

## New Geographies of Migration

Editorial to **DIE ERDE 141**, 2010, Issue 1-2

This double issue of “DIE ERDE” touches upon the theme of migration – which is certainly among the most exciting topics in the current public and academic discourse. But understanding the causes, the processes and patterns of migration projects is a challenging task. Internationally, the debate on migration and integration is concentrated in an independent (or separate) academic field labelled “migration studies”, while in Germany questions of “migration and integration” are still dealt with mainly as a part of population studies or as an annex of other fields of research such as education or social work – restricting the perspective often to the deficits and problems of integration. The current issue of “DIE ERDE” steps out of this narrow definition of migration as part of population studies. It introduces “migration studies” as a field on its own, with cultural, social and economic perspectives woven closely into the analysis. The focus of the chapters is on developments that are tightly linked to the process of globalisation and social transformation. Such a transformation process is indicated by the redefinition of symbols and myths, accentuated lines of inclusion and exclusion, by the construction of transnationalism and through highlighting the role of migration for global and regional econom-

ic restructuring. All contributions in this issue refer implicitly or explicitly to the question of whether we may identify new “geographies of migration” and if so, what its features might be, and how to make them visible<sup>1</sup>.

This publication presents a selection of papers that were prepared for the conference “Towards New Geographies of Migration? – Transnational Spaces, Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Development as Builders of Social and Spatial Organization in Europe” at Bremen University in September 2008, financed by DFG and BIGSSS (Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences). All contributions here give weight to an interpretation that sees migration as an outcome of international relations of power on the one hand and migrant agency on the other hand, generating new spatial arrangements (at the local, national and global level). Embedded in processes of globalisation and restructuring, migrants are often able to introduce social and economic changes in certain sectors and spaces, frequently in those that are perceived as “marginal” by the mainstream societies. It is argued here that migrants act as a propelling or at least an active force in the process of rescaling world-

wide, and it is assumed that migration functions as a defining force of social and spatial organisation. New geographies of migration have emerged and contributed to broader social change in Europe. Although German history, from the middle ages to the industrialisation phase and still today, migration has worked as a prominent form of social transformation (*Hoerder* 2010: 22, *Osterhammel* 2009: 195f.). Nevertheless, of course, there has been a substantial shift in the way migration works today. Why NEW geographies?

In 2010 there are more international migrants than ever before and their number is predicted to increase (see *Fig. 1*). This is a quantitative question only on the surface: More and increasingly heterogeneous groups of the population have to deal with “migration” and, more generally, with various forms of “mobilities”. However, it is not only individuals who are on the move, the “stable” part of the society is also increasingly confronted with the consequences of migration and is facing transformed local realities. For many social groups spatial mobility, as one form of human action, has now become a precondition for the organisation of their daily lives and life courses. Further forms of migration have changed: Circularity has become more important, and transnational communities constitute a new option for many migrants. The interest of migration research should thus concentrate preliminarily on the qualitative changes that occur with migration.

One theoretical commonality in all contributions in this issue is the notion that the analysis of migration and mobility may serve as a privileged way to understand the broader changes in the social and spatial organisation of societies. In addition, we have good reason to assume that the spatial implications of global change, such as global warming and the destabilisation of many states and territories, will increasingly lead to a perspective that sees “migration” as a core issue in the discipline of geography – and vice versa issues of regionalisation in the core of the migration de-

bate. Migration makes the abstract social organisation spatial and visible, especially in times of globalisation and in times of restructuring and growing regional inequalities. “Migration” brings together the social and spatial realities of various states and regions, cities and persons; it spans political borders and continents. Furthermore, migration has become a key feature in the process of europeanisation; all European countries show a proportion of about 5 to 20 % of their population being of migrant origin, and in most cities the share of immigrants is even higher. Migrants are no longer a transitional or marginal part of the population, which they were perceived as for many years, but they constitute a lasting feature of European societies. All articles here mention the crucial importance of transnational forms of social and spatial organisation and the creation of new local and global realities through migrants.

### Migration and Globalisation

Increasing globalisation since the late 1960s has changed the migratory flows all over the world. Especially during the 1990s globalisation gave migration a boost; new technologies, new possibilities to travel and new possibilities for the international transfer of money were introduced into the global circuits of goods and people. Further, new boundaries, or new national frontiers, created “new migrants”. Shifting boundaries sometimes turned former inhabitants statistically to “migrants”, for example in the former Soviet Union.

The increase of international migration affects absolute numbers as well as the relative number of international migrants among the world population (see *Fig. 1*) – in 2010 they make up about 213 mill. people worldwide (about 104.7 mill. female migrants and 109.1 mill. male migrants). How are these data gathered? The UN provides the only available data, and these again are a compilation of various sources of national data. These data differ from country to country, they are gath-

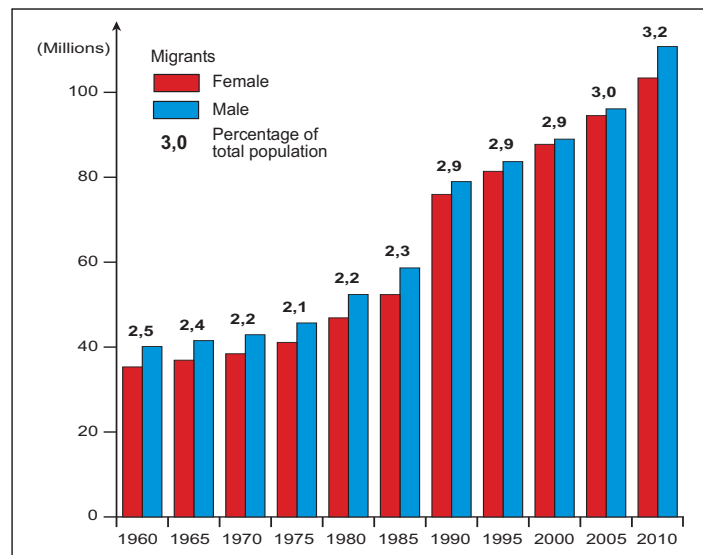


Fig. 1 Estimated number of all international migrants worldwide, 1960-2010, Source: United Nations, Population Division 2010 / *Geschätzte Zahl internationaler Migranten weltweit im Zeitraum 1960-2010, Quelle: United Nations, Population Division 2010*

ered for different reasons, and they may adopt very different definitions of migrants that sometimes include the foreign-born second generation and sometimes not. Some countries define short-term moves as migration, others do not. Some divide the data by gender, others do not. Some use census data, others use resident population registers. What is not included in this figure is the huge number of informal, non-registered migrants all over the world. Refugees are also not mentioned here. If these numerous and highly important groups were included, the number of international migrants would be even higher. Still, the data allow us to identify some trends such as the increase of migration as a whole. Also the composition of the migration flows has changed: There has been a continuous increase in the share of female migrants among the total international migrant population, constituting 49% in 2010. This phenomenon is referred to as the “feminisation of migration” in the NGO-related discourses on migration as well as in academic research. Even if women already

accounted for nearly 47% of all migrants living outside their countries of birth in the 1960s, with these percentages reaching 48% in 1990 and 49% in 2000 (Zlotnik 2003), gender-blindness was, for a long time, a common feature in most research on migration. “Historical amnesia (has) befallen female immigration” (Kofman 2008: 59) – similar to the neglected and marginalised position of migration in European history. Migrant women tend to be even less visible to the overall society than migrant men, and if all authors were asked to focus on gender questions, too, few were able to do so.

### Migration and Theory

To date, migration studies have certainly lacked *one* theoretical core and are organised either as a separate field (migration studies) or as an annex to a variety of disciplines (geography, sociology, history, law, politics, anthropology, political science). This means that interdisciplinarity is need-

ed in order to fully understand the migration process. But it also has the consequence that “migration” is an overly complex and under-theorised field. Many authors complain about this from the onset (*Bommes and Halfmann 1998*), stressing the point that there has not yet been a substantial theory building in migration studies. What adds to the complexity of the migration process itself, is the fact that very often, academic and applied research in migration studies overlap. Some fields of research in migration studies are only undertaken by international organisations with a direct policy interest and sometimes “policy-based evidence-making”. Often enough, thorough studies on the academic side are lacking – for instance concerning the problem of human trafficking and smuggling. All the articles presented here show that there is not a one and only social and spatial reality. Neither a single macro-theory nor a single micro-theory is capable of grasping the multi-dimensional character of migration. This complexity of migration is due to the multi-layered character of the migration process itself, which involves the integration of a wide range of personal decisions, constraints, regulations, norms and opportunities at various spatial levels – accompanied now by “transnational” developments sometimes with contradictory effects (*Portes and DeWind 2004*).

Until now, many migration studies have operated without a spatial fix and they have abstracted from a concrete example for the sake of building typologies. The mere quantitative interpretation of existing data and the processing of bi- and multivariate analysis in order to understand the trends is also very common. Pull and push models use such econometric methods. The results of these studies mostly refer to data that build on the national average. The effects of the context are frequently underrepresented in this kind of migration studies. But migratory processes are complex and “not readily accessible to social-scientific models that seek to isolate and test specific factors”. Migration can only be understood if linked more closely with wider social theory and when

there is also a focus on the links between global change and human mobility (*Castles 2010b: 3f*). As many studies show, migration is always linked to the level of human development in a particular zone and it is likely that people living in the more central parts of a region move earlier and under different circumstances than those living on the margins. It is a “certain degree of ‘development’ – which increases capabilities and aspirations” – that enables and motivates people to migrate (*de Haas 2008*).

One prominent line of thought makes reference to spatial units that function on an abstract level such as global cities or peripheries – and it puts migration into the core of social change, which is understood as a fundamental shift of the way in which societies are organised. In this view migration becomes the consequence of broader transformations such as global economic restructuring. Migrants are integrated into global flows and circuits (*Piore 1979, Castles and Kosack 1985, Castells 2003, Sassen 2003*), and this process labels many groups of population as “superfluous” for the rest of the society, especially those groups that have already been on the margins of the socio-economic setting (*Baumann 2005: 90f.*).

*Sassen’s* focus on the role of global cities makes migrants one key element for global restructuring in the focus of analysis. Apart from the strategic sectors that rely on highly qualified international workers, the bulk of migrant supply goes into those segments of the labour market that is in need of cheap and often informal work: gastronomy, household-related services and care work, cleaning and security. Macro-approaches tend to be demand-oriented and they tend to see the migrant as a victim of structural constraints. Still, it would be misleading to interpret the migratory landscapes as a mere outcome of such structural constraints; individual agency and also institutional and group agency structure the migration flows. Theories highlighting structural explanations often also fail to tackle the question why certain national or ethnic groups are able to

change their occupational situation quickly while others are not; questions of integration have hardly been touched within this perspective.

Theoretically opposed to this macro-perspective are the neoclassical studies which assume that the individual migrant chooses on the basis of knowledge of a variety of options: Migration is thought to better the individual life. It is assumed that the individual is free to decide about the way migration takes place. In this view, migration flows are the sum of thousands and thousands of individual choices and migration flows will tend to cease as soon as wage differentials are balanced (*Borjas* 1990). Starting from the idea that the migrant acts as a *homo oeconomicus*, this perspective also has its shortcomings: Wage differentials are hardly the only factor provoking migration flows. The so-called *New Economics of Migration* introduced the notion of migration as a risk-diversifying strategy while seeking to increase the household income or to minimise risks (*Stark* 1991). On the other hand, studies concentrating mostly on the individual level operating with anthropological and biographical methods often fail to integrate the effects of the location and the context into their analysis. A narrow analysis, concentrating on individual cases and on selected forms of migration, has its shortcomings, too: Which lessons are to be learned from one case study without reflecting on general trends and without relating to a theoretical framework? None of the studies presented in this issue refer to only individual cases; they all emphasise the importance of the context for the migratory process, they all “go spatial”.

Understanding migration is frequently linked to the understanding of the underlying policies: Questions of migration are highly politicised and normative in most countries: Structural factors restrict or facilitate flows of migrants between countries. Politics, laws, norms and the socio-economic setting merge in migration regimes that map the boundaries of the migratory landscape. Nation-states regulate migration as a key element

of their sovereignty – nearly always controlling entries into the country, and sometimes also the exits out of the country (see also *Koser* and *Lutz* 1998 on the “new migration in Europe”).

Of special interest in this issue of “DIE ERDE” is the literature on the concept of transnationalism which arose in the 1990s and reached its peak in the early 2000s. *Fassmann* (2008: 22) concludes that the combination of empirical analysis and theoretical reflection is best represented in the approaches on transnationalism and is among the first to integrate this perspective into academic geographical research. Nearly all authors rely on the work by *Glick Schiller* et al. (1997) who define transnationalism as the outcome of transmigrants that span different social realities through transnational networks. Each of these papers is concerned with forms of social organisation that go beyond the classical territoriality – in terms of either diaspora (*Light, Mazzucato*), shifting symbols (*Vasta* and *Erdemir, Pagès-El Karoui*) or new forms of regional integration (*Sternberg* and *Müller, Henn*). All six papers make use of qualitative research methods and challenge the traditional understanding of migration. It turns out that the Ghanaians both in London and in the Netherlands make use of specific strategies to cope with not being at their place of origin; that diasporas function even though there is now widespread use of English as a *lingua franca*. Return migration has received a new role in these shifting geographies.

### **From “Old” towards “New” Geographies of Migration**

If it is assumed that there are new geographies of migration, it is implied that there is such a thing as “old” geographies. These “geographies of migration” are defined here as the collectivity of the dominating spatial and social patterns of the migratory landscape. This conceptual approach refers to *Pessar* and *Mahler* (2003), who first used the term “gendered geographies of power” to ex-

plain that migration links a wide variety of spatial scales, from the local and familiar to the national and global. They state that the gendered nature of migration offers “power geometries” and that gender operates simultaneously on multiple spatial and social scales (the authors refer to the body, the family and the state as units of analysis).

This editorial puts forward the proposal that the geography of migration existing now might be distinguished from an earlier geography of migration (read as the collectivity of earlier forms and patterns of migration) – with overlaps and no clear-cut boundaries between one and the other. A geographical understanding reads the geographies of migration as a spatialised copy of the social structure in the first place. But in a second step, “place” also matters, shaping social organisation and constructing social realities.

*Table 1* summarises the main differences between old and new geographies of migration as it is frequently found in the vast body of literature. *Table 1* neither aims at giving a complete overview on such overlapping geographies, nor does it claim to explain the changes. But it may serve here as a first point of reference to better understand the theoretical setting of the new geographies of migration. It presents the main changes concerning (a) the scale and direction of migration, meaning that the distinction between sending and receiving countries tends to diminish and that more mixed forms exist. Migrations tend to be also more multidirectional and circular and include different forms of status (formal and informal) in the migratory project, leading to a transnationalisation of lifestyles (see here also the studies of *Glorius 2007* and *Becker 2009* on the Polish community in Germany, *Goeke 2007*, *Pries 2008*). Concepts of circular migration have become one tool adopted for the management of migration in Europe (*Fassmann 2008: 22*). Of extreme importance for the changed geographies is (b) the introduction and ‘democratisation’ of communication and transport: Computer-aided communica-

tion (including email and voice over ip) and the dissemination of mobile phones allow a much faster and cheaper communication among migrants in most parts of the world. Cheaper flights to many destinations have eased migration in the early 2000s, too (*Vertovec 2001*). (c) Compared to the migratory flows after World War II in Europe the initiative to migrate today seems to be more often undertaken by the migrants themselves and less through the recruitment of migrants, so-called meso-links such as institutions and organisations have gained momentum (*Faist 1996, 2000*). (d) Cultural changes have had an impact on the new geographies: With globalisation the image of the nation-state is increasingly fading out. There are global myths that help keep the migration flow from certain countries going (see *Vasta and Erdemir* in this issue, *Nyberg-Sørensen 2008*). (e) For many migrants the social organisation of the communities has changed: “Imagined” communities have often become the central point of reference, referring to communities which are spread all over the world (see *Anderson 2003*, *von Schlichting 2008*). Social networks and diasporas have become the most important societal frame for many migrants, and hometown associations have received more attention than ever before (*Østergaard-Nielsen 2003*). In addition, of outstanding importance is the observation that (f) the whole economic setting has changed. While after World War II all OECD countries were structured as industry-led societies, the 1980s and 1990s brought de-industrialisation and increased flexibility of the labour markets. In times of industrial production most migrants were integrated strongly through the context of the place of work, today the integration into social networks and the relation to the local context are the prevailing ways towards integration. Further, (g) the scientific approaches investigating migration have shifted away from more quantitative approaches, focusing on pull- and push-factors and econometrics, to highlighting the importance of transnationalism and multi-layered analysis. In this context also (h) the role of women in migration has been analysed more in

Tab. 1 Features of the “old” and the “new” geographies of migration (draft: Hillmann 2009) / Charakteristiken der „alten“ und „neuen“ Migrationsgeographien (Entwurf: Hillmann 2009)

Characteristics	Old geographies (1960-1990)	New geographies (since 1990)
Predominant scale of international migration	National to national; Distinction between sending and receiving countries	Global; More mixed forms of sending and receiving countries; emigrant countries turn to immigrant countries; immigrant countries experience emigration
Circularity	Restricted, mostly unidirectional moves	Often multidirectional, sometimes transnational, circular (also restricted)
Prevalent means of transport and communication	Railway, car, letters, telephone	Cheap flights, telephone, email
Form of agency initiating migration	Colonial ties; recruitment of workers	Driven by the migrants due to restricted entries
Culture	Nationally organised; strong national images	Globalised hopes and myths of migration
Migrants' social organisation	Organised via the integration into the labour market, especially in manufacturing industry; weak social networks between migrant groups	“Imagined communities” diaspora organisation; strong social networks between migrant groups
Prevailing scientific approaches to analyse migration	Human capital theory, neo-classical models, new economics of migration, dual labour market theory, world system theory, cumulative causation theory, brain drain approach	Transnationalism, labour market studies, bi- and multivariate analysis of integration and assimilation, political economy of migration, migration and development
Principles of gender organisation in the countries of arrival	Patriarchal; women are seen as annex of the male migrant and less integrated into the labour market; idea of the “traditional” immigrant wife	Women start to enter the labour market, gender roles are less rigid, but still existing gendered conflicts on the distribution of care work.

depth, emphasising gender roles and gendered conflicts within and through migration (Metz-Göckel et al. 2008, Kofmann 2008, Hillmann and Wastl-Walter forthcoming).

Migration involves various actors on various scales, and each actor is attributed with a set of different defintory powers. The concept of “defintory power” refers to questions of power (We-

ber 1972) and legitimacy (Arendt 1996) and differentiates institutional and individual agency (Giddens 1988). In the migration process, both institutional and individual power-play is at work. First, it is of the utmost importance for states to seek to regulate through their sovereignty the in- and outflow of migration. In the meantime most states have become aware of the impossibility of controlling migration and try to establish forms of mi-

gration management. In many countries conflicts about the places in which migrants live sometimes lead to extraterritorialised solutions (i.e. erecting camps and designated areas for illegal migrants; *Agamben* 2002). Some of the conflicts have been militarised in the past ten years: electronic forms of border control and fences have been enhanced in the US, Northern Africa and in Europe as well as on India's border with Bangladesh. In addition, cities have increasingly been structuring migration. While nations can discuss problems for years, cities are the places where decisions have to be taken and where migration is "lived" (*Sassen* 2009). Cities act "within hierarchical fields of power" and migrants might contribute to the "scalar positioning of those cities they live in" (*Glick Schiller* and *Caglar* 2009: 189ff.). Across Europe new urban realities have arisen, and in a greying Europe immigrants make up a substantial share of the young population (*Gans et al.* 2009). Migrants are in the centre of social change, not on the margins.

It can be further assumed that not only states, but also individuals and groups of migrants exercise a form of spatial definitory power by moving on the territory and by making use of its resources. Most evident is the different extent of the spatial definitory power of the individual: Who is able to reach whom and who is able to get how far? Spatial patterns, range and "reach" as well as the impact of the context on the actions of individuals are good indicators for the spatial definitory power of migration shaping modern geographies. They turn out to be highly gendered.

With globalisation, new opportunities and restrictions among the different levels arose. States had to reorganise their restrictions on migration and they created new laws in order to protect their own territory from migration or to bring in workers for the labour markets of needy branches. Masses of immigrants drown in the Mediterranean, the European Commission is discussing a "blue card", a regulation aimed at attracting highly qualified migrants more easily. Unskilled mass migration as in the

1970s is no longer relevant to Europe, but unofficially a substantial group of people (between 1.9 and 3.8 mill., and half of them women, according to the estimates) without documents and without a permit to stay manages to live and work in Europe. This group falls outside the regular measures of the nation-state, but still has an enormous impact on the societies we all live in. The number of children and elderly people without a regular residence status is not negligible (*Kovacheva* 2010:18). Precarious living conditions are evident and the spatial definitory power of these groups lies in its mere existence without any formalised power (*Hillmann* 2007). *Table 2* sketches some of the examples of a spatial definitory power of migration.

Some authors also suggest that new "social questions" accompanying globalisation (*Castel* and *Dörre* 2009) are leading to the verge of a new social conflict, this time on the transnational scale. Nationality is seen as an expression of the politico-spatial dimension of global social inequality and it is the "civil societal organisations themselves, in their cross-regional relations, which replicate well-known social inequalities through a kind of 'international clientelism' uniting the 'market of projects of the North' with the 'donation market of the South'" (*Faist* 2007: 14ff. and 23f.). The principle of the methodological nationalism, referring to the "container society" in which all social relationships take place, is "no longer sustainable (even as a myth)" (*Castles* 2010a: 5). The fact of methodological nationalism is relevant for all studies on social and spatial transformation, but it holds especially true for migration studies (*Wimmer* and *Glick Schiller* 2003).

With the new geographies, with the rescaling and reshaping of borders and regulations in the globalisation process, many migrant groups succeed in handling new forms of living arrangements – often enough survival arrangements in precarious situations. Taking into account all these changes, it would be misleading to restrict the analysis of migration to its most traditional forms. More research

Tab. 2 Variations of the spatial defintory power of migration, Source: Hillmann 2007: 288 / *Variationen der räumlich-definitorischen Macht von Migration, Quelle: Hillmann 2007: 288*

	Scale	Examples for the spatial defintory power of migration processes	Impact/Influence
<b>MACRO</b>	Supranational/global	International migration regimes and systems; global flows of migrants	Binational/international laws and treaties
	National/state level	Laws and regulations; possibility to select and channel migration flows; regulation of access to labour market	Laws, institutional settings, welfare systems
<b>MESO</b>	Groups/communities/networks	Ethnic enclaves and ethnic economies; occasionally transnational resources; diaspora organisation	Network of flows: information, people and goods (remittances)
	Local/place	Upgrading of place through economic activities; segregation of certain neighbourhoods; fragmentation	Stabilisation of the status quo or social innovation in the place of arrival/remittance of home
<b>MICRO</b>	Individual level	Expectation of participation in the societies or in the labour markets; physical presence without formal rights	Normative; collectively normative

on the new, often transnational and at first sight untypical characteristics of migration is needed.

The convergence of all these changed migration patterns has been the starting point for the conceptualisation of this special issue of "DIE ERDE": to grasp some aspects of the new geographies of migration as part of a broader social change in Europe and global social transformation. The six articles presented here have been selected from a broader spectrum of papers which focussed on four lines of thought: first, the production of representations and myths, second, the shaping of transnational hierarchies and diasporas, third, transitions in immigrant work strategies such as the changed role of migrant economies and new work arrangements, and fourth, the establishing of visible and invisible borders. The current issue presents only those contributions which delineate the emerging "new geographies" – focussing on new forms of organisation and spatial arrangements. Most chapters are based on quali-

tative data, sometimes combined with data collection for their analysis, and all of them present empirical data – with the exception of *Light's* article which is more theoretical, but had originally been supported by quantitative modelling. All papers focus on bilocal or multi-sited forms of migration, three papers focus on European cities (London, Paris, Antwerp), and three focus on the transnational, diasporic character of the migrant group investigated (Ghanaians in the Netherlands, middlemen all over the world, returning Chinese). All contributions emphasise that the new geographies are prominently shaped by the "telling of new stories":

The first two articles pick up on the power of imaginaries, symbolic orders and narratives as one stimulating essence of migration, often under-estimated regarding the self-sustainment of migration. Here, ideas and images of foreign and unknown places may act as a stimulus to consider migration and for the individual decision to migrate. *Ellie Vasta* and *Aykan Erdemir* argue that the

discussion on the construction and circulation of myths presents new opportunities to reinterpret the immigration process and to explore the role of imperfect information among immigrants and in the receiving society. The authors ask how “information on the migration process” is used in two interlinked processes: by the receiving society to debate, design, and implement policy, and by immigrants to develop work strategies. Their aim is to demonstrate that the information immigrants and receiving society members utilise in making their decisions has mythical qualities in the ways in which it is generated, circulated and reproduced. The authors introduce the interlinkages between myth-making regimes and offer two new concepts, i.e. “hegemonic myths” and “opportunity myths”. It is then argued that the interlinked effect of this regime in the era of “managed migration” in the UK is crucial for understanding the connections between the erosion of rights and the perpetuation of immigration.

The contribution by *Delphine Pagès-El Karoui* focuses on the symbolic underpinnings that accompany the establishment of the new geographies of migration. The author presents the introduction and the spread of shisha cafés in Paris and France as an example for new spatial arrangements. Her interest is not only in mapping the geography of the shisha cafés in Paris and illustration of their décor – as an exotic iconography of meaning. She also analyses the behaviour and habits of their customers – as part of the new geographies of migration making use of new forms of social organisation and spatial representation, even new identities. She elaborates the hypothesis that the young managers of the shisha cafés aspire to create a new kind of ethnic business by marketing an Eastern dream; “having a drop of Orient in your Shisha” also means for the smokers to reinvent their parents’ cultural background. Another important line of thought deals with the shaping of transnational hierarchies, diasporas and development. As outlined above, globalisation has resulted in massive changes for the or-

ganisation of the diaspora. Nowadays, transnational hierarchies are produced by the diaspora itself and by (migrant) organisations. *Valentina Mazzucato* refers in her article to the importance of diaspora networks at the individual level. The author adopts a transnational research approach to investigate how migrant personal and network characteristics relate to employment security, housing security and the ability to solve a crisis. The analysis is based on transaction, network and life history data collected from migrants in the Netherlands and also from their network members in Ghana. The author shows that the migrants’ legal standing in Dutch society and, secondly – and this refers to the new geographies of migration –, the migrants’ positioning within a transnational network of actors are fundamental for securing a living. Furthermore, the author highlights the point that stringent migration policies in the Netherlands lead to a retreat of the state as the provider of basic needs. Migrants’ transnational social networks cater for these needs, risking, however, to become overly strained.

The article by *Ivan Light* analyses the changed role of diasporas in the process of globalisation. Concentrating on the notions of “assimilation” and “language”, the author departs from the observation that assimilation means acquiring, in the course of three generations, the language of ones new homeland and forgetting the language of ones ethnic origin. For immigrants, the road to assimilation leads from monolingualism in a foreign language to bilingualism and back to monolingualism in a new language. In the classical countries of arrival, such as the United States and Canada, whatever one’s ethnic origin, one’s grandchildren would become English monolinguals. Therefore, thanks to assimilation, international immigration routinely leaves no permanent ethnic colonies in place abroad as a permanent historical legacy. Diasporas are the exception to this generalisation. *Light* raises the question to what extent transnational migrants rely on the use of language as a social bond and thus as a basis

of enforceable social trust among merchants, even over long distances. The existing literature – so the author argues – has correctly inferred that trans-migrants enjoy linguistic and social capital advantages for international commerce and entrepreneurship. This is a straightforward inference from the literature about middlemen minorities. In the existing transnationalism literature *Light* finds a lack of an awareness of the fact that globalisation reduces the utility of bilingual conversations that do not include English. Spanish-to-French competence is not necessary when French exporters and Spanish importers both speak English. Globalisation increasingly embeds world commerce, science, cinema and diplomacy in a dominant language, English. This dominant language creates a global linguistic structure where previously only linguistic frictions existed. Here the definitory power of migration is attributed to the possibility to build up a common language. According to *Light*, there is every reason to suppose that economic consequences result from the global dominance of English and this dominance embeds the earth in a structure which subserves transnationalism.

*Rolf Sternberg* and *Claudia Müller* also point to the importance of transnational linkages as an emerging geographical reality. On the basis of an economic geography approach and with little reference to the migration literature on the whole, the authors point to *AnnaLee Saxenian's* concept of 'argonauts' – well-educated young people from less developed countries, who leave their respective home country because of unfavourable economic and/or political conditions towards the US., to return later to set up a business in their home country. It is argued that these 'argonauts' help their home country to overcome the typical disadvantages of latecomer economies. By using a qualitative survey of Chinese return migrants running their own businesses in their country of origin the authors analyse the role of the local and international linkages of such return migrants for local economic development. The article highlights that the new geographies of migration are

shaped by migrants as agents within globalised labour markets. The authors chose to focus on the biotech industry, which is certainly among the most 'flexible' industries because it relies mostly on codified knowledge. This contribution illustrates how close migration processes are linked to broader economic trends and how regional patterns determine economic behaviour of individuals.

The article by *Sebastian Henn* highlights the role of transnational communities for the emergence of regional clusters – and brings concepts from economic geography into the debate on migration. The author analyses the example of Antwerp as the most important centre of the global diamond industry which has undergone a significant change since World War II. It is argued that much of this shift can be attributed to the commercial activities of a transnational community, namely Jain families. These Jain families are seen as agents in the dynamics of regional clusters, their activities are linked to the new geographies of migration in so far as they foster regional concentration and branch specialisation.

The authors presenting their work in this special issue stem from a variety of disciplines; most come from geography, others from anthropology and other social sciences. What unites their differing approaches is the inclusion of the spatial dimension of changing geographies. It goes without saying that not all contributions make use of the same body of literature or the same scientific approaches. What they have in common is the idea that migration is among the most important forces propelling globalised social organisation, creating new spatialisations.

#### Note

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