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## 5

REFLECTIONS ON MIGRANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS  
IN AN ERA OF INCREASING DISRUPTION AND  
DISINFORMATION<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

A glance through previous World Migration Reports, and other policy and scientific publications on international migration, shows that at least two observations have been prevalent over time: i) recognition that migration, particularly immigration, has emerged as a prominent international and national policy issue; and ii) that the public discourse on migration has increasingly become polarized with the space for balanced, rigorous, and evidence-based analyses having diminished over time.<sup>2</sup> While the nature of the public discourse has changed over time, there is widespread recognition that the “toxicity” of the migration debate has further intensified over the last few years, with the politics of fear and division increasingly framing discussions.<sup>3</sup> Disruption and disinformation are increasingly being deployed as part of tactical pursuits of power, with negative impacts on public, political and social media discourse, on societal values, and on public policy issues such as migration, displacement and migrants (including refugees).<sup>4</sup>

In the face of often negatively skewed discussions on migration and migrants, one can lose sight of the fact that human endeavours to improve peace and prosperity in modern times that are underpinned by migration have been on the whole successful, and in specific key areas *very* successful (such as the eradication or control of specific, deadly diseases and the dramatic decline in infant mortality following the efforts of Nations under the 2000–2015 Millennium Development Goals).<sup>5</sup> Migrants provide a source of dynamism globally, and are overrepresented in innovation and patents, arts and sciences awards, start-ups and successful companies. Such historical and contemporary contributions have become increasingly overlooked or ignored in recent discussions on international migration, with many contributions being “normalized” over time but nevertheless evident (at times conspicuously so).

It is also easy to lose sight of the fact that international migration remains a relatively uncommon phenomenon, with a mere 3.5 per cent of the world’s population being international migrants (see chapter 2 of this report for details). Notwithstanding this small proportion, the total number of international migrants has increased in recent decades to reach as high as 272 million, or close to the national population of Indonesia (269 million).<sup>6</sup> What we currently know is that mobility, as opposed to migration, is becoming much more prevalent, making some argue that now is the time to rethink how we conceptualize and discuss these issues.<sup>7</sup>

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2 GCIM, 2005; Martin, Larkin and Nathanson, 2000; McAuliffe and Ruhs, 2017.

3 Fisher, 2017; Kaufmann, 2017; Zappettini and Krzyzanowski, 2019.

4 Morgan, 2018.

5 Mathers et al., 2018.

6 UN DESA, 2019.

7 Deutschmann and Recchi, 2019; Skeldon, 2018. See also the discussion on mobility in chapter 1.

In this context, revisiting the many ways in which migrants have contributed – at the transnational, national and local levels – is important in presenting a balanced discussion on migration. This is not to suggest that international migration and displacement do not pose challenges for communities in origin, transit and destination countries (as well as migrants) – many other chapters in this report are focused on such challenges. However, in writing this chapter, we acknowledge that the many ways in which migrants contribute to societies are currently being overlooked, downplayed or taken for granted, and it is the purpose of this chapter to bring these contributions of migrants to the forefront.

The next section describes key concepts related to contributions, providing an analytical framework for this chapter in the context of a rich body of academic and policy work on the topic. We then go on to describe and analyse migrants' contributions globally, with reference to sociocultural, civic–political and economic aspects. The chapter then discusses emerging impediments to the recognition of migrants' contributions globally, before outlining the implications for policy deliberations and for further research.

## What are “contributions”?

To contribute means to give something – money, time, ideas, labour, material goods – in order to achieve something with other people.<sup>8</sup> Outside of personal relationships, such as those with family and friends, and in the context of sociology and social change theory, “contributions” are part of broader interactions and engagement with individuals, groups and institutions in society. In other words, contributions occur as part of broader structural settings and social processes that support and shape societies. They can be broadly categorized as being in sociocultural, civic–political or economic domains (see text box for definitions).

*Sociocultural* relates to different groups of people in society and their habits, traditions and beliefs.

*Civic–political* relates to participation in civic duties in the context of accepted authority of the State.

*Economic* relates to aspects concerned with trade, industry or money.

*Sources:* Cambridge Dictionary, 2019; Almond and Verba, 1963.

As the salience of migration has risen in public policy and research spheres, there has been a new and greater focus on migrants per se – as distinct subpopulations within larger national populations, with reference to the structural settings they encounter, especially in the destination countries.<sup>9</sup> The way in which people enter, stay and settle in a new country occupies the time of an increasing number of researchers, policymakers and those in the media:<sup>10</sup> the first focusing on understanding the demographic, geographic, economic, legal/

<sup>8</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Dennison and Drazanova, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 4 quantifies the increase in research output; chapter 11 discusses global migration governance.

policy and other factors;<sup>11</sup> the second on how best to meet policy objectives (however defined); and the third scrutinizing and commenting on both. Research continues to explore the dynamic relationships that exist between migrants (including potential migrants) and migration processes and related factors. We know from existing evidence and analysis, for example, that the contributions migrants are able to make in destination as well as origin settings do partly depend on legal-policy frameworks, such as those impacting the ability of both regular and irregular migrants to stay, participate in civic activities, work lawfully and send remittances, as well as to return home (see chapter 6 of this report).<sup>12</sup> Contributions are also related to demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, with those who choose to migrate having higher skills, education and opportunity, ultimately also reflecting a greater likelihood of contributing in origin and destination countries in a variety of ways.<sup>13</sup>

Consistent with migration research more generally (see chapter 4 of this report), there is recognition that much of the analysis on migrants has been undertaken from a destination country perspective,<sup>14</sup> with some arguing that the most significant immigration country in the world – the United States – has disproportionately influenced the study of migrants globally.<sup>15</sup> With this in mind, this chapter attempts to reflect broader experiences of international migrants' contributions by incorporating recent research and analysis focusing on destination *and* origin.<sup>16</sup> In scoping and presenting the chapter in this way, we acknowledge that we are not seeking to summarize all existing literature, nor are we suggesting that the findings highlighted in the chapter are representative. What we do recognize, however, is the importance of encapsulating a reasonable geographic and thematic *diversity* of research and analysis on the topic in what, after all, would make a migration report truly a *World Migration Report*.

Importantly, this chapter does not assess the overall impacts of migration in these settings. Studies on the impacts of migration are numerous and well documented (see examples in the text box below);<sup>17</sup> they provide important insights and analyses. This body of work is focused mainly on economic impacts rather than sociocultural or civic-political impacts, including because economic variables are to a greater extent standardized, thereby supporting comparative analysis. Some examples of recent publications on the economic impacts of migration, including some empirical estimates, are included in the text box below.

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11 See, for example, writings on cumulative causation (Massey, 1990), neoclassical economics (Todaro, 1989), world system theory (Wallerstein, 1974; Portes and Walton, 1981), new economics of labour migration (Stark and Bloom, 1985) and social network theory (Boyd, 1989).

12 Baldwin-Edwards, 2008; Kanko and Teller, 2014; Shah, 2009.

13 Goldin, 2018; Hunt, 2010.

14 Carling, 2015; Castles, 2010; McAuliffe and Laczko, 2016; Morawska, 2008.

15 FitzGerald, 2014.

16 While this chapter focuses on *international* migration, we acknowledge that it may also be relevant to internal migration in some countries. See Weiner (1978) for examples of disruptions and disinformation leading to conflict and discrimination faced by inter-State migrants within India.

17 See also the *World Migration Report 2005* (IOM, 2005).

## Assessing the economic impacts of migration

Estimating overall economic impacts of migration is a topic of intense debate in political and policy circles. Some recent publications on the topic include:

- *Exceptional People: How Migration Shaped Our World and Will Define Our Future*, by Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan, shows that there is broad consensus among economists that, for destination countries, immigration is a catalyst for economic growth at an aggregate level and produces net economic benefits. However, the authors also acknowledge that there are ongoing debates on how to measure these effects.<sup>a</sup>
- The McKinsey Global Institute's report, *People on the Move: Global Migration's Impact and Opportunity*, echoes these findings, showing that migrants contributed over 9 per cent, or USD 6.7 trillion, to global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015.<sup>b</sup>
- *International Migration: Recent Trends, Economic Impacts, and Policy Implications*, by the International Monetary Fund, concludes that the economic impacts of migration vary across countries, and that, while migration brings challenges, it also confers benefits to origin and destination countries.<sup>c</sup>
- *Migration and the Economy: Economic Realities, Social Impacts and Political Choices*, by Goldin et al., affirms that immigration impacts positively on economic growth, and that this happens in a number of ways: many migrants are comparatively younger than local populations and thus have a significant positive impact on both GDP per capita and overall (aggregate) GDP; migration enhances output per worker by increasing human capital; and migration bolsters total factor productivity as well as innovation. The report finds that, had immigration to the United Kingdom and Germany ceased in 1990, both countries' real GDP in 2014 would have been lower by GBP 175 billion and GBP 155 billion, respectively.<sup>d</sup>
- The impacts on labour markets, including on wages, vary widely, are often negligible and are largely driven by how complementary migrants' skills are to those of local workers;<sup>e</sup> these may be reversible in the longer run, as economies adjust to immigration, as Ruhs argues in *The Price of Rights: Regulating International Labor Migration*.<sup>f</sup>
- *The Economic and Fiscal Effects of Granting Refugees Formal Labor Market Access*, by Clemens, Huang and Graham, suggests that most evidence shows that the average effect of refugee inflows is on labour markets for both developed and developing countries is small or null.<sup>g</sup>

a Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan, 2011.

b McKinsey Global Institute, 2016.

c IMF, 2015.

d Goldin et al., 2018.

e Ibid.

f Ruhs, 2013.

g Clemens, Huang and Graham, 2018.

The next section of this chapter discusses sociocultural contributions, and is followed by sections covering civic–political and then economic contributions. The chapter then examines recent evidence on how public migration debates are changing, including through the (mis)use of social media platforms for misinformation and disruption with transnational reach. The final concluding section summarizes the implications of current evidence for policy, practice and research.

## Migrants' sociocultural contributions

The sociocultural contributions of migrants are felt by many of us on a daily basis, even though we may not be conscious of it. Simple activities – such as shopping for groceries at our local market, eating out at a restaurant or ordering take-away food, visiting a place of worship, attending a musical performance or watching a sporting match – are likely to have been influenced or enriched (or, in some cases, made possible) by migrants who have brought with them customs and traditions.

Perhaps one of the most significant and highly visible contributions of migrants to the sociocultural dimensions of societies throughout the world has been the sharing of food and culinary traditions, resulting in the tremendous increase in food diversity in modern times. The highly social aspect of sharing food is a distinctly human trait of considerable cultural importance, and it has provided an opportunity for social bonding in private and public settings.<sup>18</sup> The power of sharing and valuing such intimate and historical cultural conditions as the preparation of food allows for migrants' contributions to be understood as more profound than the superficial so-called “sushiology” of migration.<sup>19</sup> Food can lie at the heart of integration experiences, which are often depicted as two-way processes:

Immigrants travel with their culinary practices and habits, while acquiring new food customs that they adapt naturally to their new life and, occasionally, import to their countries of origin. This mixing takes place, therefore, in both directions, as a reflection of human beings' need to share and dialogue, expressed through food.<sup>20</sup>

Food also acts as a catalyst for cultural fusion and new experience, as many of the world's so-called “global cities” can show.<sup>21</sup> Recent research shows that, globally, we are now more connected in culinary terms than ever before. A study of crop origins has found that the most important primary regions of diversity contributing to a country's modern food system are more often located elsewhere around the planet.<sup>22</sup> Immigration, mobility and trade links have helped facilitate the development of the modern food system. Cuisines such as “Indian curry” or the “chicken tikka masala” (which rose to the status of being called Britain's national dish) have been a widely acknowledged aspect of the Indian–Pakistani–Bangladeshi diaspora's contribution to bringing diverse people together both “on the table” and “inside the kitchen”.<sup>23</sup>

Food culture can also be enriched by migrants returning home. In Belize, for example, its diversity and emigration patterns have allowed for the development of a rich food culture that draws on a variety of

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<sup>18</sup> Pilcher, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Skerry, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Oussedik, 2012:55.

<sup>21</sup> Kershen, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Khoury et al., 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Lal, Reeves and Rai, 2006.

cuisines and ingredients that are brought home to the country by migrant workers.<sup>24</sup> There are many countries throughout the world that can claim their cuisines have been enriched by international migration and the transfer of related cultural practices, especially those situated along sea and land trade routes or part of long-term migration corridors, such as Malta and Singapore. Recent studies have found a strong relationship between diversity of modern cuisines and migration.<sup>25</sup>

In recent years, the arenas of professional and representational sport at the international level have become important in anti-racism and counter-xenophobia campaigns. The highly competitive and elite nature of this sector, as well as its high profile, has meant that migrants are often centre-stage for predominantly positive reasons.<sup>26</sup> In many ways, elite sports allow migrants to “transcend” discrimination and other negative issues because of the extraordinary talent they display and the admiration they may invoke. Programmes such as the European Sport Inclusion Network, the Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe, and “Welcome Football” (Australia) have sought to acknowledge and utilize migrant sports stars as positive role models, including to encourage integration through sports activities.<sup>27</sup> And yet, research has pointed to issues of inequality in the international sphere of elite sports, whereby migrants from countries of considerable, long-standing talent at the representative level have not necessarily been able to support vibrant sporting systems. Or, put another way, “during the 2002 soccer World Cup, 21 out of 23 players on the team from Senegal... played in the French league... real Senegalese football is not therefore played within Senegal, but in the clubs of Europe”.<sup>28</sup> At the local level in Australia, Sudanese migrants have established basketball teams at local sports clubs as a way of encouraging teenagers from the community – African-Australian and others – to leave street culture behind.<sup>29</sup> Australia is a sporting country, and the discourse on sports and migration has been reasonably strong, with policy and programming including sporting activities as a means of integration. However, recent research has found that migrants’ cultural contributions can be both an asset to, and a source of exclusion from, sport participation.<sup>30</sup> This depends, in part, on the majority–minority aspects of the sports activity and the extent to which the specific cultural capital of migrants can be flexibly incorporated into sporting systems.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, there is no doubt that, overall, migrants have made significant positive contributions in sports at local, national and global levels. See, for example, the text box below on the “Salah effect”.

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24 Wilk, 1999.

25 Sajadmanesh et al., 2017.

26 Lal, Reeves and Rai, 2006.

27 Atkinson, 2015; CMY, n.d.; SPIN, n.d.

28 Simiyu Njororai, 2010:449. This was also the case for the 2018 World Cup, in which the winning French team was almost entirely comprised players of African origin (McPartland, 2018).

29 Hinds, 2018.

30 Smith, Spaaij and McDonald, 2018.

31 Ibid.

## The Salah effect

Besides his second-minute penalty for Liverpool FC against Tottenham Hotspur FC in Madrid on 1 June, Egyptian football striker Mo Salah may have also scored a goal against prejudice, according to a new study.

On the pitch, Salah often celebrates goals by dropping to his knees and touching his forehead to the grass in the sujood (an Islamic prayer position), while Liverpool fans have a chant that goes: “If he scores another few, then I’ll be Muslim, too.” But the Salah effect is having an impact beyond the stadium walls, say researchers from Stanford University, who found a drop in hate crimes around Liverpool since Salah signed with the club in June 2017. Islamophobia – or anti-Muslim racism – has been on the rise in the UK since the 9/11 attacks in New York in 2001, according to think-tank Runnymede Trust. There are generally spikes in anti-Muslim hate crimes between 24 to 72 hours after a terrorist attack by Islamic fundamentalists, such as the attack at Westminster in London in March 2017.

The report examined data from police departments around England, including Merseyside, the UK county in which Liverpool is located. It found hate crimes there were “significantly lower” – dropping by 18.9% since Salah joined the club – than would be otherwise expected.

“The observed decrease is larger in Merseyside than in all placebo counties, suggesting the result is not merely due to chance,” wrote the researchers. They noted that the trend has not coincided with a general decline in crime: “There is a larger relative decline in hate crimes than in any other crime category.” Not only that, but after studying 15 million tweets by UK football fans, the researchers found Liverpool supporters had halved the number of anti-Muslim tweets they were posting.

In the Stanford study, a survey of more than 8,000 Liverpool fans suggested the reason for the reduction in prejudice towards Muslims in Merseyside was because Salah was familiarizing his fans with Islam, through his observation of the faith, while his image as a bubbly father, friend and fantastic footballer was breaking down stereotypes of “threatening Muslims”. Through his now-famous goal celebration, his social media posts, his pitch-side interviews and seeing his wife Magi cheering him in a veil, Salah’s fans have been invited into his public and private lives. “These findings suggest that positive exposure to outgroup celebrities can reveal new and humanizing information about the group at large, reducing prejudiced attitudes and behaviours,” the researchers concluded. And they hope the Salah effect will offer up “new potential avenues for building social cohesion around the globe”.

Salah was named one of Time magazine’s 100 most influential people of 2019, described by HBO host John Oliver as “a humble, thoughtful, funny man who isn’t taking any of this too seriously”. Perhaps the last word should go to his Liverpool manager, Jurgen Klopp, who praised the athlete’s recognition in Time, noting, “Mo is a very smart person and his role is very influential. In the world at the moment, it is very important that you have people like Mo.”

Abridged excerpt of Whiting, 2019.

Just as extraordinary sporting talent has been found to enable individuals to transcend aspects of racism, migrants possessing exceptional artistic ability have been able to gain popularity and achieve success, thereby providing diverse role models for others in their communities. This is not to say that discrimination is overcome, but that social norms are able to be shaped over time in positive and constructive ways through admiration and respect (as highlighted in the text box above). In popular culture, difference is an asset, providing an “edge” in highly competitive talent and consumer-driven markets, making migrants from diverse backgrounds often overrepresented in entertainment sectors.<sup>32</sup> In the creation of pop music, migrants can contribute fresh ideas:

Artistic production is an endeavour in which innovation is highly prized. This may give migrants and their ambivalently native born yet not-quite-native children some ironic advantages... Bringing different frames, tastes and repertoires from their cultures of origin may give migrants something new to add to the creative mix.<sup>33</sup>

Cultural traditions can also be shared experiences as well as form the basis of resilience and strength in foreign (sometimes hostile) environments. A recent line of analysis has focused on “super-diversity” and the benefits as well as challenges highly diverse communities can present as a result of international migration, including in relation to cultural fusion and social cohesion, but also social tensions and xenophobia.<sup>34</sup> The notion of “super-diversity” often relates to cities as the main site of increasingly diverse populations<sup>35</sup> and, relatedly, of diversity of sociocultural settings and experiences.

Migrants have also made significant sociocultural contributions to countries of origin. It has long been observed that migrants bring with them new ideas, values and practices, sometimes referred to as “social remittances”.<sup>36</sup> These types of remittances are transferred or exchanged in various ways, including “when migrants return to live in or visit their communities of origin, when non-migrants visit those in the receiving country, or through the exchange of letters, videos, cassettes, emails, blog posts and telephone calls”.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, not all social remittances are positive. The ideas and practices that migrants bring with them can have both positive and negative effects.<sup>38</sup> For example, migrants have helped to shape gender norms in countries of origin by supporting and arguing for greater gender equity after experiencing it in other countries. Returning migrants have been found to have contributed positively to the empowerment of women and girls in their home countries.<sup>39</sup> One recent migration study found migrants in countries with gender parity are likely to promote gender equality in the social institutions in countries of origin, with women being greater agents of change than men.<sup>40</sup> However, those who migrated to countries with lower ratings of gender equality tend to bring back more conservative gender norms.<sup>41</sup> A similar trend has been observed in relation to fertility rates. A 2013 study examining the relationship between international migration and the fertility rates of countries of origin at the macroeconomic level found that migration to countries with lower

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32 Lal, Reeves and Rai, 2006.

33 Kasinitz and Martiniello, 2019:858.

34 Vertovec, 2007; Van der Meer and Tolsma, 2014. Noting that the empirical basis of the term has been questioned by empirical findings showing that in some locations (such as the United States), migration has increased but there has been a narrowing of diversity of immigrants (Czaika and de Haas, 2014).

35 Nicholls and Uitermark, 2016.

36 Levitt, 1998.

37 Lamba-Nieves and Levitt, 2011.

38 Ibid.

39 Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2010; Lafleur and Duchesne, 2017; Grabowska and Engbersen, 2016; Kenny and O'Donnell, 2016.

40 Ferrant and Tuccio, 2015.

41 Ibid.

fertility rates is associated with a reduction in fertility rates at home, while migration to destinations with high fertility rates tends to result in the reverse.<sup>42</sup>

## Migrants' contributions in civic–political terms

Migrants can be important contributors to civic–political life. In destination countries, for example, migrants can be involved in governance and politics at different levels (such as community/local areas, national levels), undertake volunteer work, and support fellow migrants (especially those who are newly arrived) as they integrate into new communities. Chapter 6 of this report discusses aspects of these issues from an integration and social cohesion perspective, including the extent to which migrants are able to wholly engage in political processes (such as democratic elections).

Perhaps more than sociocultural and economic contributions, the extent to which migrants are able to make civic–political contributions depends on policy settings of the country, including at the national, subnational and local levels; this topic is discussed in chapter 6 of this report and is not repeated here. However, the key factors influencing migrants' contributions have been neatly summarized in a publication on migrants' civic–political contributions (see table 1). This summary table shows the complexity of factors affecting the extent to which migrants are able to contribute in the civic–political sphere, which include structural settings but extend to other factors, including cultural and demographic aspects.

**Table 1. Factors influencing immigrants' civic–political contributions**

<b>Global level</b>	<b>National level (origin and destination)</b>	<b>Local level (external and intragroup)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation and communication technology</li> <li>• International laws and treaties on human rights</li> <li>• International power politics, pressures and conflicts involving immigrants' home country/region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographic proximity between origin and destination</li> <li>• Structure and dynamics of the economy</li> <li>• State–national model of civic–political integration</li> <li>• Civic culture/practice of inclusion–exclusion (multiculturalism)</li> <li>• State of Nation-building process</li> <li>• Immigration/emigration policies and citizenship</li> <li>• State-to-State bilateral relationship</li> <li>• Patriarchal/egalitarian gender relations in private and public spheres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure and dynamics of the economy</li> <li>• Civic culture/practice of inclusion–exclusion (multiculturalism)</li> <li>• Extent of residential segregation</li> <li>• Intergroup relations</li> <li>• Proportion of foreign-born</li> <li>• Immigrant/ethnic group size and residential concentration</li> <li>• Sojourn/diaspora mentality</li> <li>• Immigrant/ethnic group sense of civic entitlement</li> <li>• Internal organization and leadership</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Morawska, 2013, p. 142.

42 Beine, Docquier and Schiff, 2013.

As can be seen from table 1, normative or policy settings at all three governance levels (global, national and local) are important in circumscribing migrants' civic-political contributions. For example, the right to vote, hold public office, or join a political party or a trade union may be set by (or rely upon) regulations at different levels, determining the extent and nature of related engagement. In some places, for example, migrants are able (and expected) to contribute actively, including through voting in democratic elections (e.g. New Zealand), although this is still relatively uncommon for national elections. (See the text box on "Countries where migrants can vote in national elections" in chapter 6 of this report.) The ability to vote in democratic elections is often linked to naturalization, so that migrants who become citizens are able to vote as well as stand for public office. In the United States, for example, the November 2018 elections for the 116th Congress delivered the most racially and ethnically diverse Congress in the country's history, and 13 per cent of its members are first- or second-generation migrants.<sup>43</sup> In other locations, such as Gulf States, migrant workers make up very significant proportions of workforces and yet are banned from contributing to the protection of workers' rights through collective/trade unionism, let alone able to naturalize (see chapter 6 of this report).<sup>44</sup>

The role of diaspora has received significant attention in research and policy communities, and the extent to which diaspora groups are able to engage in the political processes of origin countries varies widely, and can be contested and sensitive.<sup>45</sup> Recent Turkish elections (Parliamentary, and a referendum on the Constitution), for example, showed a high rate of participation by the Turkish diaspora and were also the subject of controversy, namely the extent of election campaigning by political parties targeting Turks living in Europe.<sup>46</sup> There are also some specific limitations on diaspora engagement that are set at the international level, such as limits on the most extreme forms of political insurgency conducted by banned organizations operating transnationally.<sup>47</sup> Experiences in destination countries can also shape the political ideals of migrants as they witness different systems in action and become integrated into host societies. Migrants can bring back political ideologies to origin countries when they return, temporarily or permanently. Research has found that returning Filipino migrants from Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China, for example, showed a higher commitment to democracy, while returnees from Saudi Arabia expressed more ambivalence towards it.<sup>48</sup> Migrants, including refugees, can also be important agents of change in peacebuilding and reconstruction processes, bringing their experiences, skills and resources to the rebuilding of infrastructure, social cohesion and political processes in post-conflict settings, as shown in the text box below.<sup>49</sup>

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43 Bialik, 2019; Geiger, Bialik and Gramlich, 2019.

44 ILO, 2019; Khadria, 2016.

45 Pan, 1999; Lal, Reeves and Rai, 2006.

46 Adamson, 2018.

47 Clarke, 2017.

48 Rother, 2009.

49 Bradley, Milner and Peruniak, 2019; Jacobsen, Young and Osman, 2008; Milner, 2011.

## Diaspora building peace

Diaspora involvement in the conflict ‘back home’ can be both positive and negative because of the diversity within the diaspora. Diaspora individuals and organisations often have conflicting roles: some contribute to the conflict and prolong the conflict through the provision of financial, material and political support that is used for military purposes and decreases the parties’ incentives to negotiate. Others contribute to peace and the resolution of conflict through the provision of financial, material and political support that can put pressure on parties to engage in negotiations to bring about a political solution.<sup>a</sup>

Until recently, the dominant discourse on diaspora engagement in peacebuilding primarily focused on the negative aspects of diaspora engagement in conflict and post-conflict contexts, namely, the coercive power of diaspora groups. Diasporas were viewed as fuelling conflict and exacerbating tensions; however, diasporas often contribute positively towards peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected countries. The challenge is how to inspire diasporas to direct their energy to the promotion of a sustainable peace.

A Diaspora peacebuilder must be dexterous, informed, connected, passionate and courageous. No-one embodies this more than Stéphanie Mbanzendore, founder member of the organisation Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD).<sup>b</sup> During the Diaspora Academy,<sup>c</sup> Stéphanie emphasised the value of soft power when sharing her experience as a diaspora peacebuilder actively engaged in peace work in the Netherlands and Burundi. Soft power as a strategy requires careful and clear consideration of people, issues and processes. It also involves taking decisions that allow the peace potential of a situation to manifest gracefully through nuance engagement in navigating a challenging reality. Stéphanie demonstrates the skilful use of soft power in planning a trip home. In July 2004, she participated in a trip to Burundi aimed at introducing the Burundian diaspora to the new Burundian government, to build relations, and to assess the situation; this was her first visit home in nine years. There was a great deal of planning, strategising and preparation beforehand to make the trip a success.

After 2004, Stéphanie did lots of capacity-building<sup>d</sup> trainings<sup>e</sup> focused on building peace in Burundi, and a campaign to educate girls. A practical consideration (the high cost of hiring training venues) led to the idea of possibly building a training centre. In Stéphanie’s own words, “At first, I doubted it is possible, but when you don’t ask, you don’t get.” On her return to the Netherlands, Stéphanie approached the Dutch Government with the idea to build a centre, and received a positive response. She then asked counterparts in Burundi what their contribution would be to this project, and the local municipality gave the land for the building. The Multi-Purpose Centre of Kirundo was built; it has a large hall that seats 250, a library, training room, two offices, a computer room, and a large inside compound. The First Lady of Burundi officially opened the centre on 11 March 2011. The staff of the Centre has an orange uniform to acknowledge and thank the Netherlands for its contribution.

- a Smith and Stares, 2007.
- b Burundian Women for Peace and Development was established in 2001 with seven women. Stéphanie Mbanzendoré is a founding member. Available at [www.bwpd.nl](http://www.bwpd.nl).
- c Stéphanie participated in the Diaspora Academy as an expert.
- d Capacity-building training was held on the topics of: conflict resolution, gender-based violence, domestic violence, leadership, self-esteem, elections and campaigning, HIV/AIDS and youth.
- e Stephanie says, "At the end of every training, all participants received a new bicycle. They need means to travel. They are very happy with that. They say, "We've got somebody who understands our concern."

Abridged excerpt of Nordien, 2017.

## The economic contributions of migrants

In terms of economic contributions, there is a very substantial and growing body of evidence on the centrality of migrants' remittances to support families and local communities in origin countries.<sup>50</sup> International remittances – in contrast to overseas development assistance and, to a lesser extent, direct foreign investment – are localized contributions made through personal transactions, typically helping families to meet basic household needs (such as food and shelter) and alleviate poverty.<sup>51</sup> The money that migrants send home can be important buffers against unexpected costs, supporting household financial stability and resilience.<sup>52</sup> Money can also support access to health services and investment in education of immediate and extended family members, as well as provide the ability to invest in businesses, property and other assets.<sup>53</sup> The introduction and expansion of "mobile money" apps over the last decade has allowed for migrants' contributions in the form of remittances to better support their families and friends. An example from Kenya illustrates:

As of 2013, 93 per cent of the adult population in Kenya is registered for M-Pesa, and 60 per cent actively use the service. The impact of the M-Pesa is much broader as it has facilitated the creation of thousands of small businesses and gave nearly 20 million Kenyans access to financial services, particularly low-income Kenyans. The percentage of people living on less than \$1.25 a day using M-Pesa grew from less than 20 per cent in 2008 to 72 per cent in three years.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to enhanced financial inclusion, "mobile money" also provides lower money transfer costs and reduces the risk of exploitative practices. There is, however, recognition that both access rates and usage differ socioeconomically and demographically within local communities. Recent research in Ghana, for example, has found that women display different financial behaviours and are more likely to save in household settings using mobile money, and yet have more limited access to information and communication technology (ICT).

<sup>50</sup> de Haas, 2005; Mohieldin and Ratha, 2019; OECD/ILO, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> IOM, 2016; Skeldon, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Beaton, Catão and Koczan, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> UNDP, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Shrier, Canale and Pentland, 2016:10. M-Pesa, which stands for Mobile Money, is a platform that makes it possible for users to store and transfer money to other users using mobile phones. See Suri and Jack, 2016.

The researchers subsequently recommended that “efforts should be geared towards the provision of mobile phones (and other ICTs) to women to help them to be financially included to achieve development”.<sup>55</sup> A similar study in Uganda found that poor households would benefit from tailored programmes and additional assistance to support greater access to mobile money services.<sup>56</sup> In some countries, various laws and regulations have limited ICTs for cross-border financial flows. While it is important to ensure digital security and prevent illicit financial transfers, overly cumbersome and rigid regulations have often driven up the cost of sending remittances, for example, and slowed the uptake of new technologies needed to enhance financial inclusion.<sup>57</sup>

Legal status can have a profound effect on the ability to contribute economically to families and communities back home. Irregularity and precariousness are linked to more limited options to remit, and higher costs in doing so. Irregularity in destination also often translates into lower wages with greater risk of exploitation, higher relative living costs and reduced choice, which can in turn translate into a lower capacity to remit.<sup>58</sup> In addition, studies have found that greater precariousness associated with working as an irregular migrant in informal settings results in workers ensuring they have enough money to deal with uncertainties, which again negatively affects their ability to remit.<sup>59</sup> This is in the context of recognition that irregular migrants – even more so than other migrants – will be key contributors to societies of the type of labour least favoured by the native-born: the so-called 3D (dirty, dangerous, demanding) jobs.<sup>60</sup> The “winners” in all this, some argue, are the receiving countries, who are able to benefit from a steady supply of workers in the informal economy and so keep wage costs down,<sup>61</sup> while also not benefiting from income tax revenues. This is not uniform, however, and certain sectors in many economies (such as the agricultural, fishery and care sectors) rely more heavily on irregular migrant workers, resulting in labour market segmentation. Employers in these sectors may operate as “bad actors” by exploiting irregular migrant workers, who are more likely to accept lower pay and bad working conditions out of desperation.<sup>62</sup> As one means of addressing these issues, some countries implement regularization programmes periodically so that those who are in irregular situations can gain lawful status and (re)enter the formal economy.<sup>63</sup> However, more systematic responses focusing on decent work for native-born and migrants alike will ensure people performing low-/semi-skilled work are able to improve their ability to contribute.

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55 Osabuohien and Karakara, 2018.

56 Murendo et al., 2018.

57 Cooper, Esser and Peter, 2018; IFAD and the World Bank Group, 2015.

58 Baldwin-Edwards, 2008; Kanko and Teller, 2014; Shah, 2009.

59 Schluter and Wahba, 2009.

60 Shah, 2009; Khadria, 2009.

61 Shah, 2009.

62 Papademetriou, 2014.

63 Triandafyllidou, Bartolini and Guidi, 2019.

### More than a worker...

While we often think of international migrants as primarily a source of labour, they are more than just workers, playing diverse economic roles in origin and destination countries, including:

- As **workers**, migrants are part of, but also have an impact on, the labour market; they also alter the country's income distribution and influence domestic investment priorities.
- As **students**, migrants – or their children – contribute to increasing the stock of human capital and diffusing knowledge.
- As **entrepreneurs and investors**, they create job opportunities and promote innovation and technological change.
- As **consumers**, they contribute to increasing the demand for domestic – and foreign – goods and services, thus affecting the price and production levels, as well as the trade balance.
- As **savers**, they not only send remittances to their countries of origin but also contribute indirectly, through the bank system, to fostering investment in their host countries.
- As **taxpayers**, they contribute to the public budget and benefit from public services.
- As **family members**, they support others, including those who need care and support.

Source: OECD/ILO, 2018 (adapted).

Migrants have made and continue to make significant economic contributions, in both countries of origin and destination. Migrants' monetary remittances to their countries of origin are among the most widely researched and scrutinized economic contributions. As the amount of money sent in the form of remittances has sharply increased over the years, so has the interest from policymakers and academics in understanding how remittances contribute, both positively and negatively, to recipient countries. In 2018, global remittances amounted to USD 689 billion, whereas flows to low- and middle-income countries alone rose to a record USD 529 billion, up from USD 483 billion in 2017.<sup>64</sup> The significance of remittances to countries of origin cannot be overstated; remittances to low- and middle-income countries, except for China, exceeded foreign direct investment (FDI) flows in 2018,<sup>65</sup> a reflection of increased international migration, as well as new and relatively lower cost channels for international money transfers.<sup>66</sup> More information on remittances is provided in chapters 2 (global overview) and 3 (regional developments) of this report.

While migrants' other aggregate contributions to countries of origin are not as well documented as remittances, a growing body of evidence is providing a sharper focus on these benefits. One such contribution is financing

64 World Bank Group, 2019.

65 Ibid.

66 Meyer and Shera, 2017.

through instruments such as diaspora bonds. For struggling and cash-strapped countries, diaspora bonds are a relatively inexpensive way to raise funds, including during periods of financial stress<sup>67</sup> and after disasters; they have been a key alternative to borrowing funds from more expensive lenders such as other governments, financial institutions or capital markets. Borrowing at an attractive rate from their citizens abroad, governments have also been able to pursue large development projects. Meanwhile, diaspora bonds have provided citizens and former citizens abroad with the opportunity to be development actors back home – to tangibly contribute to their origin countries' economies, particularly as disaster management initiatives after calamities such as earthquakes and floods have struck their "homelands". In 2017, for example, Nigeria issued its first diaspora bond, raising USD 300 million to fund infrastructure projects.<sup>68</sup> Armenia, a country with a large diaspora, also established government-issued diaspora bonds in 2018.<sup>69</sup> But India and Israel are perhaps the most successful examples of countries that have reaped benefits from diaspora bonds, with both countries raising billions of dollars over the decades.<sup>70</sup> India has also been offering differential and tax-free interest rates on fixed deposits in Indian banks made by non-resident Indians.<sup>71</sup> Since 1951, Israel has raised more than USD 40 billion through this financing mechanism.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to diaspora bonds, migrants have contributed to their home countries' economies by directly investing in or starting new businesses. Several studies have demonstrated that returned migrants are more likely to start businesses than are people who never left their countries.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, in some countries, diaspora-owned companies make up a significant share of FDI. In Georgia, for example, an estimated 17 per cent of private sector firms belong to the country's diaspora.<sup>74</sup> Diaspora entrepreneurship has not only helped to build physical capital in countries of origin, but also continues to enhance economic productivity as well as contribute to job creation. But the economic contributions migrants make to countries of origin extend beyond financing and entrepreneurship; by establishing migration networks across countries, migrants have reduced information barriers and have helped to boost trade and investment flows between countries of origin and destination.<sup>75</sup> A recent study, exploring if the presence of migrants has an impact on FDI investment decisions, found that immigration does indeed reduce information asymmetries and positively affects outgoing FDI stocks from destination to countries of origin.<sup>76</sup> The presence of a large number of migrants can also establish a market for products manufactured in their countries of origin and thus enhance trade flows between economies.<sup>77</sup> Offshore business process outsourcing and back-office operations are significant ventures in India, started by returnees by raising venture capital at times of economic downturns in the developed countries, particularly the United States, that drove them back home in the first place.<sup>78</sup> Among the most important contributions that migrants make to their countries of origin is their influence on human capital stocks. This is done either directly when they return with new knowledge and skills, or indirectly

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67 Ratha and Ketkar, 2011.

68 Brookings Institution, 2018.

69 Lieberman, 2018.

70 Strohecker, 2016.

71 A variety of bank accounts are offered by the Indian banking system. See Khadria, 2009, 2012.

72 Strohecker, 2016.

73 OECD, 2016; Demurger and Xu, 2011; Naudé, Siegel and Marchand, 2015.

74 OECD, 2016.

75 IMF, 2015.

76 Fensore, 2016.

77 Ibid.

78 Khadria, 2009.

by incentivizing citizens to acquire or enhance their human capital, bolstering a country's overall skills.<sup>79</sup> Innovative engagement of expatriate doctors and nurses in a perceived "United Nations Healthkeeping Force" (emulating the United Nations Peacekeeping Force) to provide free or low-cost medical care to unskilled and irregular immigrants among their own diaspora, as well as in low-Human Development Index third countries, has been suggested.<sup>80</sup> However, a recurring concern among policymakers is that emigration, particularly of high-skilled migrants, can come at a cost. "Brain drain" and "brain waste", or the loss/under-utilization of high-skilled human capital, are commonly raised and widely debated issues.<sup>81</sup>

The economic contributions of migrants in destination countries have been examined in depth over time. A large body of evidence exists on how both low- and high-skilled migrants have rectified labour shortages, which may relate to particular occupation groups, sectors or specific professions.<sup>82</sup> In countries with large shares of high-skilled natives, low-skilled migrant workers have complemented the skills of natives by occupying jobs in sectors where citizens are in short supply; in many cases, these are also sectors that native workers consider unattractive.<sup>83</sup> This not only addresses labour gaps in industries such as construction and agriculture,<sup>84</sup> but also allows native workers in high-skilled sectors to further specialize in their work. This complementarity of skills has been significant for native, high-skilled women. As migrants have filled jobs in childcare and housekeeping, female native workers have been able to increase their workplace participation and productivity. For example, a study conducted in Italy found that, when there was a large supply of immigrants who provided household services, native Italian women spent more time at work.<sup>85</sup> A 2011 study in the United States drew the same conclusion, suggesting that by lowering the costs of household services, low-skilled immigration increases the labour supply and average hours of market work of high-skilled native women.<sup>86</sup>

Some countries are almost entirely dependent on migrant workers, especially in industries such as construction, hospitality and retail. In the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, for example, international migrants make up significant proportions of their national populations (88% and 76%, respectively).<sup>87</sup> And for countries undergoing population decline, migrants can be essential in offsetting some of the negative economic consequences associated with a shrinking population, which can stymie a country's overall economic productivity and growth. As fertility rates tumble across regions such as Europe, migrants remain significant contributors to population growth and labour supply.<sup>88</sup> In the European Union, natural population change (births and deaths) only contributed 20 per cent to population growth from 2012 to 2016, while net migration added 80 per cent to total population increase.<sup>89</sup>

In terms of their broader economic contributions with large-scale and long-term externalities to societies, migrants have long been drivers of entrepreneurship and innovation. Migrants, unlike people who have never

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79 McKinsey Global Institute, 2016.

80 Khadria, 2012.

81 "Brain drain" is defined as the migration of high-skilled people from poorer to wealthier countries, while "brain waste" refers to a downgrading of skills, where migrants end up working in occupations that require skill levels lower than those they had acquired in their countries of origin. See Docquier and Rapoport, 2011; Pires, 2015.

82 Khadria, 2012; Ruhs, 2013; Goldin et al., 2018; Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan, 2011; IMF, 2015.

83 Constant, 2014.

84 Ibid.

85 Barone and Mocetti, 2010.

86 Cortés and Tessada, 2011.

87 UN DESA, 2019.

88 See the discussion on migration and population change in world regions in chapter 3 of this report.

89 Eurostat, 2019.

lived outside of their home countries, are much more willing to take business risks. This, as some researchers have observed, may be because migrants have already taken the risk of leaving their countries of origin to pursue opportunities in new places and are thus well-primed to be risk takers.<sup>90</sup> By overcoming obstacles and the challenges that come with moving to a new country, they develop the so-called “growth mindset”, which allows them to be adaptable, more confident and to have a higher tolerance for uncertainty.<sup>91</sup> Recent studies, however, have cautioned against seeing migrants as “super-entrepreneurs” compared with natives when aggregate data are patchy at best.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, migrant entrepreneurs continue to face significant challenges, which can result in the collapse of their enterprises. The failure to access credit is among the most important constraints on migrant entrepreneurship, and while this is not unique to migrants, they have greater difficulty acquiring business loans than those who are native born.<sup>93</sup> Factors such as lack of collateral, shorter credit histories, possible discrimination and credit institutions’ unfamiliarity with migrants all make them less likely to receive credit from lending institutions.<sup>94</sup> Other obstacles – including limited rights to start a business, lack of local networks, unfamiliarity with the local business environment and language and cultural barriers – remain significant constraints on migrant entrepreneurship.<sup>95</sup>

Perhaps more than in any other developed country, immigrants have significantly contributed to driving innovation and entrepreneurship in the United States. While immigrants represented only 13 per cent of the population in a country of more than 300 million people, they comprised nearly 30 per cent of all entrepreneurs.<sup>96</sup> In addition to their disproportionate contribution toward entrepreneurship, recent research suggests that businesses founded by immigrants in the United States were not only more likely to survive, but also tended to outperform those started by native citizens when it came to employment growth over three- and six-year periods.<sup>97</sup> However, the same study did find that, in terms of growth in wages, immigrant-founded companies did not perform any better than those started by natives and may in fact underperform their native peers.<sup>98</sup> The success and contribution to innovation is most visible in the engineering and technology industries; in about one quarter of engineering and technology firms founded in the United States from 2006 to 2012, for example, at least one main founder was an immigrant.<sup>99</sup> Silicon Valley is often cited as the hub of such successful migrant innovators and entrepreneurs.<sup>100</sup> Yet this trend is not limited to the United States. Globally, migrants continue to help create jobs as well as contribute to destination countries’ economic growth through entrepreneurship. A 2012 survey of 69 economies by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor demonstrated that immigrants had higher entrepreneurial activity compared with natives.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, while there is a dearth of research on the contributions of migrants to entrepreneurship in low-income countries, emerging studies, particularly those focused on refugees, show that where they are given the opportunity to work, refugees make positive contributions to destination economies. In Uganda, a country that hosts one

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90 Goldin et al., 2018.

91 Kelly, 2018.

92 Naudé, Siegel and Marchand, 2017.

93 Desiderio, 2014.

94 Ibid.

95 UNCTAD, IOM and UNHCR, 2018.

96 Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2017.

97 Kerr and Kerr, 2016.

98 Ibid.

99 Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 2014.

100 Lal, Reeves and Rai, 2006.

101 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2013.

of the largest refugee populations in the world, refugees – those residing in both cities and in rural areas – are highly entrepreneurial and have created jobs not just for themselves but also for Ugandan nationals.<sup>102</sup> Research conducted on refugee entrepreneurs in Kampala, showed that refugees employ 2.4 people on average in the city.<sup>103</sup> A similar trend has been observed in South Africa, whose self-settlement approach to refugees allows them not only to move freely, but also to find work and to be self-employed. However, because many refugees struggle to find employment in the formal economy, many choose to start their own enterprises in the informal sector. A recent report on “refugee entrepreneurial economies in urban South Africa” found that refugee enterprises have contributed to the country’s economy by creating jobs;<sup>104</sup> an estimated 52 per cent and 45 per cent of businesses in the provinces of Cape Town and Limpopo, respectively, employ people in their enterprises, with around 50 per cent of these businesses more likely to employ South Africans.<sup>105</sup>

### Migrants as innovators

The contributions that migrants make toward innovation, particularly in destination countries, have received much attention in recent years. There is little dispute and widespread consensus that migrants are significant drivers of innovation globally. A recent report identifies four ways through which migrants enhance innovation: (a) migrants’ higher concentration in economic sectors that tend to be more innovative; (b) through patents and as entrepreneurs; (c) their greater contribution to business start-ups compared with natives; and (d) by fostering investment, trade and technology linkages.<sup>a</sup> The United States is the most salient example of migrants’ innovation. For example, migrants have long been linked to an increase in patents in the United States.<sup>b</sup> In fact, given their concentration in fields such as science and engineering, migrants in the United States have been shown to patent twice as much as natives.<sup>c</sup> A recent study, which sought to determine how high-skilled immigration affects “product reallocation” in the United States, found that “a 10 per cent increase in the share of H-1B workers is associated with a 2 per cent increase in product reallocation rates”.<sup>d</sup> In other words, companies that hired more highly skilled, college-educated foreign workers created more new products.<sup>e</sup> Product reallocation, which is another measure of innovation, is defined as the entry of new products into the market and exit of older products.<sup>f</sup>

A separate 2018 study determined that, despite comprising a relatively small share of the country’s population, migrants have accounted for 30 per cent of aggregate innovation in the United States since 1976.<sup>g</sup> The contribution of immigrants to United States innovation is evident in the number of Nobel Laureates and members of the National Academy of Sciences who are immigrants, which is triple that of natives.<sup>h</sup> Although most studies on innovation have focused on the United States, a growing body of work is exploring how migrants have made contributions in this area in other countries. A study assessing migrants’ contribution to the increase in patents in the United Kingdom, France and Germany determined that, similar to the United States, there is a positive correlation between high-skilled migrants and innovation.<sup>i</sup>

102 Betts et al., 2014.

103 Ibid.

104 Crush et al., 2017.

105 Ibid.

- a Goldin et al., 2018.
- b Rassenfossea and Pellegrino, 2019; Moser, Voena and Waldinger, 2014; Hunt and Gauthier-Loiselle, 2010; Kerr and Lincoln, 2010.
- c Hunt and Gauthier-Loiselle, 2010.
- d Khanna and Lee, 2018.
- e Ibid.
- f Ibid.
- g Bernstein et al., 2018.
- h Goldin et al., 2018.
- i Venturini, Montobbio and Fassio, 2012.

## New impediments to the recognition of migrants' contributions

In previous sections, we have seen that there have always existed obstacles, major and minor, to migrants being able to contribute in origin and destination settings, typically related to policy settings stemming from a range of legal contexts. Many obstacles, for example, are based on the application of laws regulating societies more broadly, such as those related to labour law, property law, criminal law, tax law and such. Likewise, we have seen that changes in structural/policy settings and new technology (such as mobile money) have been successfully adopted to facilitate migrants' contributions in specific ways. The issue of maximizing or optimizing contributions and creating the right conditions for opportunities to be realized in the pursuit of peace and prosperity is, of course, not specific to migrants, but remains at the heart of policymaking in most countries throughout the world as it relates to all residents (citizen and non-citizens). However, the relationships between policymaking and politics have also evolved, bringing them much closer together over time for a range of reasons, including the 24/7 media cycle, the shift from "expertise and analysis" to "opinion", the very significant changes in expediency and delivery at the expense of critical reflection and adjustment, among others.<sup>106</sup>

Combined with seismic geopolitical events – such as the end of the Cold War, the 9/11 attacks, the 2015/16 large-scale movements of people to and through Europe – more recent policy environments have had to increasingly accommodate a more brutal form of politics and respond to the pressing issue of migration. This is most apparent in Western democratic countries, but is by no means limited to them. In a 2014 big data study on media depictions of migration and migrants in 10 countries,<sup>107</sup> one of the key findings was that politicians were by far the most dominant voices in the media in all countries. This was the case in Afghanistan, just as it was in Sri Lanka, Canada and the United Kingdom.<sup>108</sup> Immigration is increasingly being used as a political reference point, and as a way of defining values (and in democratic systems, as a means of appealing to the electorate). Some studies have found that "political conflict over immigration follows a political logic and must be attributed to parties and party competition rather than to 'objective

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<sup>106</sup> Kirkpatrick, Ackroyd and Walker, 2005; Weinberger, 2011.

<sup>107</sup> McAuliffe and Weeks, 2015. The 10 countries in scope were Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Viet Nam.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

pressures”.<sup>109</sup> The role of far-right parties in politicizing immigration for political expediency is a recurring theme in recent studies.<sup>110</sup> In other words, in many countries “anti-immigration” rhetoric has become a central plank of political branding in the quest for market share, regardless of the significance (or otherwise) of the substantive issue itself. What was once “dog-whistling” on anti-immigration has become a central theme in political messaging. Politics itself is becoming a significant impediment to balanced policy on immigration and the contributions of migrants.

## Politics and migration

Among the old stalwarts of the centre-left, there is a simple explanation for the decline of the parties they used to lead: immigration... Hardly a week passes without some candidate or columnist declaring that liberals will only regain power when they lock down the borders. The obsession with immigration is not an accident. It reflects a widely held belief that the decline of the grand parties of the centre-left across Europe... has been caused by the rise of the new parties of the populist radical right, who have “stolen” the old working-class vote with a nativist, even authoritarian, message.

...

But since the so-called refugee crisis of 2015, these worries have escalated into a panic, as the leaders of Europe’s social democratic parties scramble to show their concerns over immigration... [A] dramatic shift in the rhetoric of ostensibly centre-left parties is part of a larger panic over how to halt the spread of right-wing populism across the west in recent years.

...

...the recent growth of populist radical-right parties – unlike their initial expansion in the 1990s – has not been driven by winning over more of the working class. The real story is that responses to events such as 9/11 and the “refugee crisis” by mainstream commentators and politicians brought the arguments of the populist radical right more into the mainstream discussion – and their “solutions” consequently became acceptable to broader sections of the public. As a result, the most successful populist radical-right parties now are Volksparteien – “people’s parties”, rather than “workers’ parties” – and do not represent just the working class.

...

Academic research consistently shows that when mainstream parties move to the right in an attempt to co-opt the issues of the radical right, it does not hurt populist right parties – in fact, it often helps them.<sup>a</sup> Moreover, other research shows that it does not stop the electoral bleeding of social democratic parties either.<sup>b</sup> This makes perfect sense. By prioritising immigration as an issue – and reinforcing the negative depiction of migrants and migration – mainstream parties only help to boost the main issue and frame of the populist radical right. Moreover, populist radical right voters are not only nativist, they are also populist, which explains why the “immigration realism” of social democratic parties is ultimately not effective.

a Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2018.

b Abou-Chadi, 2018.

Abridged excerpt of Mudde, 2019.

109 Grande, Schwarzbözl and Fatke, 2018.

110 Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2018; Abou-Chadi, 2018; Mudde, 2019.

We must also recognize that the fundamental ways in which public debates occur has changed. By this we mean that the “who, what, where and how” of public discourse are manifestly different in a world that has recently experienced a rapid transformation in transnational connectivity. The ability to access information and opinion from different locations globally has massively expanded. We are also able to (self) publish our own views largely without restraint, a development made possible by relatively new social media platforms. By using these platforms, organized groups, regardless of their numeric size, are increasingly able to utilize open, real-time (un-curated) publishing to distort narratives in attempts to realize changes in political (and policy) decisions.<sup>111</sup> Overall, the way we – as countries, as communities, and increasingly as transnational value-based groups – describe and discuss migration to ourselves and to others is being shaped by the massive changes in the media landscape. Recent research on these changes has been undertaken utilizing big data analysis on Twitter, for example, finding that some groups are engaging in “entanglement” of messaging in order to portray refugees and other migrants as negative, regardless of the facts (see text box below).

### Transnational tribalism, immigration and social media platforms

A big data study of Twitter during the peak of the so-called refugee crisis (October 2015 to May 2016) analysed almost 7.5 million tweets collected through hashtags such as #refugee, #refugeecrisis and #flüchtlinge.<sup>a</sup> The study examined the framing of refugees in the Twittersphere, and the extent to which the frames represented alternative voices. The analysis found that, overall, dominant frames revolved around security and safety on the one hand and humanitarianism on the other. The study also identified some explicitly racist hashtags linked to some of the security and safety frames. Linking any new issue to pre-existing hashtags—for example, #refugees and #tcot – points to an emerging dynamic in which new issues are subsumed and used for different political purposes. The researchers found that Twitter is no longer a social media platform that operates as a levelling field; rather, the long-standing presence of some has already conditioned the medium, “socializing” new tags in their own way and “broadcasting” to millions of followers. This points to the instrumentalization of Twitter, where it is used strategically to achieve certain political ends by specific interests, such as far-right activists. There was evidence of increasingly strident anti-immigration voices in Europe. Overall, the refugee debate on Twitter was caught between the security and racist frames on the one hand, and humanitarian responses on the other.

It is understandable that European activists were found to be present in the study, given the events that were taking place at the time in Europe. The relationship to these events and the rise of transnational tribalism through social media platforms as well as traditional media, spearheaded by political leaders, is a topic of intense interest to many political scientists. Migration features prominently in these analyses, which is often characterized as “battles”, “struggles” and “hostilities”.<sup>b</sup> The main actors in the battle are based in Europe, the United States and Australia, and are able to connect via unprecedented transnational communication.<sup>c</sup> Rather than predominantly economic issues, the battle is over societal attitudes between “nationalism and protectionism” and “integration and openness”.<sup>d</sup> Immigration policy has regrettably become the centrepiece of this transnational struggle for political power.<sup>e</sup>

111 McAuliffe, 2018; Siapera et al., 2018; Suiter and Culloty, 2019.

- a Siapera et al., 2018.
- b Mounk and Foa, 2018.
- c Zemandl, 2018; Suiter and Culloty, 2019.
- d Kaufmann, 2017; Zemandl, 2018.
- e McAuliffe, 2018.

## Concluding observations on the challenge ahead

In an ideal world, there would be no need for this chapter to be written. The topic itself would be so obvious and uncontroversial as to render it irrelevant. And yet, it is more important now than at any other time in modern, post-war history to reflect on migrants' contributions to countries and communities around the world. Simply put, this is because it is becoming increasingly difficult to hear balanced perspectives in public debates on important policy issues, such as international migration.

Given this context, this chapter is not about quantitative cost-benefit analyses of migration. Instead, the chapter has looked at the often neglected but core determinant of the migrant(s) as contributors to communities of destination as well as those back in their places of origin.

With this perspective, we have focused on three central domains of what makes a good society: sociocultural, civic-political and economic contributions. Today in the twenty-first century, migrants may be better able to make contributions to these domains than they were in the last century (or prior) largely because of the phenomenal improvements in development that have taken place in most countries, as well as strong recognition of the need to ensure that global development and stability are underpinned by human rights.<sup>112</sup> Yet, this chapter also drives home the point that the contributions of migrants to societies, politics and the economies globally have not only been largely overlooked, downplayed and taken for granted, but also hindered, through proliferation of disruption and disinformation against migrants. Recent research and analysis show that some forms of technology are impacting our media, social and political interactions, and are becoming more pressing for governance, both in relation to the regulation of newer forms of technology and how they are shaping democratic processes.<sup>113</sup>

The question therefore remains as to what would be a balanced strategy to make the contributions optimally, if not maximally, visible, acknowledged and accepted on the global and national policy agendas.

While some activists and advocates argue for adopting political responses,<sup>114</sup> and others engage in countering negative images only by putting forward positive "idealized" representations of migrants, others argue that we need to be cautious, as these approaches risk further polarization in public discussions that are increasingly influenced by inflammatory (and sometimes inaccurate) social media commentary.<sup>115</sup> With this context in mind, the following implications for policy, practice and research are offered:

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, the United Nations Human Development Index results over time, which show significant improvements in the level of development in most countries globally.

<sup>113</sup> Morgan, 2018.

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, Crawley and McMahon, 2016.

<sup>115</sup> Kaufmann, 2017; Alfred, 2017.

- Balanced public discussions require greater scrutiny of “fake” social media content, including by promoting a better understanding of the responsibilities that go hand-in-hand with free speech. This is currently a “hot” issue in many parts of the world, with stricter regulatory regimes being actively considered, or having been put in place.<sup>116</sup>
- There is clearly a place for greater emphasis on migrant-centric research and analyses, as well as research on the social media activists’ influence on bolstering unbalanced political discourse (and ultimately political decisions). Ideally, this research would examine the impacts of a wide range of distorted messaging, noting that existing studies outlined in this chapter indicate that the negative, anti-migrant interest groups appear to be increasingly using social media platforms to great effect, at times regardless of accuracy or truthful representations.
- Both historically and contemporarily, there is strong evidence that migrants have made substantial contributions in a variety of settings and in a variety of important ways. However, it is also clear that there are structural limits that act to circumscribe migrants’ contributions in ways that are counterproductive for communities, States and migrants. The most obvious examples exist with respect to irregular or undocumented migrants who may be doing low-prestige, underpaid work that is, in many cases, nevertheless much needed. Structural reforms combined with migration policy initiatives (such as regularization and enhanced regular pathways) offer the opportunity to optimize migrants’ contributions and support sectors and communities.<sup>117</sup>
- There is room to build on innovations delivered by new technology – such as mobile money apps – to help facilitate migrants’ contributions in origin and destination settings. Migrant tech has the ability to support migrants all the way through the migration cycle, including as a means of supporting safe, regular and orderly migration. Further support of migrant tech start-ups is one practical approach, noting the work already underway in this area.<sup>118</sup>
- There is considerable room to improve recognition of the enormous value of sociocultural and civic-political contributions of migrants in societies and globally, including in political, media and research spheres. While this can be challenging, the tendency to focus on economic issues without fully acknowledging the importance of other aspects leads to a transactional view of societies and nation States. Expanding research, for example, on the influence migrants can have as positive leaders (for example, the “Salah effect”), as well as on the relationship between culinary knowledge transfer and health and well-being, would enable policymakers and general audiences to better appreciate the important contributions migrants have already made to modern life globally, as well as what further contributions they will offer.

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116 BBC, 2019; Tusikov and Haggart, 2019.

117 Triandafyllidou, Bartolini and Guidi, 2019.

118 See, for example, “Start-ups Without Borders” available at <https://startupswb.com/>.

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