

A Critical Overview of Migration and Development: The Latin American Challenge

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Abstract

There is an intense ongoing debate on migration and development in Latin America. This article offers a critical overview of the main perspectives surrounding the Latin American debate across the social sciences. A brief historical background is provided, followed by a characterization of the three main paradigms prevailing in the region: the dominant perspective, grounded in modernization and neoliberal principles; the southern perspective, which has growing influence in the region and is rooted in the Latin American development school; and the transnational approach, which stands in between the first two paradigms and is circumscribed to a meso-level of analysis. The final section highlights five cutting-edge topics that have emerged in the region's scholarship. The article emphasizes the specificity and the main contributions made by Latin American scholars to understanding and demystifying the complex relationship between migration, development, and human rights.

INTRODUCTION

Academic and political discussions of migration and development have a long history in Latin America, dating back to the early post-World War II period. These discussions are closely related to an intense regional debate regarding the theory and practice of development. Throughout the era of import substitution industrialization (ISI) (1930 to 1980), and particularly since the 1950s, these discussions led to a rich and varied body of academic work focused on the dynamics of internal migration and its relationship to urbanization. After the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1980s, however, the analysis of internal migration fell to secondary importance, and international migration moved to the forefront. Although most emigrants went to the United States or the European Union, intraregional migration nonetheless remained important. The shift in focus from internal to international migration occurred in tandem with a wider debate on migration and development that involved the participation of international organizations, national governments, local authorities, academic institutions, and social organizations and movements.

Latin American research on migration and development does not merely reproduce the dominant positions of the Anglo-Saxon literature. Instead, drawing on the region's rich tradition of structuralist thinking and the concept of dependency (Kay 1989), Latin American scholars have sought to decolonize theories of development and offer alternative views that incorporate the perspective of sending countries and the viewpoints of migrants and their families. In doing so, they intend to expand analytical horizons and question assumptions common to the North American debate. Unfortunately, these discussions have barely transcended regional boundaries, owing to a combination of language barriers, the limited circulation of publications in Spanish and Portuguese, and the cultural hegemony that prevails in academic and political circles.

Latin American contributions to the field are characterized by a systematic deconstruction of social science precepts so as to question traditional disciplinary boundaries and challenge discourses emanating from powerful industrialized centers. In contrast to the narrow emphasis on migration and remittances that has dominated the literature since the 1990s, this review offers a holistic, multidimensional, historically grounded approach to migration and development in the region. It seeks to call attention to important Latin American contributions to theory that focus on the complex relationship between human mobility in its multiple manifestations and social transformations in a region that continues to be structured along the dimensions of development/underdevelopment and center/periphery. In contrast to typical Anglo-Saxon thinking, Latin American scholars do not view the Caribbean as a separate entity but as an integral part of the region, a stance adopted in this review.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT UNDER IMPORT SUBSTITUTION INDUSTRIALIZATION

After the global crisis of the 1930s, and especially during the immediate postwar period, the economic model for development in Latin America took a transcendental turn from producing primary commodities for the international market to internal industrialization. This turn gave rise to a Latin American school of thought known as structuralism, which constituted the "first original body of development theory to emanate from the Third World" (Kay 1989, p. 10) and stood in stark contrast to the neoclassical framework that prevailed outside the region. Initiated by Raúl Prebisch and like-minded researchers at the Economic Commission for Latin America (today known as the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean, or ECLAC, or by its Spanish acronym, CEPAL) (Rodríguez & Busso 2009), this school of thought focused on inequalities inherent in a world capitalist system structured

from center to periphery and gave rise to a radical critique known as dependency theory.

As Kay (1989, p. 26) has pointed out, “the originality of the structuralist paradigm lies in its proposition that the process of development and underdevelopment is a single process; that the center and periphery are closely interrelated, forming part of a single world economy.” This perspective questioned the existing regime of international trade, arguing that it was characterized by unequal relationships of exchange that undermined rather than promoted local development. Rather than trade liberalization, ECLAC structuralism promoted a strategy of ISI. In this development model, the state erected barriers to imported manufactured goods and channeled investment to national firms, often state owned, that produced goods to replace those that were formerly imported. In principle, this strategy enabled peripheral countries to shift from an outward-oriented development process toward an inward-focused model that sought to build domestic markets.

The implementation of ISI was marked by rapid urbanization and geographically unbalanced economic growth, developments that were particularly relevant to the analysis of internal migration in Latin America, which was mainly from rural to urban areas (Rodríguez & Busso 2009). Urbanization in Latin America was characterized by a process of “metropolitanization” in which migration, resources, and economic growth were disproportionately channeled to a small number of large urban areas, yielding the highest rate of urbanization in the world after the United States and Canada. As a result of this process, today approximately one in three Latin Americans lives in a city with a million or more inhabitants (ECLAC 2012).

This phenomenon and its consequences are usually approached from two opposing analytical perspectives: modernization theory and the historical-structural approach. The former posits urbanization as part of an evolutionary trajectory in which migration from rural to urban areas is an important milestone on the road to the inevitable destination of development (Germani 1969), although at advanced

stages of modernization rural–urban movement gives way to a more complex combination of international and intraurban migration flows (Zelinsky 1971). In contrast, the historical-structural model does not see development as a linear, straightforward process and emphasizes the impoverishment and marginalization of rural migrants who cannot be absorbed into modern sectors of the urban economy. Beginning in the 1960s, theorists proposed an alternative model that took account of the structural position of Latin American nations in the global capitalist economy (Rodríguez & Busso 2009, p. 30). Although their account drew on some of the tenets of structuralism developed by ECLAC, it was more centrally based on Marxist theory and, specifically, dependency theory (Nun 1969, Singer 1973).

From a structuralist perspective, rural–urban migration was a consequence of the persistent concentration of land ownership (*latifundismo*) and capitalist penetration into small farm production that, in turn, led to processes of primitive accumulation. Modernization theories were thus rejected because migration did not function in a neutral manner to foster regional development. Instead, given the dependent character of most Latin American economies, “the regional labor market would generate a workforce surplus ready for capital exploitation. . . , [one] far exceeding the formation of an industrial reserve army (as happened in developed countries), [and that] expelled the labor force from the production system to form a marginal mass” (Rodríguez & Busso 2009, p. 57). The marginal masses migrated to the urban periphery, where they occupied positions in the informal economy (González-Casanova 1963; Stavenhagen 1969, 1972) and relied on social networks to survive.

The golden age of ISI and structuralist influence on development theory occurred from the 1950s through the mid-1960s (ECLAC 2010, [Ocampo 2004](#)). During the 1970s, state planners found it increasingly difficult to substitute domestic products for imports of intermediate and capital goods, slowing down the development process and weakening the

historical-structural perspective, which was strongly challenged by monetarist theories. The rapid pace of economic growth that had prevailed through the 1960s began to stall, and in an effort to sustain growth, governments borrowed heavily during the 1970s. Foreign debt accumulated and ultimately led to a liquidity crisis and financial collapse, ushering in the “lost decade” of the 1980s. In this context, structuralist analyses of internal migration lost momentum, and the topic became progressively less popular in Latin American research circles. Ironically, this shift happened at a time when regional migration flows were experiencing a new and significant transformation.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT UNDER NEOLIBERALISM

Like the Depression of the 1930s, the debt crisis of the 1980s led to a series of profound economic, political, social, and cultural changes throughout Latin America. These changes entailed a radical paradigm shift in the region and marked the beginning of a new age in the theory and practice of development. Unlike ISI, the neoliberal model sought to achieve development through international trade and investment and thus advocated the lowering of trade barriers, the deregulation of economic activity, the privatization of state enterprises, and the reduction of taxes and spending. These reforms were intended to spur industrialization through export to foreign markets. The new model, however, was neither inevitable nor implemented to the same degree throughout the region (Kay 1998, p. 101).

To understand the nature of neoliberal globalization, its particular *modus operandi*, and the changes it brought to migration dynamics in the region, we must go back to the early 1970s, when large corporations faced declining profitability, stagnant productivity, labor militancy, and radical social movements at the core, as well as Third World nationalism and rebellion on the periphery. Structural adjustment programs were forcefully implemented in or-

der to restore profitability, break the power of labor unions, dismantle the productive apparatus of the ISI era, and internationalize production through outsourcing and the creation of global commodity chains. This corporate strategy depended not only on the information-technology revolution and the containerization of shipping, but also on the resubordination of the periphery to the needs of the core (Bello 2006, Harvey 2007, Márquez & Delgado-Wise 2011, Robinson 2008, Sassen 2007). Large multinational corporations collaborated with powerful governments led by the United States and international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization to implement a profound process of capital restructuring known as neoliberal globalization, one characterized by the following traits:

1. The internationalization of capital: The global economic system was restructured to permit outsourcing and free intrafirm trade among large corporations, whose influence extended across the world. Peripheral countries with cheap labor and abundant natural resources were reinserted into global production processes as new export platforms were created to operate as enclaves (Foster et al. 2011b, Freeman 2008, Márquez & Delgado-Wise 2011, Robinson 2008).
2. Restructuring of innovation processes: Technological advances in computing, telecommunications, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and materials science were applied by corporations to facilitate outsourcing and offshoring. The result was a new international division of labor that enabled access to a mass of developing-country scientists, who could be used to accumulate patents, capitalize benefits, and transfer risks abroad. This change led to an unprecedented commodification of scientific research with little social and environmental concern (Bate 2001, Freeman 2005, Grueber & Studt 2012, Moris & Kannankutty 2010).

3. Financialization: Financial innovations created new speculative strategies to channel investment funds, sovereign wealth, and social surpluses into new and highly liquid financial instruments that offered higher yields in the short term but greater risk in the long term. They caused recurring crises and massive fraud that undermined the functioning of the real economy (Bello 2006, Foster & Magdoff 2009).
4. Environmental degradation: Biodiversity, natural resources, and other public assets were privatized for the benefit of corporations that sought to maximize profits while externalizing social and environmental costs. Privatization resulted in greater environmental exploitation, pollution, famine, disease, and climate change, which produced more frequent and intense weather events that endangered the natural systems on which human society depends (Foladori & Pierri 2005).
5. Flexibilization of labor: Structural adjustment programs and the geographic expansion of capitalism generated a massive oversupply of workers in developing nations that reduced wages worldwide. The oversupply of labor led to globalization, differentiation, and increasing precariousness within labor markets. It also led to the creation of national, racial, and cultural hierarchies that fostered new divisions within the working class, which in turn ensured corporations a cheap and flexible labor supply. In fostering the above trend, global labor arbitrage has become a key echelon of the new global architecture. It refers to the advantage of pursuing lower wages abroad (Foster et al. 2011a, Harvey 2007).

These five features of neoliberal development created a new scenario for migration within, into, and from Latin America. Its new profile and dynamic were characterized by stronger pressures to emigrate, given increasing instability and precariousness within regional

labor markets; the emergence of new migratory patterns with respect to length of stay, age, gender, race, and ethnicity; the configuration of a new geography of migration with new places of origin, transit, and destination; greater vulnerability among labor migrants, who are often undocumented and thus subject to exploitative working conditions; and the growing selectivity of legal migration flows, which increasingly are composed of high-skilled workers (Delgado-Wise 2013b). In addition to these qualitative shifts, quantitative changes in the volume of international migration from Latin America have been spectacular. The number of emigrants from the region quintupled between 1980 and 2010, reaching 30.2 million in 2010, and remittances grew at an even greater rate, rising from \$13.3 million in 1995 to \$58.1 million in 2010 (World Bank 2002). As a result, Latin America now sends the largest regional stock of international migrants to other parts of the world and is in third place with respect to receipt of remittances.

The upsurge in international migration from the region was not uniform, however, with rates of migration that differ substantially between countries and between regions within countries. Although 85% of Latin American migrants go to OECD countries—mainly the United States (69%) and Spain (7%)—there are still significant intraregional flows (13%), and migrants are very unevenly distributed across nations. According to the World Bank (2012), with a total of 11.8 million emigrants, Mexico alone accounts for 40% of all international emigrants from Latin America, followed by Colombia (2.1 million), Puerto Rico (1.7 million), Brazil (1.4 million), El Salvador (1.3 million), Cuba (1.2 million), Ecuador (1.15 million), Peru (1.1 million), and Haiti (1 million).

Despite overwhelming interest in international emigration, during the 1990s researchers once again began to pay attention to internal migration. However, the earlier focus on rural–urban migration gave way to a new focus on the selectivity and heterogeneity of flows, the rising importance of political violence, and the

growing attractiveness of mid-sized cities over large metropolitan areas (Rodríguez & Busso 2009, pp. 64–65). What was an incipient trend in the 1990s expanded and diversified in the twenty-first century, and internal migration increasingly displayed a new tendency toward emigration from the largest cities and a reversal of the process of metropolitanization. This pattern ran counter to expectations of modernization theory (Canales & Montiel 2007, Lozano-Ascencio et al. 1996). Observers noted a growing tendency for internal migration to “directly accentuate territorial disparities rather than reduce them” (Rodríguez & Busso 2009, p. 69).

Nonetheless, the spectacular growth in remittances and international emigration fueled a surge of academic and political interest that prompted Latin American researchers to revisit the connection between migration and development. Some of the region’s most important social science journals have devoted entire issues to this topic, and a growing number of specialized journals provide free online access and English translations of articles on migration and development, such as *Migración y Desarrollo*, *Migraciones Internacionales*, *Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*, and *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*. At the same time, demographic journals such as the *Revista Latinoamericana de Demografía* and *Papeles de Población* often contain articles related to migration and development, and research monographs and anthologies on the subject have been plentiful. The publishing house Miguel Ángel Porrúa alone has an entire collection devoted to the topic of migration and development.

In addition to the expansion of publications, university research centers specializing in migration and development have proliferated in Latin America, North America, and the European Union, along with non-governmental organizations, governmental institutes, and international organizations devoted to the subject. The International Network on Migration and Development (<http://www.migracionydesarrollo.org>) began in Latin America in 2002 and currently op-

erates worldwide. Numerous workshops, meetings, and conferences on the subject are also held throughout the region, including forums such as the Proceso Puebla (Puebla Process) and Foro Regional de Migraciones (Regional Migration Forum), the Conferencia Sudamericana de Migraciones (South American Conference on Migration), the World Social Forum on Migration (with meetings in Porto Alegre and Quito), and the Global Forum on Migration and Development that convened in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in 2010.

THE DOMINANT VIEW OF THE 1990s

Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and especially the Inter-American Development Bank have promoted an optimistic line of reasoning that represents the dominant view of the nexus between migration and development. This view posits that remittances sent by international migrants have a positive effect on development within countries and regions of origin (Fajnzylber & López 2007, Inter-Am. Dev. Bank 2006, UNDP 2009). Rooted in neoclassical and monetarist economic theories, this approach conceives of migration as an independent variable, and the link between migration and development is approached as a one-way scheme in which remittances serve as a key source of development capital for countries of origin (Bate 2001, Terry & Wilson 2005). The orthodox framework portrays the global market as the culmination of capitalist modernity and the end point of an inevitable process that has no reasonable alternative. Social concerns associated with development are overlooked or ignored, as it is generally assumed that a free global market will operate as an inexhaustible source of economic growth and social welfare. These theoretical precepts were crafted in developed nations and assimilated without critical examination by researchers and policy makers in Latin America, who failed to acknowledge the rich and creative legacy of development research in the southern hemisphere.

In summary, the dominant discourse on the link between migration and development is composed of the following core propositions:

1. Remittances are an instrument for development: In the absence of effective development policies in peripheral, immigrant-sending nations, the immigrants themselves become agents and catalysts for development in places of origin. Remittances serve as the primary tool (Chami et al. 2005, Ratha et al. 2011).
2. Financial instruments should be democratized: Massive remittance flows across the globe make an attractive market for financial enterprises offering banking services to marginalized groups. Remittance-based savings and credit are viewed as an attractive platform for development under microfinance schemes (García-Zamora & Orozco 2009).
3. The poor have economic power: Remittances provide migrants and their dependents with access to resources that can bring them out of poverty, transforming them into agents of global capitalist development (Escobar 2009, World Bank 2002).

Ultimately, the dominant approach is conceptually limited. It ignores the historical and political context of globalization and fails to consider critical aspects of the relationship between migration and development. In particular, it disregards the root causes of migration, ignores the human rights of migrants, downplays the contributions of migrants to receiving societies, and overlooks the risks and adversities they face in countries of transit. The optimistic view fails to address the poor living and working conditions experienced by migrants in receiving societies and the high socioeconomic costs that migration imposes on sending countries. It also fails to appreciate any potential connection between internal and international migration.

Current evidence challenges the optimism of the dominant view, and proponents have generally lowered their sights. From a catalyst

for economic growth and development, remittances have been downgraded to a mechanism for the alleviation of poverty (Lapper 2006), but this analytical perspective still does not question the foundations of neoliberal globalization or its negative effects on peripheral countries and the working classes. This perspective is founded largely on econometric models (BBVA 2011, Zárate-Hoyos 2007), and its theoretical perspective is based on a market-driven approach to economic development. This is in direct contrast to the sociology-of-development approach common in previous decades, which focused on processes of inequality and domination. What is more, the dominant view does not provide consistent theoretical or conceptual alternatives. As Portes (1997, p. 254) has pointed out:

Not the least of these [market-driven approaches to economic development] is a coherent set of expectations of individual economic actors and the possibility of submitting these predictions to empirical scrutiny. Yet many adherents of these ideas tend to dismiss their predictive failures or to explain them away in circular fashion. The outcome is a new form of scholasticism where facts are made to fit theory rather than vice versa, with potentially serious practical consequences.

A key element of the dominant discourse underlying the rationale of mainstream migration policies promoted by the International Organization for Migration, the Organization of American States, and other multilateral agencies and think tanks, such as the Migration Policy Institute, is migration management (Geiger & Pecoud 2010). In fact,

[t]hrough the umbrella of an apparently “neutral” notion...new narratives have been promoted. These narratives attempt to depoliticize migration, obfuscate the existence of divergent interests or asymmetries of power and conflicts, avoid obligations imposed by international law, and promote the idea that managing migration can be beneficial for all stakeholders: countries of destination,

countries of origin, the migrants themselves and their families. This unrealistic triple-win scenario clearly favors the interests of the migrant-receiving countries and the large multinational corporations based in such countries (Delgado-Wise et al. 2013, pp. 433–34).

This approach to the link between migration and development generates contrasting views of migrants in origin and destination countries. In origin countries, they are portrayed as national heroes with the political purpose of ensuring the flow of remittances; in destination countries, they are characterized as a burden and, at times, as a negative and polluting cultural and racial influence on the receiving society (Huntington 1997). The underlying purpose of this stigmatization is to guarantee the supply of cheap and disposable labor. The more vulnerable migrants are, the more their employers benefit; their social exclusion leads to increased profits and fiscal gains for both employers and host governments.

From this viewpoint, international migration has been analyzed in receiving nations in a decontextualized manner. This ethnocentric and individualistic stance has resulted in an incomplete understanding of the connection between migration and development. It has promoted a kind of methodological imperialism with a nativist focus on salary disparities, the displacement of native workers, illegality, and border security. This vision not only distorts reality but also obscures the underlying causes of migration- and development-related problems that are intrinsic to neoliberal globalization.

A SOUTHERN PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In contrast to the dominant view, Latin American scholars have developed an alternative approach to conceptualizing the relationship between migration and development in collaboration with researchers from other regions in

the Global South. This analytical framework has become increasingly popular since the beginning of the twenty-first century and is known as the southern perspective. It is being promoted by the International Network on Migration and Development and is based on a reassessment of Latin American thought and a critical evaluation of neoliberal globalization (Aragonés et al. 2009, Delgado-Wise & Márquez 2009, Delgado-Wise et al. 2013). Taking into account the aforementioned structural components of neoliberal globalization, the link between migration and development is characterized as dialectical rather than unidirectional and is approached from a multidimensional framework that consists of economic, political, social, environmental, cultural, racial, ethnic, gender-related, geographical, and demographic factors (Castles 2008, Castles & Delgado-Wise 2008, Faist 2009, [Glick-Schiller 2009](#)). The goal is to build a comprehensive view of the phenomenon in order to address its root causes, show the contributions made by migrants to destination countries, and reveal the costs and impacts of migration on countries of origin, migrants, and their families. The southern perspective incorporates the local context and the relationships of unequal development that result in interrelated patterns of internal and international migration. Work by Dussel (2011) and de Souza Santos (2009) provides ethical and epistemological foundations for this perspective, and the approach promoted by ECLAC has a distinctly southern flavor in this regard (Martínez-Pizarro 2011).

The architecture of neoliberal globalization is based on the implementation of structural adjustment programs in southern nations. These programs are centered on the precepts of privatization, deregulation, and liberalization and have been a tool with which to insert less developed economies into the dynamics of globalization. As a result, production systems have been dismantled, facilitating the influx of foreign capital and generating a massive oversupply of labor (Delgado-Wise & Márquez 2007). Generally speaking, these processes

have resulted in the entrenchment of two particularly relevant phenomena:

1. Deepening asymmetries within countries and between countries and regions: From a geostrategic standpoint, we observe a deepening differentiation between developed and peripheral countries, which leads to increasing social and economic gaps. These gaps (financial, technological, and productive) reflect a complex system of asymmetric power relations between regions, countries, and localities.
2. Increasing social inequalities: Social inequality is one of the most distressing aspects of our times. It is expressed in the unprecedented concentration of capital, power, and wealth in a few hands while a growing segment of the population suffers poverty, exploitation, and exclusion. Increasing disparities are also expressed in racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination; reduced access to production and employment; a sharp decline in living and working conditions; and the progressive dismantling and segmentation of social security systems (ECLAC 2010).

The concept of unequal development encapsulates this dominant trend. It refers to the historical, economic, social, and political processes of polarization (among regions, countries, intranational spaces, and social classes) derived from the dynamics of capital accumulation, the international and national division of labor, the new geopolitical atlas, and class conflict across spaces and hierarchies. A key underlying aspect is the emergence of new international and national divisions of labor. The exploitation of the workforce—via labor migration and export processing zones established in peripheral nations—has become a central factor in the emergence of new forms of unequal exchange (Delgado-Wise & Márquez 2012).

From this alternative point of view, migration is not merely the product of individual or family decisions but is a phenomenon with its own patterns that is embedded in a set of social networks and transnational relations.

The massive nature of migration under contemporary capitalism and the bonds between domestic and international flows are fundamentally determined by the contradictory and disorderly dynamics of uneven development. Migration thus adopts the particular mode of “compulsive displacement,” a new modality of forced migration, possessing the following two characteristics.

First, migration is essentially an expulsion process resulting from a downward spiral of social regression triggered by deprivation of the means of production and subsistence, pillaging, violence, and catastrophes that jeopardize the subsistence of large segments of the population in places of origin. This outcome is not simply a cumulative or gradual process but an actual breakdown of the social order. It is brought about by structural adjustment policies and by domination and wealth concentration strategies that have attained extreme levels and are forcing massive contingents of the population to sell their labor both nationally and internationally to guarantee their families’ subsistence.

Second, compulsive displacement imposes restrictions on the mobility of the migrant workforce, depreciates it, and subjects it to conditions of high vulnerability and extreme exploitation. If the process of expulsion reprises the original accumulation modes characteristic of the first historical stages of capitalism, then the current liberalization of the workforce is fated to face obstacles in the labor market internationally. Migrant-receiving states regulate immigrant entry with punitive and coercive instruments that devalue labor, in addition to violating human rights and criminalizing migrants. Conditions for labor exploitation and social exclusion, as well as the risks experienced at different stages of transit and settling, endanger the lives of migrants.

The proposed alternative view comprises a dual analytical perspective based on strategic practices and structural dynamics. “Strategic practices” are understood as the confrontation between different development projects (neoliberalism versus alternative forms of development) espousing divergent social and

economic class interests that underlie the structures of contemporary capitalism and its inherent development problems (Canterbury 2010, Fox & Gois 2010). “Structural dynamics” are processes that characterize unequal development in the spheres of finance, commerce, production, the labor market, innovation, and the environment (Phillips 2009). A crucial element of the southern perspective is that, unlike the hegemonic standpoint, it seeks to promote social and political conditions that would generate social equality. It recognizes (a) that the official discourse of neoliberal globalization rests on the ideology of the free market, the end of history, representative democracy, and, more recently, the war on terror, but (b) that in actual practice neoliberal globalization promotes the interests of large corporations and a single, exclusive mode of thought that nullifies pluralist alternatives.

Although the prevalent discourse exalts the notion of citizenship, citizen rights, and democratic opportunity in an open economy with full political participation, the latter is constrained to a limited electoral offering and often curtailed by an exclusionary political system (Goldring & Landolt 2011). At the same time, fundamental human rights are systematically undermined and subverted by the doctrine of national security and the demands of a market economy that serves multinational corporate interests and turns the vast majority of the population into a cheap means of production and consumption.

In addition, the welfare state has been dismantled under the sway of mercantilism, and the satisfaction of most basic needs is conditioned by a market where communal goods and public services are offered as new spaces for privatization. Labor flexibility, sustained by a massive workforce surplus and the systematic deprivation of labor rights, becomes a mechanism by which to increase business competitiveness and extraordinary profits. All of this, in turn, seriously undermines the social, economic, political, and environmental fabric of society. The advancement of structural adjustment programs in Latin America has led to increasing so-

cial debt, a fact that remains unacknowledged by several governments in the region and the entrenched powers. In fact, Latin America has become the most unequal region on the planet under neoliberalism (ECLAC 2010).

Forced migration is a logical consequence of this process. Human rights violations multiply along migration paths; the victims include women, children, and entire families (De la Garza 2010, Herrera 2008, Magliano & Romano 2009, Pérez-Orozco et al. 2008). The human drama underlying the current migration dynamics threatens the integrity and the lives of migrants, exposing them to robbery, rape, extortion, kidnapping, detention, deportation, murder, labor discrimination, sexual exploitation, insecurity, and social exclusion (Casillas 2011, CEIDAS 2010). Despite the seriousness of the situation, migrants’ human rights still occupy a marginal place in most debates and discussions (Ghosh 2008, Gzesh 2008).

The southern perspective maintains that receiving, transit, and sending countries should all be held accountable for the safety and welfare of migrants. In most receiving countries, there is a tacit disavowal of labor and human rights where migrants and their families are concerned. The right to legal residence and citizenship is also obstructed under the stigma of illegality, either because of racial prejudice or, more commonly, for reasons related to economic interest (Machand 2008, Massey & Sanchez 2007). Countries of origin and transit espouse a double discourse: sending nations denounce violations of migrant rights in countries of destination while violating the rights of foreigners in their national territory.

At the same time, the fact that many migrants were forced to leave their homes owing to a lack of development policies and decent employment opportunities is routinely ignored. In the realm of forced migration, women are a particularly vulnerable group, especially when they are forced to cross borders using irregular means. Even though the scope of female migration and its members’ vulnerability are gradually receiving more attention, there is still a lack of adequate gender-based approaches to

migration policy (Herrera 2012, Piper 2008). At the core of Andean migration to European countries, the topic of “global care chains” is gaining visibility and significance in the migration and gender analyses in Latin America (Herrera 2013).

In summary, it is of paramount importance that human rights become an integral component of the relationship between migration and development (Gzesh 2008, Sassen 2007). The southern perspective sees them as inherent to and inseparable from issues pertaining to migration and development, including the right to development, the right to not migrate, the right to freedom of movement, and the basic rights of migrants and their families (Delgado-Wise et al. 2013). The current use of the notion of “migration governance” as opposed to “migration management” encapsulates this alternative vision and has been amply disseminated in the academic and political debate in Latin America and beyond. Whereas the term governance focuses on a human security framework and promotes cooperation and human development policies, the term management adheres to a national security doctrine and endorses temporary worker programs (Mármora 2010).

In the past decade, there has been a turn to the left in the region, particularly in South American countries. This has led to an intense debate on the theory and practice of development (Grupo Perm. Trab. Sobre Altern. Desarro. 2011, 2013; Serna & Supervielle 2009). As a result, new development paradigms, such as *Vivir Bien* (Farah & Vasapollo 2011), *Buen Vivir* (Walsh 2010), and twenty-first century socialism (Borón 2009) have been implemented in the region. This change, in turn, has renewed a trend toward South American integration, together with a new and progressive approach to the link between migration, development, and human rights. Free human mobility regimes have been thoroughly established with the ultimate aim, posited by the South American Conference on Migration, of fully achieving South American citizenship (Declaración de Santiago 2012).

TRANSNATIONALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

When referring to dominant and alternative perspectives, I do not seek to apply superficial labels, nor do I seek to thematically confine the rich and varied body of Latin American research on this topic. Rather, I seek to distinguish two lines of thought that lie on opposite ends of the spectrum and have a significant influence on contrasting public policies. This distinction is useful for analytical purposes but does not account for certain ideas that should be addressed, even if only in passing. This section touches on these views, particularly those that emphasize “transnationalism from below” and are focused on what has been called alternative development or community-based development. These views lie at an intermediate point between the dominant and the southern perspectives. They are to some extent eclectic and do not entail a radical challenge to neoliberalism; rather, these development possibilities are located in the interstices of neoliberalism.

The concept of transnationalism recognizes that, contrary to popular belief, migrants do not sever contact with their place of origin once they have settled in countries of destination. Indeed, regardless of their degree of incorporation into the receiving society, migrants tend to maintain strong ties with their society of origin. Authors who support this view (Faist 2008, Glick-Schiller 2005, Portes 2005, Smith 2006) argue that migrants maintain bonds to their place of origin in order to deal with racial inequality and other hurdles in the country of destination. They hold that migration is caused by global processes that supersede the nation-state and in turn generate a global civil society that threatens the political monopoly exercised by the state, and that transnationalism gives way to a “third space” that locates migrants in a social field that links together their country of origin and their country of settlement or destination. A distinction is often made between “transnationalism from above,” in which corporate, financial, and governmental agents promote mobility, and “transnationalism from below,”

which is arranged and organized by migrants. Although [Glick-Schiller \(2005, 2009\)](#) insists on the need to remain aware of the broader context (i.e., transnationalism from above), the overwhelming tendency has been to focus on transnationalism from below ([Portes 2005](#)).

Working from the complexity of migratory processes, transnationalism attempts, on the one hand, to uncover the dialectic interaction among migrant identities and the complex processes of belonging and exclusion that are generated through the migratory dynamic ([Lawson 1999](#), [Smith 2006](#)) and, on the other hand, to overcome the dualist conceptions involved in the spatiality of the migratory phenomenon: origin/destination, place of work/residence, rural/urban, and other binary representations of place in migration ([Rouse 1992](#), [Smith & Guarnizo 1998](#)).

The connections between transnationalism and development have been explored from at least two viewpoints. The first is the economy of migration, in which the transnational practices of migrants—such as phone calls, the use of communications technologies, participation in tourism, the nostalgia industry, and remittances—have positive effects on local economic development ([Orozco 2003](#)) while also creating niches that are later appropriated by transnational corporations ([Guarnizo 2003](#)). The second viewpoint focuses on the contribution of migrant organizations to local and regional development processes, particularly their participation in social works that collectively benefit local populations ([Delgado-Wise et al. 2004](#), [Faist 2005](#), [Portes et al. 2006](#)).

The latter is bound up in the diversification of kinds of remittances, particularly the so-called collective remittances and their extraeconomic attributes related to migrants' negotiation capabilities with different levels of government in their countries of origin ([Goldring 1992, 2002](#)). The "3 × 1" program implemented in Mexico constitutes a paradigmatic case of progress within the latter perspective ([García-Zamora & Orozco 2009](#)). Another way in which migrant linkages with local

development projects are built up, particularly among those coming from Andean countries to Spain, is through codevelopment ([Cortés & Torres 2009](#)). This involves an initiative promoted by various European countries with the aim of regulating or controlling migratory flows through an ostensible policy of voluntary return. However, at the lower and meso levels, codevelopment has made possible the generation of links between migration and transnationalism "that actively incorporate networks and strategies generated by migrants, their families and their origin and destination environments" ([Cortés 2006](#), p. 11). This shows that the codevelopment debate of recent years reveals paradoxes within the concept and the practice that support their application as migration management policy ([Abad-Márquez 2005](#), [Fernández et al. 2009](#), [Lacomba & Falomir 2010](#), [Malgesini 2010](#)).

It is worth noting that the various initiatives to promote transnational development with the support of migrants have been relatively limited. To date, with the exception of initiatives by panethnic organizations such as the Oaxaqueño Binational Indigenous Front ([Fox 2006](#), [Fox & Rivera Salgado 2004](#)), most of those ventures have been oriented toward development projects for the communities and localities of origin. As such, these activities have not been able to reach effectively into the transnational arena in which the socioeconomic and cultural practices of migrants and their families are exerted. The possibilities and potentialities that transnational spaces offer for development, although at the local or meso level, have not been fully realized, partially owing to (a) the lack of adequate project planning, (b) the organizational weakness of the migrants and civil society groups with which they are linked in the transnational sphere, and (c) the absence of an adequate institutional framework capable of providing the required support ([Aksakal 2012](#)).

Finally, closely related to this analytical perspective, the Mexican Migration Project and the Latin American Migration Project have provided significant quantitative and

qualitative data and creative theoretical and methodological tools for understanding the complex relationships between migration and development in 16 countries of the region (Donato et al. 2010; Durand & Massey 2004, 2009; Massey et al. 1990, 2002). Both projects, codirected by Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey, are based on an ethnosurvey “designed to provide a picture of Latin American migration to the US that is historically grounded, ethnographically interpretable, quantitatively accurate, and rooted in receiving as well as sending areas” (<http://lamp.opr.princeton.edu/research/methodology-en.htm>). More than 30 books, 60 dissertations, and hundreds of book chapters, peer-reviewed articles, and research papers related to an ample variety of migration-related topics have been based on information derived from these projects (<http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/home-en.aspx>; <http://lamp.opr.princeton.edu/home-en.htm>).

SELECTED TOPICS

The purpose of this final section is to highlight several cutting-edge topics emerging in Latin American scholarship.

Skilled Migration and the Restructuring of Innovation Systems

Migration of highly skilled workers from Latin American countries to those in the OECD and, particularly, to the United States has grown significantly in the past two decades (Dumont et al. 2010, Lozano-Ascencio & Gandini 2010, Martínez-Pizarro 2010, Tuirán & Ávila 2013). In academic and political discussions around this kind of migration, the concept of “brain drain” has been abandoned (Pellegrino 2001) and replaced by the notion of “brain or talent circulation” (Meyer 2011). With this change of direction, the pessimism and concern around South–North emigration has been transformed into a rampant optimism that replaces the notion of loss with that of gain. This approach is supported by the assumption that knowledge is, in and of itself, beneficial for all and that contact

with highly qualified expatriates abroad generates synergies that empower the development of the country of origin regardless of where, how, and for whom they work. Knowledge and research agendas are viewed as neutral, and similarly the question of intellectual property—i.e., the appropriation of the fruits of scientific/technical labor—is underappreciated or simply ignored. Further, the euphoria surrounding the notion of “circulation of talent” and the creation of bridging programs with the “capable diasporas” depart from the assumption that innovation creates, through incubation processes, its own linkages with the productive, commercial, financial, and service sectors.

None of the optimistic assumptions held by advocates of the “brain or talent circulation” concept have a basis in the reality of contemporary capitalism. The International Migration and Development Network emphasizes the role of migration of highly skilled workers from the peripheral countries within the dynamics of the restructuring of innovation systems at a global scale. The United States leads this restructuring process, and large multinational corporations are the key agents (Delgado-Wise 2013a). Central elements of the process include (a) greater internationalization and decentralization of research and development activities; (b) the establishment of scientific cities—similar to Silicon Valley and Route 128 in the United States or the new “Silicon Valleys” mainly in Asia—where innovation is promoted more or less openly by large multinational corporations (Sturgeon 2003); (c) the development of new ways to control research agendas and the products that arise from scientific work (patents) by the large multinational corporations through “strategic investment” (Nat. Sci. Board 2012, Partnersh. New Am. Econ. 2012, Rand Corp. 2008); and (d) the South–North expansion of a highly skilled workforce, particularly in the fields of science and engineering, and the increasing recruitment—via outsourcing and offshoring—of this workforce with special significance in the case of peripheral countries (Grueber & Studt 2012, Moris & Kannankutty 2010).

The Specificity of the Relationship Between Migration and Development in Cuba

Cuba has an organizational and productive matrix quite different from the norm in its continental context. Its specificity has been synthesized in the concept of socialist productive underdevelopment (Fresneda & Delgado-Wise 2013). In this concept, the notions of underdevelopment, human development (Veltmeyer & Rushton 2011), structural heterogeneity, and structural instability are central. Although theoretically this eliminates the capital/labor relationship on the island, in practice, the relations of production derived from the change in the means of production (from private to collective) did not lead to changes that encouraged productivity growth. Under Cuba's income distribution system, the conditions of the workforce qualification and reproduction improved, but the fact that salaries were governed by principles of relative homogenization and full employment tended to discourage increased production and efficient development of productive forces. In this context,

the contradictions arising from the socialist productive underdevelopment—which carries over traits from its prerevolutionary capitalist underdevelopment path—lead to a series of structural distortions that restrict the possibilities for human development and result in increasing limitations to consumption and social mobility for the majority of the Cuban population. Migration operates as a mechanism to partially offset these distortions through two modalities: economic migration and the export of intensive services. Both modalities are a product and result of the noncapitalist mode of production in force on the Caribbean island and involve forms of labor exportation aimed at mitigating, but not overcoming, its structural constraints. (Fresneda & Delgado-Wise 2013, p. 155)

This line of thought not only offers important elements for understanding the specificity of migration in a noncapitalist context, but also

allows for a critical and constructive analysis of the limits and potentialities of social transformation in the region.

Revisiting the Cultural Dimension in Migration and Development Studies

A critique of the dominant conceptions that view cultures from the lens of modernization theory and/or see them as a static feature has been developed in the Latin American context (Delgado-Wise & Márquez 2012). This critique—opposed, *inter alia*, to the ideas of assimilation/integration and appropriation of the values of the North—seeks to reveal the values that underlie the dominant discourse, such as mercantilism, individualism, consumerism, passivity, and servility. Further, it shows that these values promote the reproduction of social inequalities, human insecurity, and social decomposition: xenophobia, racism, and narco-culture, as well as *maras* (criminal gangs) and other juvenile expressions of criminality and social nonconformity (Delgado-Wise & Márquez 2012, Márquez et al. 2012, Narváez 2007, Valenzuela 2009). Given this scenario, an alternative view has been developed that enables a demystification of the dominant perspective and an understanding of the character of the cultural practices and displays in the field of migration and development (Delgado-Wise & Márquez 2013, Grimson 2011, Valenzuela 2010). The transnational approach has also made important contributions in this regard (Levitt 2010, Massey & Sanchez 2007). On that basis, the role of an antihegemonic culture in the construction of an agent of social transformation capable of driving human development within a comprehensive and emancipatory set of values and social practices is being explored (Delgado-Wise & Márquez 2012).

Organized Crime's Inroads into the Migratory Phenomenon: The Question of Transit Migration and Forced Return

The Mexico–US border is the world's largest corridor of international migration. Apart

from Mexican migrants who attempt to cross the border, there exists an enormous number of Central American transmigrants (433,000 in 2005, according to the National Migration Institute of Mexico), principally originating in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, who cross Mexican territory en route to the United States in conditions of ever-increasing vulnerability. This vulnerability is interrelated, on the one hand, with the increased militarization and border controls that are a by-product of a renewed focus on national security (Anguiano & López-Sala 2010) and, on the other, with the growing presence of organized crime in the business of irregular transmigration (Casillas 2011).

These issues add to an increase in the return of migrants arising from massive deportations and from the financial crisis in the United States. At its core, this is a double forced migration. Migrants were initially expelled from their territories of origin and are newly expelled from their destinations to return in conditions of greater vulnerability, a transgression against human security that makes them easy prey for criminal gangs. The situation has opened a fertile field of study and political action in which an ever-wider group of civil society organizations is participating. The focus of this field goes beyond assistance and complaint. It analyzes the causes, characteristics, and implications of organized criminal violence without losing sight of the systemic violence provoked by neoliberal globalization: social exclusion, marginalization, poverty, extreme exploitation, and forced migration (Márquez et al. 2012).

Demystification of the Link Between Migration, Development, and Human Rights

Migration is a complex phenomenon fraught with myths that distort reality under a unilat-

eral, decontextualized, reductionist, and biased view of human mobility. The dominant political and research agendas in the field tend to reproduce much of the prevailing mythology, ignoring the context in which contemporary international, transit, return, and internal migration flows are embedded. They assume that migration is a free and voluntary act, impervious to any kind of structural conditioning and/or national or supranational agents, including organized crime. In a similar tenor, the multiple economic, demographic, social, and cultural contributions made by migrants to transit and destination societies and nations are often ignored, hidden, or even distorted, to the point where immigration is portrayed as a socioeconomic burden for destination countries and immigrants are turned, in times of crisis, into public scapegoats. In addition, these views tend to ignore the social reproduction and educational costs posed by migration to countries of origin, costs that go far beyond the overemphasized “positive” impact of remittances (Puentes et al. 2010).

A fundamental task in this regard has been the development and measurement of key demystifying indicators, such as the contribution of Latin American immigrants to the labor force and GDP growth both in the United States and in Spain; the covert wage discrimination to which Latin American immigrants have been subjected in most destination countries; the often ignored tax contributions of documented and undocumented immigrants, particularly to the US treasury; and the educational and social reproduction costs of migration for Latin American countries, costs that surpass the inflow of remittances and imply a modality of unequal exchange and an often neglected South–North subsidy (Canales 2011, [Martínez-Pizarro 2011](#), Puentes et al. 2010).

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