There are many ways of understanding the migration/development nexus but the one that informs this text is “developmental impact,” defined as “economic investments but also transfers of information and skills from abroad, plus the avoidance of depopulation” (pp. 38-39).

The most theoretically developed chapter is by Ale-

jandro Portes who disaggregates migration flows from developing countries into low- versus high-skilled migrants and cyclical versus permanent migration. The four categories have different potential for development in the home state. Permanent low-skilled migration is likely to have a negative effect: it “generates depopulation and entrenches home country elite and patterns of inequality.” Even remittances drop after the first generation of migrants. Transnational communities provide “transnational philanthropy” at best (p. 43). In contrast, cyclical migration, narrowly defined as short-term migration with a focus on the home community, has developmental potential at both the low- and high-skilled levels by providing the home state with human capital gained from the stay abroad as well as remittances and productive investment. Finally, long term professional migration has the potential for transforming developing country economies by generating new industries that insert the developing country into the global economy in an advantageous position of high value added production. However, Portes points out that the home country environment is also critical to the developmental potential of migrants because there must be a propitious environment that migrants can exploit. This chapter nicely sets up the two following chapters on the role of the Indian and Chinese diasporas on development in the home states.

Min Ye provides a nice overview of the impact of the Chinese diaspora on development in the People’s Republic of China. This Chinese diaspora includes the Chinese population in previously distinct political entities—Hong Kong and Macau—as well as Taiwan and other Southeast Asian nations. She traces the efforts of overseas Chinese migrants to shape the Chinese economic rules to ensure preferential treatment of their investment and reports the positive impact of that investment. She summarizes the impact as being “responsible for most foreign capital investment in the country, especially in manufacturing, and in conjunction with investing they have infused ideas, information and technology” (p. 69). She also refines Portes’s analysis by reporting that only specific types of migrants were influential, “successful entrepreneurial immigrants” (p. 70). Kyle Eischen follows with an analysis of the role of Indian migrants in the development of information technology industries in India. His chapter effectively illustrates Portes’s category of cyclical high-skilled migrants’ developmental impact by facilitating multinational corporate investment in India as well as by spurring information technology startups that are closely networked with firms in the United

States.

Natasha Iskander focuses on the role of the state in channeling remittances of Moroccan migrant workers in a way that allowed the Moroccan state to fund “major development projects” (p. 181). It did so by becoming a financial intermediary. It reached out to low-skilled migrant workers and brought them into the formal banking system, thereby allowing the state to benefit from foreign exchange and to finance development projects. But it did so in a way, unlike Cuba (see below), that allowed the migrants to employ the funds to meet their own and their families’ priorities. Although Morocco is having difficulty in serving its high-skilled migrants as effectively, Morocco represents a case of good practices in terms of migrant remittances.

All of the other chapters point out the intended and unintended negative consequences of migration on the migrant’s home state. Remittances are central to Eckstein’s analysis of the impact of emigration on Cuba. This is an interesting portrait of the interaction between migrants (primarily in the United States), families in Cuba, and the Cuban state. This essay emphasizes both the central role of the state in channeling (or preventing) remittances and the unintended consequences of Cuba’s growing reliance on remittances. Cuba, unlike most developing states, chose to minimize the role of the émigré community and remittances until the implosion of the Soviet Union, which subsidized the Cuban economy since the 1959 revolution. Remittances then became an important source of funds for families to prevent a decline in their standard of living and as a source of income for the Cuban state. But the initial win-win position of domestic actors changed as the state became ever greedier for access to remittances and installed systems to extract a larger share of remittance flows. In response, the domestic population developed techniques to avoid state control, generating economic and social problems and a growing black market. These have, according to Eckstein, undermined the moral legitimacy of the regime. This chapter begins to sketch the ways in which migration can generate a negative impact on the migrant’s country of origin.

The remainder of the chapters focuses primarily on the social impact of migration and virtually all these chapters speak to the downsides of migration on the home country. David Fitzgerald contrasts the two prominent perspectives on migration, assimilation and transnationalism, with a third, dissimilation. According to Fitzgerald, “dissimilation questions the very concept of community by highlighting negotiations over who is

a legitimate member of the community, what kinds of behavior are acceptable, and struggles over where the boundaries of the community begin and end” (p. 116). This framework is illustrated by a comparison of the local Mexican population with Mexicans who immigrated to the United States and subsequently returned to Mexico. The dimensions explored include culture, religion, education, crime, work, politics, and remittances and home town associations. The chapter emphasizes the differences among communities that have previously been seen as much more homogeneous transnational communities.

Riva Kastoryano also focuses on transnational communities in the context of the Turkish diaspora. She delineates three distinct components of the European experience on Turks who migrated to Europe. First, Turks assimilated to or adopted many of the democratic demands that they experienced in their host country. Second, given the European acknowledgment of “the right to be different,” migrants regenerated ethnic and religious identities that were quashed in Turkey, such as a Kurdish identity or an Alevî identity (p. 141). Finally, Turks, unlike postcolonial migrants, moved to many different European countries and, through state supported migrant organizations, were able to develop pan-European organizations to lobby European Union institutions. These political and cultural changes have affected the demands and the ability of Turkish migrants to affect domestic politics at home, and have undermined the adamant nationalist and secular state that existed since the Turkish revolution.

The picture grows darker when considering women migrants. Rhacel Parrenas examines the role of female Philippine migrants. The deck is decidedly stacked against them. They migrate to provide financial support for their families but the fathers who remain behind refuse to take up active parenting of the children. The children are cared for by women in the extended family— aunts and grandmothers. But cultural mores make the children feel abandoned by their mothers, despite long-distance mothering, local mothering from relatives, and the benefits accruing from their mothers’ remittances. Despite genuine efforts to the contrary, migrant mothers are doomed to fail due to the cultural mores that allow men to avoid their parenting responsibilities and impose impossible standards the society sets for women migrants as mothers.

Jose Miguel Cruz paints an equally dismal picture of social remittances transmitted by Central America migrants who join gangs in California and are subsequently deported back to their states of origin. Again, the societal resilience of the home society allows some states—Mexico and Nicaragua—to avoid the consequences of transnational gang violence. Moreover, the local gangs modify the behavior of the migrant gang members as well. Nonetheless, gang violence has accelerated in Central America in large part due to return migrants who transform local gangs.

Death by disease is the migrant remittance to the rural women of Mozambique. Victor Agadjanian, Cecilia Menjiva, and Boaventury Cau describe the out-migration of men from rural Mozambique in search of livelihoods to support their families. Yet they may abandon their families to start new families in South Africa—depriving their original families of the promised remittances—or they may return, having been infected with HIV/AIDS while in the country of destination. Silence aggravates the problem—no one wants to confront the issues of marital infidelity on both sides during the men’s long stays abroad.

As this brief overview of the chapters indicates, migration only promotes development under very specific conditions and may well contribute to a declining quality of life for those left behind in the country of origin. To reiterate, this volume provides a useful corrective to the sanguine appraisals of migration and development. Although this volume is well researched and well written, and provides a disturbing but important contrast to the generally positive perspective on migration, it only sets the stage for better theory development. It is difficult to determine how pervasive these negative impacts are. There is insufficient attention to the conditions under which the broader impact of migration on the host society will be positive or negative. The most theoretically developed component on the economic impacts could be further refined—cyclical migration has now become the watchword in migration and development. But this overlooks decades of experience with both high- and low-skilled migration wherein migrants develop human contacts in the host society and remain there permanently. This volume whets the appetite for richer theoretical developments and more comparative empirical analyses to inform policy choices in both the developed and developing world.

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