Sustainable Refugee Protection in Neighbouring Countries: What Works?

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Summary note of presentation at EMN Roundtable on 9th December 2020 on 'Sustainable Migration from Africa to Europe.

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Introduction

We live in an *age of displacement*. One the one hand, the number of forcibly displaced people is growing virtually year-on-year, due to a growing number of chronically fragile states. These numbers are likely to continue to rise given the impact of climate change and the advent of a multi-polar world's impact on multilateral solutions to the root causes of conflict. On the other hand, the political willingness to admit migrants and asylum seekers is diminishing around the world, amid populist nationalism, and structural change in the global economy, including the effects of offshoring and automation.

The challenge is how to square this circle, and create sustainable refugee policies that can ensure that all refugees receive access to protection (their rights under international law), assistance (basic services including access to health and education), and solutions (a pathway to citizenship back home or elsewhere), in a manner that can be reconciled with the constraints of contemporary politics, and which can be effective at scale and endure over time. In other words, how can we create sustainable refugee policies for refugees, and other displaced populations?

One longstanding thread to the policy debate has been a focus on 'protection-in-the-region-of-origin'. Recognizing that 85% of the world's refugees are in low- and middle-income countries, it has long been argued that it makes most sense to target scarce resources on ensuring protection for the majority of the world's refugees in the States that immediately neighbour conflict and crisis. Such approaches have emphasized development-based approaches, focusing on refugee self-reliance as a means to move beyond closed refugee camps, destitution in urban areas, and the need to embark on dangerous journeys at the hands of smugglers. In recent years, this idea has been central to the vision of the European Union's approach to refugee protection, and is present in the external dimension of the European Commission's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa), and central to the UN Global Compact on Refugees.

However, a particular challenge has been a lack of a clear evidence base on what works, for whom, and under what conditions. How can sustainable refugee policies be designed for neighbouring countries? What does the evidence tell us about the types of assistance model that can lead to sustainable outcomes, including improving the welfare or refugees and proximate host communities, enhancing social cohesion between refugees and hosts, and reducing the need for onward migration? This short memo draws upon the research of the Refugee Economies Programme to give a sense of what we know empirically.

The Search for Sustainability

When it comes to refugee policy, there are three criteria for sustainability: *rights*, *politics*, and *scale*. First, refugee policies must ensure all refugees have access to protection, assistance, and solutions. This involves not only delivering civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights, but also ensuring that people receive access to basic social services and social protection, and can also have a pathway towards effective citizenship somewhere in the world, in the medium-term. Second, they must retain the political support at global, national, and local levels. Sustainable policies must be capable of avoiding

majoritarian political backlash. That politics is not fixed, narratives can be changed through persuasion and argumentation, but politics nevertheless represents a constraint. Third, they must be able to function at scale and endure over time. This is especially important given that, amid profound structural transformation and proliferating drivers of displacement, refugee numbers are likely to rise over time.

Reconciling rising needs with declining political will is a significant challenge, and it is one that is pressing for both donor countries in the Global North and host countries in the Global South. Refugee protection is a shared global responsibility, and to be effective it relies upon all states contributing. However, historically and legally, the international refugee system has been largely silent on *how* that responsibility should be shared. As a result, that most refugees have been hosted by countries that neighbour conflict and crisis, and distant donor countries have exercised discretion in the contributions that offer through humanitarian and development assistance, or through resettlement places.

Logically, there are three possible allocation mechanisms for distributing responsibility for refugees: *free choice* (allowing refugees to choose their destination), *equitable quotas* (allocating refugees equitably across all countries), and *neighbouring countries* (prioritizing resources on host countries in the region of origin). Each of these has a part to play within a sustainable refugee policy model, but to different degrees.

Spontaneous arrival asylum is an important 'check and balance' in the event that effective protection is unavailable close to home or if a person needs to claim asylum 'sur place' (i.e. because circumstances change while they are already outside the country). Resettlement quotas are important as a means to support people who have vulnerabilities that preclude them living in safety and dignity close to home, and as a means to ensure a pathway to citizenship for those ultimately unable to go home. Both of these solutions, though, are only ever likely to be available to a minority of the world's refugees. Neighbouring countries represent the only politically viable option to meet the conditions of sustainability for the majority of the world' refugees. The option is politically feasible because it is compatible with the mutual interest of both donor countries (which want managed migration) and host countries (that want development assistance that benefits their citizens). However, such approaches to 'protection-in-the-region of origin' have often been applied disingenuously but both donor and host states, often with little benefit to refugees or host communities.

The important empirical question is: what works, under what conditions, and for whom?

Three Questions

In order to identify the conditions for sustainable refugee policies in neighbouring countries, it is necessary to answer three broad empirical questions, relating to the determinants of 1) *refugee welfare* (when do refugees thrive rather than merely survive?); 2) *social cohesion* (when do refugees and host communities get along?); 3) *mobility and migration choices* (when do refugees stay and when do they go?).

The Refugee Economies Programme at the University of Oxford has collected panel data on the economic lives of refugees, covering more than 16,000 refugees and proximate host community members in cities and camps in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Between them, these three countries host more refugees than the whole of the European Union combined, despite being among the poorest countries in the world. Over 80% of registered refugees in these countries live in camps or settlements, rather than cities.

The data we have collected are no universally representative, but are based on random sampling. Our focus populations include Somali refugees across all sites, as well as Congolese and South Sudanese refugees within some of the sites.

Welfare outcomes: thrive or survive?

Drawing upon our data, we have explored the determinants of a range of welfare indicators for refugees, including income, assets, food security, health, mental health, and subjective wellbeing. We find a systematic 'gap' in welfare outcomes between refugees and host community members. We also explore a range of correlations with those welfare outcomes. Among the most important findings is that employment and education are especially important in explaining many of these outcomes. For example, higher incomes are correlated with variables such as having a job, number of years of education, gender, and living in a country that provides the right to work and freedom of movement. Put crudely, jobs and education are key to a range of socio-economic outcomes for refugees and hosts.

Social cohesion: when refugees and hosts get along?

We also explored the determinants of host community attitudes towards refugees, refugees' attitudes towards refugees, and levels of inter-group interaction. We found across our research sites that economic concerns were much more important than security or cultural concerns in shaping host community attitudes towards refugees. Furthermore, those economic attitudes tend to be influenced by inter-group interaction: the more interaction, the more positive the attitudes. And the types of interaction that matter appear to relate to consumption (refugees buying from host shops, and vice versa) and employment (refugees working for host employers, and vice versa). This suggests that interaction within dynamic, integrated local economies may improve social cohesion.

Mobility and migration: stay or go?

The so-called 'migration hump' is regarded as one of the most robust empirical relationships in Migration Studies. It suggests that, in the short-term, as people get richer, they are more likely to have a preference to emigrate. In other words, in the short-term, development tends to increase -- rather than decrease – onward migration. However, our findings call into question whether or not the same relationship actually holds for refugees, as distinct from other migrants. Our preliminary analysis suggests, in fact, that some development indicators (such as asset holding) may actually be negatively correlated with both actual international migration and with the aspiration to migrate. In other words, there is some grounds to believe that improving refugees' socio-economic outcomes may reduce their preference to engage in onward migration.

Overall, and crudely put, there is evidence from our data that the best available route to sustainable refugee policies may be to improve socio-economic outcomes from both refugees and host communities.

Learning from Innovative Programmes

The next question, though, is how to achieve this in practice? What types of innovative interventions are likely to work? In order to explore this, we have used a combination of impact evaluation methods to explore innovative practices in the same three refugee-hosting countries in East Africa. Some of our insights are below

Uganda: the right to work and freedom of movement

In contrast to its neighbours, Uganda has long allowed refugees the right to work and freedom of movement, albeit for complex and sometimes politically ambiguous reasons. Drawing upon the dataset described above, we compared economic outcomes for the same refugee populations (Somali and Congolese refugees) in Uganda (which allows the right to work and freedom of movement) and Kenya (which does not allow the right to work or freedom of movement). We found that, despite, refugees in

Uganda living within generally much poorer surrounding communities than those in Kenya, the Ugandan model is associated with higher incomes (at purchasing power parity [PPP]), greater mobility, lower transaction costs for economic activity, and more sustainable sources of employment. In other words, there is some evidence that there is a 'Uganda effect' on refugees' socio-economic outcomes, possibly related to the right to work and freedom of movement. Being in Uganda is, for example, associated with 16% higher income at PPP controlling for other factors.

Kalobeyei: a market-based settlement model

In 2016, a brand new, designed refugee settlement, the Kalobeyei Settlement, was opened in the Turkana County region of Kenya, just 3.5km away from the four pre-existing Kakuma refugee camps. At the time, the Kakuma camps were traditional camps, based in an in-kind assistance model. Kalobeyei was instead designed as an integrated, market-based settlement, intended to support greater refugee self-reliance. It was funded through the EUTF for Africa, as well as by a number of bilateral European donors. In contrast to Kakuma, it was launched as an 'integrated settlement' for both refugees and hosts, and it implemented a range of innovative market-based approaches, including for example using various models of cash-based assistance, instead of in-kind food assistance or one-size-fits-all shelter models, for example. We undertook impact evaluations on both the overall impact of the settlement model on refugee self-reliance, and on some of the specific cash-based interventions.

Overall, our findings suggest that Kalobeyei is a step in the right direction; some of the market-based interventions, such as cash-based assistance and the use of 'kitchen gardens' have had positive outcomes. However, it has also faced weaknesses – for example host community members have been reluctant to move to the settlement, even refugees were reluctant to relocate to an area in which they lacked pre-existing social networks, and two years after opening, only 2% of refugees in Kalobeyei reported being able to meet their needs independently of aid and only 6% had an income generating activity. The biggest weakness was that, despite a series of microeconomic innovations, the surrounding region remained poor, and so the Kalobeyei economy has remained based on the circulation of aid money. In order to create self-reliance for refugees, large-scale macro-economic interventions are needed to transform remote borderland economies. Building borderland economies relies upon investment in infrastructure and public goods.

Dollo Ado: private sector investment

The IKEA Foundation has made the largest private sector investment in the history of the international refugee system within five refugee camps in the Somali region of Ethiopia. Developed since the influx of Somali refugees between 2009 and 2011, the Dollo Ado camps are in a remote, arid, and inauspicious region. Working with UNHCR and the national government, the IKEA Foundation has notably invested in a range of innovative livelihoods activities for both refugees and the host community. One of the most notable innovations has been 'cooperatives' -- membership-based income-generating groups. The cooperatives typically involve an equal number of refugees and host community members. The cooperatives exist across the camps, and cover areas such as agriculture, livestock, energy and the environment, and microfinance. Many of the cooperatives have been supported with significant infrastructure such as the construction of 29 km of irrigation canals to transport water directly to the fields, creating 1000 hectares of irrigated cropland, enough for 1000 refugee and 1000 host community cooperative members to farm their own plot.

The cooperatives are still at an early stage, and have so far had different levels of success. Through impact evaluation, we found that many of the cooperatives have led to significant increases in the incomes of beneficiaries, improved social cohesion between refugees and hosts, and had indirect benefits for the local communities. Not all of the cooperatives have been equally successful, but they have provided an insight into some of the challenges associated with building sustainable economic opportunities in remote, arid, and sometimes insecure borderland regions. As with Kalobeyei, they

show that, although some progress can be made through small-scale micro-economic interventions, sustainability will rely upon the macroeconomic transformation of refugee-hosting border regions.

The Political Conditions for Socio-Economic Rights

Behind creating sustainable refugee economies in neighbouring countries, however, lies an additional political challenge. Host countries need to be willing to commit to provide not only admission to territory for refugees, but also entitlements and opportunities. Such entitlements and opportunities include the right to work and freedom of movement. National and local support for these are not a given. But they have sometimes been possible given the right conditions. These conditions frequently include a clear benefit to both national and local-level political gatekeepers.

For example, our research in Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia has revealed that variation in governments' willingness to provide refugees with the right to work and freedom of movement has frequently been shaped by donors' willingness to provide pay-offs to *both* national and local actors. Uganda's longstanding commitment to refugee self-reliance stems from successive national governments' ability to access international donor funding and to channel some of it into patronage networks in refuge hosting regions. In Kenya, the national government has not provided refugees with similar rights; however, in one region – Turkana County – the regional Governor has taken a different approach because of direct benefits from the international donor community. Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, the government adopted some of the most progressive refugee legislation in the world through its 2019 Refugee Proclamation. It did so entirely because of donor conditionality, with the EU, the UK, and the World Bank offering $600m towards its industrial parks in exchange for 30,000 jobs for refugees within the country's industrial parks, and because legislative change was a condition. However, in the absence of a local pay-off in refugee-hosting areas, or an ongoing quid pro quo, there is little prospect of implementation of all of the rights within the Proclamation.

Conclusion

Creating sustainable refugee policies in neighbouring countries is not an easy task, and it has often been made more challenging by the lack of systematic evidence highlighting what works, for whom, and under what conditions. The rhetoric of 'protection-in-the-region' has often been used disingenuously by donor and host countries alike. However, in an age of displacement, development-based solutions are likely to be the most realistic and sustainable option for the majority of the world's refugees. It is imperative that they are designed in ways that are evidence-based, and expand the entitlements and capabilities of refugees and host communities.

Key points from presentation by Bram Frouws, head of the Mixed Migration Centre, during the EMN roundtable on sustainable migration, 9th December 2020

Mixed Migration

- Mixed migration is not a defined target group (link to the definition of mixed migration by MMC). You cannot put a total number on the volume of mixed migration, as it includes so many different groups. It is a phenomenon and provides a lens to apply to understand that phenomenon.
- This lens is important to describe, understand & address nature of contemporary movement. It is useful from a protection perspective: while on the move people in mixed migration flows face similar risks, irrespective of status, whether refugees or migrants. And it helps to understand drivers of movement of refugees and migrants are various, intertwined and influence each other.
- We are cautious in making too strong a distinction between refugees and migrants. Of course, there are legal distinctions and being a refugee comes with additional rights for protection. But first and foremost, they are all human beings, which comes with a whole set of human rights.
- Drivers of migration are not as clear cut as is often portrayed in media and policy discussions. Refugees are of course fleeing insecurity, conflict, persecution. But they are also individual human beings, with all kinds of other motivations, including economic motivations. Especially when they decide to move on, to engage in secondary migration. Migrants may have left their home country primarily because of economic reasons, but along the way, they might become victims of human trafficking, or face violent human smugglers. They might end up in countries in crisis such as Libya, from which they want to flee to find safety. Are they refugees or migrants?
- 4Mi data from MMC shows that people always have multiple reasons for movement. Even when economic reasons may dominate, it is often combined with more 'refugee-related' reasons for movement.

Mixed migration trends between Africa and Europe

- Between 2014 and 2016, was rather exceptional, with very high numbers of irregular arrivals by sea, but primarily in Greece, and primarily related to situation of onward movement of Syrian refugees along with others. Since then, numbers decreased and as of 2020 are rather low.
- The numbers of people coming from Africa as part of mixed migration flows are very low.
- The proportion of people coming from sub-Sahara Africa is even lower. The number of arrivals in Italy increased in 2020, compared to last year. But that trend is fully caused by the increase in people originating from North Africa, mainly Tunisia, and to a lesser extent Algeria and Morocco.
- Here we clearly see Covid-19 both as a driver of migration – in the case of North Africa – but also as an inhibitor of mixed migration, in the case of sub-Sahara Africa.
- To some extent, this leads to changing routes. At the moment, while we see very low numbers coming to continental Europe, there is of course a strong increase in arrivals from Africa to the Canary Islands.

- The overall take away: mixed migration from Africa to Europe at the moment is a rather small phenomenon. This is not the idea we get if we follow the media and some of the policy discussions, where there is still this sense of political panic. But these are very manageable numbers; mixed migration flows represent a small proportion of human mobility, but have

seriously disrupted migration and refugee policy as well as politics worldwide. The images of people arriving in boats, arriving irregularly, are so vivid, that it makes the mixed migration phenomenon a significant disrupter, creating a lot of political noise. This stands in the way of a more level-headed and rational debate, instead of one based on emotions. And it stands in the way of developing approaches to sustainable migration, for which we need to exactly avoid that political panic.

Future outlook: focus on demography, climate change, urbanization and Covid-19

Demography

- There are many doomsday predictions, how with the rapidly rising population in Africa, we can expect a lot more migration. Currently, emigration rates from the African continent are still very low. If you compare the number of migrants abroad from most African countries to more typical emigration, middle-income countries like Mexico or the Philippines, with emigration rates of 10%, a lot of potential for a lot more migration can be expected. Even a small increase in the percentage of the African population leaving for Europe, would already mean a lot of people in absolute numbers.
- However, there are three important caveats to make here:
    - There is currently not much evidence for an African exodus. In the past decade, the population of Africa increased faster than the out-migration, which means the migration rate – out-migration compared to the population - from Africa actually decreased.
    - There is a complex interplay between economic development, migration and population growth. Usually, with economic development migration increases. But population growth usually decreases with economic development. How this is going to play out in the case of Africa is not known.
    - Not all migration is directed to Europe, in fact, most migration is not. Most Africans migrate within their countries, within their regions, or within the continent. Additionally, there are movements from Africa to other destinations, like China and the Gulf countries. There is no reason to think this will change.
- Having a young population, can also become an economic benefit, creating a lot more opportunities within Africa. Combined with ongoing initiatives to create one free movement area on the continent, this could further boost economic development, with less reason to leave the continent. In short: this narrative of an impending African exodus to Europe may not be right.

Climate change

- Again, there are many predictions about the millions, or even more than a billion people who are going to be displaced due to climate change. This creates, again, a fearful perception that many of those will migrate from south to north. However, most of the displacement and migration due to climate change and environmental shocks is short distance, rural to rural or rural to urban, or at most cross-border, but within the region. Long distance, very expensive international irregular migration is not a coping strategy for people who ran out of all livelihood options due to climate change.
- In fact, the group we may need to worry about most are those unable to leave, those involuntarily immobile, as they are often the most vulnerable.
- Of course, climate change is a threat multiplier. It can be behind the economic motivations that some people would indicate as a reason for movement. And of course we do not know

exactly how this is going to evolve. But as it stands now, it is highly unlikely that climate change will lead to massive, irregular mixed migration from Africa to Europe.

Urbanisation

- Already, 60% of the world's refugees, 80% of IDPs and most internal and international migrants ultimately end up in cities. The world keeps on urbanizing rapidly, even though there has been a bit of reversal with Covid-19, with people leaving cities. Cities are places where people accumulate resources and develop further aspirations, and as such they often function as springboards for international migration. In a way we can, therefore, expect this ongoing urbanization - which also goes hand in hand with economic development - to spur further international migration, including mixed migration towards Europe.
- That said, cities can also play a key role in better managed migration. Both at regional level, as regional hubs, offering economic opportunities within regions. But also across borders and continents, where cities can work together to develop approaches to better managed and more sustainable migration, as a way to unlock the development potential of migration within regions, with less need to leave regions.

Covid-19

- In general, migration is the result of a combination of aspirations to move and capabilities to do so. Covid-19 is having an impact of both aspects. It is likely to increase aspirations to move, influencing mixed migration drivers such as economic opportunities. And it is likely to limit capability to move by reducing resources that people can invest in movement and making mobility more difficult, for example through increased border controls and more restrictive migration policies. This is why in some contexts we see a drop in movements, and elsewhere, increased movement.
- Based on 15,000 remote 4Mi interviews with refugees and migrants by MMC, some key conclusions on the impact of Covid-19 include:
    - Between 25% and almost 40% of respondents in Africa saying Covid-19 was a factor in their decision to leave, usually linked to economic drivers.
    - It also limiting people's capability to move, with many referring to the increased difficulty of crossing borders, or no longer being able to afford the journey.
    - Finally, we see that this is affecting the smuggling dynamics. Many respondents indicate the need for smugglers is increasing, that smuggling fees are increasing and that this increased dependency leads to the use of more dangerous routes.
- Covid-19 is very much a trend accelerator. Which can be negative, if it is affecting people's dire economic circumstances, exposing them to more dangers on the routes or it if leads to more harsh migration policies. But it can also accelerate positive trends. A recent MMC study on the Global Compact for Migration in times of Covid, pointed to many positive trends, with countries implementing actions as prescribed by the GCM, for example providing a regular status to migrants, ensuring access to healthcare and releasing people from immigration detention.

Sustainable migration

- For sustainable migration and better migration policies, we need to cut out the non sustainable, non-productive and - importantly - the inhumane aspects of migration. Such as: the huge expenditure by migrants on smugglers; the huge investment by states in ever more advanced border controls and technology; tax evasion in the informal sector; labour

exploitation; the violence towards refugees and migrants; the policies that may lead to further destabilisation of regions.

- Instead, we need to make sure those unproductive elements are channeled to productive migration. For example, migrants can use what they spend on smugglers on legal migration, for example on premium visa or deposits. Governments can use what they would save by spending less on border controls/securitisation and by having more tax income through regular labour, on creating legal channels, better labour condition controls, etc.
- What also remains really crucial in any discussion on sustainable migration and costs and benefits, is the question: sustainable migration for whom? We should never forget about the human side of the story, the personal experiences, the humanitarian principles, the fact that migration can also be a lifeline or escape to find safety. It does not always need to be productive immediately. We have to be careful not to go too far with applying a utility-, market-driven perspective on migration. There is a risk that could lead to an approach or narrative where migrants become disposable: useful as long as they contribute, but not if they don't.
- We also still too much face a vicious cycle and lack of leadership and courage when it comes to migration policies between Europe and Africa. With European countries not willing to substantially open up more legal migration channels, as long as countries of origin do not sufficiently cooperate with returns. And for countries of origin, it's the other way around. We need to break this gridlock, and get more serious about both returns, but also about really scaling up on regular and circular labour migration, beyond the eternal cycle of small-scale pilots that we have seen for so many years. Regular migration has very much been part of the European Agenda on Migration in the past. But it has not been sufficiently implemented.
- Together with a stronger focus on regional migration within Africa and the crucial role of cities, really scaling up on labour migration is key to make migration work better. To make it more sustainable. To make sure we take migration as it is: something that can boost economic development for all involved something that helps fulfilling life aspirations.

The European Migration Network (EMN) online Roundtable on
Sustainable Migration from Africa to Europe
9 December 2020

Background on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum[1]: Reinforced tailor-made partnerships with third countries

The Pact builds on the experiences of the past and proposes a new approach to address the complex challenges of migration and the root causes of irregular migration for the benefit of the EU and its citizens, partner countries, migrants and refugees themselves. When it comes to working with international partners, migration needs to be central to the EU's overall relationships with key partner counties of origin and transit. Comprehensive, balanced and tailor-made partnerships, which are flexible enough to adjust over time, can deliver mutual benefits and build a relationship based on trust and open dialogue.

This is why the EU engages in migration globally, in international partnerships at bilateral, regional and multilateral level and takes its responsibility as a global actor extremely seriously and proudly.

The Communication on the Pact sets out that effective coordination between the EU and its Member States is essential to allow for consistent messaging and joint outreach to partner countries.

The EU will use its policies and financing tools in a strategic, coordinated and flexible way to underpin these partnerships.

The Pact proposes to develop and deepen comprehensive, tailor-made and mutually beneficial migration partnerships with key countries of origin and transit along five main axes:

1: **protecting those in need, supporting countries which host large number of refugees and strengthening their protection system**.

- Working with partners allows the EU to fulfil its obligations to provide protection to those in need - 80 million people are in need of protection and assistance as a consequence of forced displacement.
- The EU has given considerable support to refugee hosting countries, notably to the countries affected by the Syria crisis through dedicated instruments such as the EU's Facility for Refugees in Turkey and the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis.
- The humanitarian evacuation of people from Libya to Emergency Transit Mechanisms in Niger and Rwanda for onward resettlement helps the most vulnerable to be taken away from desperate circumstances.
- In December 2019 at the Global Refugee Forum, the EU reiterated its strong commitment to providing support to millions of refugees and displaced people, as well as fostering sustainable development-oriented solutions.

2: **building economic opportunity, thereby contributing to addressing some of the root causes of irregular migration**, in particular through trade, investments and development assistance.

- the EU is the world's largest provider of development assistance - this will continue to be a key feature in the EU's engagement with partner countries, including on migration issues.

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en

- the EU will work to build stable and cohesive societies, to reduce poverty and inequality and promote human development, jobs and economic opportunity, to promote democracy, good governance, peace and security, and to address the challenges of climate change.

3: the EU will continue **supporting partner countries' migration governance**

- the EU will continue to support partner countries' migration governance, to manage irregular migration, forced displacement and combat migrant smuggling networks, launch information campaigns, strengthen asylum systems, combat discrimination and labour exploitation.
- the EU will continue to support reinforcing border management capacities of third countries, including those related to search and rescue.
- a new EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling for 2021-2025 will be presented by the Commission in 2021.

4: **fostering cooperation on readmission and reintegration,** by mobilising all the EU's policies and tools.

- return of those who do not have the right to stay is essential
- need to step-up voluntary returns which is always the preference
- working with partner countries more closely to improve cooperation on readmission complemented by cooperation on reintegration, to ensure the sustainability of returns. The Commission will propose a new Sustainable Voluntary Return and Reintegration Strategy next year, aiming at building partner countries' capacity and ownership.

5: **enhancing legal migration pathways**

- formalising the ad-hoc scheme of approximately 29,500 resettlement places already being implemented by Member States in 2020 and 2021
- support to establish community or private sponsorship schemes
- building on the experience with the pilot projects on legal migration to launch Talent Partnerships to support legal migration and mobility.

EU funding will be essential to the delivery of the above objectives – the Commission's proposal for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) includes a 10% target for migration and migration governance related actions.

EMN Norway Occasional Papers

A Sustainable Migration Approach

Towards a Common Platform?

Øyvind Jaer, National Coordinator EMN Norway
Oslo, 2020

The European Migration Network (EMN)

EMN is a network coordinated by the European Commission. The network consists of national contact points in most EU member states, and Norway. The Norwegian contact point – EMN Norway - consists of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration. Our status in the network is regulated by a working agreement between the European Commission and the Ministry. EMN's mission is to provide credible, comparable and up-to-date information on member states' policy developments, regulations and practices in the asylum and migration field. The aim is to support policy makers and enlighten the public debate in the EU and in the member states plus Norway. EMN finance and organise studies, conferences and roundtables and publishes reports, informs and other knowledge products on migration. Most of the information is available to everyone. For more information, see www.emnnorway.no.

EMN Norway Occasional papers

EMN Norway has committed itself to addressing the challenges and sustainability of today's asylum and migration system. By commissioning papers on the various aspects of sustainable migration from poor to rich countries and presenting and discussing these in conferences both in Oslo and in Brussels, we hope to deliver 'food for thought' on how to design sustainable migration policies which can serve the interests of parties involved. We also hope to contribute to designing a common platform for knowledge- and policy development related to migration- and development-policies.

The format of the papers is designed to facilitate easy and quick publication with clear and well-founded perspectives with a bold and innovative policy relevant content. EMN Norway Occasional Papers are addressed to a wide audience of policymakers, academics, media and interested public.

As regards the current paper, *Sustainable Migration – Possibly a Promising Approach for Prevailing Challenges*, I would like to thank my colleagues in EMN Norway, Stina Holth and Magne Holter for excellent cooperation and partnership in bringing the activities and products of EMN Norway's sustainable migration project forward and for contributing ideas and quality assurance in formulating this paper. I would also like to thank my former EMN colleague Eivind Hoffmann for carefully going through the draft and proposing many good improvements. However, the only responsible person for this paper is the author himself.

Other papers in this series:

The views and conclusions of the EMN Occasional Paper are those of the respective authors.

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- Sustainable migration framework, Alexander Betts and Paul Collier (2018)
- Defining sustainable migration, Marta Bivand Erdal, Jørgen Carling, Cindy Horst and Cathrine Talleraas (2018)

Content

1. Introduction

Asylum and migration are sensitive and contested political issues, not at least among Member States of the EU. The European Commission's attempt to 'bridge the gaps' by launching the New Pact on Migration and Asylum on 23 September 2020 has so far failed in reaching the desired consensus, despite substansial effort by the German Presidency of the Council during the final semester of 2020..

One challenge is communicative; i.e. the challenge to create narratives on asylum and migration that are commonly shared is:

"A common and unifying language through which to build political consensus is urgently needed. It must be unifying across countries and political parties. The basis must be guiding principles that can reconcile economic needs, human rights obligations, and maintain democratic backing. (B&C 2018b)

The underlying challenge, as seen by a substantial number of people in European countries, is the impact immigration might have on society, and many are challenging the current immigration and refugee policies. Will we be able to sustain the"Nordic Model" and our own welfare state in the future? Will we maintain trust and solidarity between different groups, and between the population and the government? And will we be able to generate jobs for the low skilled in an ever more digitalized world of tomorrow? Or will the low skilled have to depend on the welfare state?

Such worries escalated dramatically, in the second half of 2015, when many European countries experienced a 'migration crisis'. The route from a "politics of welcome" to a "politics of closed borders" became short, not only for the European countries receiving the largest numbers of migrants. Many felt that the migration politics of the past was not sustainable. It led to "panic and regret" as B&C describe it in their paper *Sustainable Migration Framework* (2018).

Norway's main immigration challenges are the low skilled immigrants with limited education and language skills and with cultures and values different from our own. Many of them will have to try to enter the Schengen-area irregularly – no other legal route is open for them - and try to apply for asylum at national borders. Quite a few of the asylum seekers are *recognised as* refugees and will also give rise to family immigration.

Currently (2021) the number of arrivals of asylum seekers to Norway is low and the immediate challenges not so urgent. Norwegian integration policies also give reason to be somewhat optimistic, especially when looking at second-generation immigrants, who in both education and in the labour market often outperform their parents'generation..

However, technologies are changing and the future demand for workers to 'elementary jobs' are expected to decrease significantly, as one may read from our EMN Norway Occasional paper *Automation and Robotisation…* (2019). How many low skilled workers will the future labour market be able to absorb, and what will be the effects on job opportunities for different groups of workers?

A related and equally compelling question is the volume, composition and speed of future immigration flows. Population growth, forced displacement including climate-induced

migration[1], economic development generating rising aspirations and more capacity to emigrate are key drivers of emigration from poor countries.

The current asylum and refugee system in the EU/EFTA member countries is often said to favour the few who have sufficient strength and means to pay the smugglers to be able to enter the richer and preferable destinations. Left behind in regional havens are the remaining 85% of the refugees with minimal support compared to those who were lucky to get asylum in the richer countries. This picture becomes even more bleak and unjust if we trace back the migration chain from the regional haven to the country of origin, where we find the internally displaced and *the bottom billion* (the title of Collier's earlier book on poverty), who, in spite of aspirations, neither have capacity nor resources to migrate.

What will happen if a greater number of the bottom billion will be able to convert dreams to reality and start their own migration project towards the richer countries?

Finally, if we turn the perspective to the countries of origin, another key challenge with the current EU/EFTA migration and asylum system is the loss of valuable human resources needed for their post conflict recovery. According to B&C, 30-50% of the entire university educated Syrians have managed to reach European countries and have settled there. Will they ever go back to help rebuild Syria? Probably not. Likewise, in the broader brain drain perspective, *im*migration of educated, skilled migrants, with competences demanded by the labour market, is usually considered to be of great value for rich countries like Norway. In poor countries of origin, on the other end of the migration chain, *e*migration of skilled and educated workers may lead to an unsustainable and destructive "brain drain".

A promising approach?

> *"….. the concept of sustainable migration …..has the potential to reset the debate on criteria on which a new consensus can be forged.* (B&C 2018)"

Sustainable Migration, as a concept as well as a goal for migration policies, is a promising platform on which to build political consensus in a language which is intelligible not only to political decision-makers, but also to the broader segment of public opinion. ***Un***sustainable effects are destructive! Who would go for that?

Sustainable Migration is fairly hard to reject as a goal - a guiding 'star' - for migration policies. However, building consensus in the broader frame as indicated here, will take time as it did with regards to *Sustainable Development* towards the end of the 1990'.

Sustainable development demands political governance of the market according to policy regulations defined by what is held as sustainable levels for environment and nature. This was a kind of political regulation of the market which neo-liberals in the 80' and 90' criticized eagerly. Today, knowledge based policy governance of the market will be seen as a matter of course by the majority of the electorate.

Sustainable migration also demands political governance of migration flows by policy regulations defined by the sustainable volume, composition and speed of out or ingoing

[1] The *World Risk Report* estimates that climate change may trigger population movements of up to 200 million people, which means that the migration challenges of tomorrow *may* be formidable.

migration flows. This is a political governance of the migration flows which may meet with critique from more 'migration liberalist' angels and from 'over-dynamic' rights thinkers (see paper on Migration and human rights below) –still a power factor in social science and in public discourse.

With *Sustainable migration* as the Government's goal formulation for immigration policies, a sustainable migration approach should influence Norwegian decission makers and thus in a little way help secure a more '*Safe, orderly and regular migration*' (United Nations General Assembly 2016), but also with a clear, knowledge based political governance of migration flows regulated by what is found to be sustainable levels of volume, composition and speed of migration, and in accordance with a *migration realistic* and *Convention 'fundamentalistic'* understanding of human rights.

Sustainable migration, as a policy goal, is migration *realism* representing the middle path of policies seeking to establish a more 'whole of government approach' to migration and development-humanitarian policies. These are different policy areas, but in many cases targeting the same populations in poor and vulnerable developing countries.

An idea could be to further develop, theoretically and methodologically, and test out a Sustainable migration project to see if such an approach could produce an outcome which proves successful in relation to the challenges above. While this is indeed the final goal, the more specific objective of this paper is the following:

The objective of the remaining part of this paper is to outline thoughts and ideas on how to define and operationalize 'sustainable migration' - a basic concept in Norwegian Government documents and the current and earlier Governments' goal formulation for immigration policies (*Sustainable immigration)*. We also find the term well introduced in several EU documents.

The way forward towards this aim will be to draw out key messages from papers and conferences, as well as from the independent thinking and innovation produced by EMN Norway and others over the last five years. They all deal with sustainable migration, more specifically sustainable migration from poor to rich countries which is usually seen as the most demanding flow of immigration to rich welfare states like the Scandinavian ones.

Reminders: A sustainable migration approach deals in principle with all sectors of the migration chain from poor countries of origin via transit countries and regional havens to integration in rich countries of destination. This is also how we should understand the concept of migration as signifying both the national and international aspects of the movement. Still, the current paper as well as the *Sustainable Migration Approach* have an immigration bias as this is probably the key interest of most readers and also the most educational way to grasp the subject matter.

Hoping to be relevant in a European context, there is also a Norway-Nordic bias in this paper: partly because the Scandinavian welfare states often offer the most clearcut examples highlighting the points made.

Let it be noted that 'migration', as a general term, is used to refer to all aspects of the migration process from *e*migration to *im*migration- integration- assimilation. This wide connotation of the term is used quite freely when the points made are understood to be more or less equally relevant for all sectors of the migration chain. When need be, we use amore precise term, e.g. immigration etc.

Finally, ' a sustainable migration approach' and '*The Sustainable Migration Approach*' are used throughout this paper. The capital version refers more specifically to what is this paper's proposals and the first to other possible sustainable migration approaches in general.

2. Theoretical roots

The concept

A Google search for "sustainable migration" in 2017 gave few hits.[2] Today (06.01.2) the figure will be around 191 millions. The term has indeed been met with some interest!

'Sustainable migration' is a *normative* concept, and like 'sustainable development', also a goal that gives direction to policy making. In Norway, 'sustainable migration' entered Government documents as a goal formulation in the State Budget Bill for 2018 (Prp1s 2017-2018), and it has later been used in Government documents concerned with issues like immigration, integration, return etc. The goal formulation for the immigration field of the current Norwegian Government is 'sustainable immigration'. The EU has also published its *Road Map to Sustainable Migration* in 2017. However, the term is still an undefined honorific in all the above documents.

A commonly accepted and used definition of the concept 'sustainable migration' does not yet exist, and no *empirical* studies on sustainable migration have so far been carried out. There is no consensus on what we should mean with the term and no 'general theory' or methodology on how to do empirical research on the topic. What exactly 'sustainable migration' should mean and imply in the broader context of migration management is thus an important question for migration policies with ambitions of being sustainable and knowledge based.

Two pillars

Collier's book *Exodus* (2013) and B&Cs' *Refuge* (2017), do not use the term 'sustainable migration'. Indeed, as mentioned above, nobody used that term when these books were published. Still, these books serve as the point of departure for a *Sustainable Migration Approach* providing important building blocks and information pillars to be brought forward to the common platform in the last chapter.

Exodus sets the stage and brings forward 'the whole of route approach'by presenting migration as a systemic whole and linking *e*migration from the country of origin to *im*migration processes in the countries of destination.

Exodus also makes the provocative, but highly relevant point, : *«'Is migration good or bad?'.. is the wrong question ...as sensible as it would be to ask, 'Is eating good or bad?' In both cases the pertinent question is not good or bad, but* ***how much...and what kind of composition ... is better****.» (Exodus p. 26 and p. 260).*

[2] Hits were among others *Sustainable migration in the context of development,* which referred to a high level meeting in Brussels organized by the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU 29th November 2016 and ii) The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation's report *Towards Sustainable Migration – Interventions in countries of origin* 2017. The first reference seems to be more follow ups of the Global Compact mostly focusing on the role of migration for development and the 2nd focusing on interventions in countries of origin. Both references seemed to use 'sustainable migration' as an undefined un-researched honorific. Bivand, Carling et. al. in their paper on *Defining Sustainable Migration* (2018 – see link) confirms 400 hits early 2018.

Exodus does not, in principle, advocate for a migration restrictive or migration sceptic attitude, as some migration researchers seem to argue.[3] Whether migration should be restricted or not, is an empirical question. Migration deals with people on the move, not commodities and optimal resource allocation governed by the market. Migration must be *politically governed* according to parameters like volume, composition and speed of migration. Empirical investigation is required to disclose the costs and benefits of migration for the parties involved.

Another 'take away' from *Exodus* is related to 'tipping points': If migration accelerates, what then? Marginal growth can suddenly lead to a qualitative jump – to a situation of «regrets and panic» which demands policy change. Thus, a key concern in *Exodus* from 2013 was the possible future acceleration of migration and the marginal changes that could lead to 'system crises' – something which actually happened two years later when the European migrant/refugee crises broke out 2015.[4]

Refuge: *The Economist's* review of *Refuge* April 2017 is worth quoting:

> «*"Refuge" is the first comprehensive attempt in years to rethink from first principles a system hidebound by old thinking and hand-wringing. Its ideas demand a hearing.*»

Refuge presents promising proposals for rethinking and redesigning the refugee and asylum system. Furthermore, the *Regional solution model* proposed in *Refuge* is a major component of *The Sustainable Migration Approach* and therefore presented more fully in this section.

The 'traditional' asylum and refugee system is not seen to provide any answer to compelling questions like *«... 'who to protect; 'how to protect; and 'where to protect'."* B&C suggest a significant broadening of whom to protect as *bona fide* refugees by changing the individual '*persecution*' criterium in the 1951 Convention to a *«..force majeure»* criterium – *«the absence of a reasonable choice but to leave.. »* (p. 43-44).

Refuge do not argue for any removal of the 1951 convention, but they do maintain that legal interpretation is influenced by the *«trade off between numbers and rights»* (p. 204) and the legal framework given too much weight at the expence of policy (p. 42, 208). Nor do they argue that resettlement or the right to seek asylum when spontaneously appearing at national borders, should be abolished (p. 136). However, *Refuge is* a solid argument for 'regional solutions', helping refugees where they are, which is a key fundamental in a sustainable migration approach.

The 'Regional solution model'

1. Assistance to rescue to reestablish normality and autonomy.

Rescue is the 'categorical imperative' of the asylum and refugee system (p. 99) implying 'to save someone who has escaped from danger in another country to a secure environment free of fear'. (p. 101).

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[3] Carling, Jørgen, and Cathrine Talleraas. 2016. *Root causes and drivers of migration. Implications for humanitarian efforts and development cooperation*. In PRIO Paper. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo. See also the section on Bivand, Carling et. al. 2018 below as well as the link to this paper at the end.

[4] For more general info on 'tipping points' and 'Catastrophe theory', see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catastrophe_theory

Normality indicates the standard and aim of required assistance to refugees: *«..be restored as closely as possible to pre-refugee conditions* (p. 107).*»*

Autonomy through work and self-reliance (p. 156, 153) is a right which is well established in the Refugee convention. However, this right has not been implemented in many host countries since the 1980's when camps and *«care and maintenance»* became the dominant solution (p. 156) for refugee management.

B&C also highlights a 2nd intepretation of 'rescue': *Rescue* from emergency, poverty and conflict – the development imperative for poor and vulnerable societies in need of humanitarian and development assistance. The key target here are 'societies' and not the 'individuals' of the Refugee Convention. Thus, 'rescue' combine migration/asylum and development policies under a common categorical imperative. They are also policy areas often dealing with the same countries and regions and indeed often having the same goals.

2. *The best place to get rescue and to reestablish normality and autonomy are safe havens in neighbouring countries – the regional solution.*

Regional havens, in an enviroment probably more similar to home country standards and culture, is the best answer to the fundamental question *«where to protect»*. One expected outcome of the 'regional solution model' is reduced secondary migration to European countries. Another more repatriation to build own country when conditions there are sufficiently improved. For refugees who get asylum in rich host countries, repatriation to home country is rare

B&C inform in *Refuge* (p. 129) that for every USD spent on a refugee in safe havens where 88% of the refugees are stationed, 135 USD are spent in rich host countries. One may ask if this is a fair, morally sound and an efficient humanitarian strategy? Is it a sustainable solution for the future? Not so if we follow the arguments for regional solutions in *Refuge*.

Burden-sharing: B&C concludes that 'regional solutions' give the international community a clear moral responsibility for *«burden-sharing»* with the safe haven host countries. Burden sharing should be based on the responsible parties' *«comparative advantage»*. The comparative advantage of the regional host countries is often, but not always, closeness to home country in distance, culture, language and living standard etc. Then this is where the chances to reestablish *normality* and for repatriation to home country is best. The comparative advantages of the rich countries are better capacities to finance the costs and investments required as well as providing expertise and trading opportunities. Rich countries are often *«...far less well-placed geographically and culturally, but much better placed to provide the finance:.."* (p. 104).

3. *A reformed refugee regime in regional havens should to a much greater extent be designed according to the development paradigm.*

The rescue/emergency phase will often require emergency operations and a reformed humanitarian strategy (p. 157), to be handled mainly by NGOs and less by UNHCR: *«A reformed UNHCR should do more by doing less. Its key functions should be political facilitation and expert authority ....pro-actively setting the agenda ...»* (p. 221, 220 instead of mainly "*care and maintenance"*.

The development phase: A reformed refugee system in regional havens must be based on a development political paradigm, targeting both refugees, vulnerable migrants and, not least, local populations and the host countries. This is required to avoid conflict and resistance as well as for creating a win-win situation which can benefit all parties involved. UN's development

organisations, the World Bank and national aid agencies etc. should cooperate closely with a reformed and updated UNHCR.

An example is *«The Jordan Compact»* (B&C, 2018b p. 6). The goal is job creation for refugees and local population and incubating post conflict recovery. Syrian refugees who get jobs in special economic zones where the Jordan compact is implemented, are assumed to better maintain skills, competence and ambitions, may be savings and thus be more prepared for repatriation to build own country.

3. EMN Norway Occasional Papers

Since 2017 EMN Norway has commissioned academics and researchers to develop papers on the various aspects of sustainable migration from poor to rich countries, and to present and discusse these in conferences both in Oslo and Brussels as well as in a closing webinar in December 2020. Our aim was to further develop a model for a sustainable migration approach with required information pillars and building blocks for a broader understanding.

What follows is a selection of key points from the *EMN Norway Occasional papers* produced so far. This selection has been made according to relevance and importance. Text pieces from the eight papers produced have been imported and liberally revised (without reference) to bring these information pillars and buidling blocks forward to an attempted synthesis in the last chapter of this paper.

Defining 'sustainable migration' (Bivand, Carling et. al. 2018)

Bivand, Carling et. al. note that 'sustainable migration' has similarities with other, more established concepts that describe what can be called 'migration with desirable characteristics'. Examples are the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 10.7 (United Nations General Assembly 2015) '*Orderly, safe, and responsible migration*' as well as the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) with the wording '*Safe, orderly and regular migration*' (United Nations General Assembly 2016).

The similarities between the concepts are, according to Bivand, Carling et. al., that: i) migration involves a diversity of stakeholders; ii) migration can have positive and negative consequences for the various stakeholders; iii) migration have dispersed impacts across the migration trajectory (migration 'chain') from societies of origin via societies of transit/regional havens to societies of destination, and finally, iv) the concepts have a potential for sound management. With the right policies in place, the positive aspects of migration can be maximized while the negative ones are minimized.

Bivand, Carling et. al. argue that sustainable migration is not just about migration being safe or orderly *today* (c.f. SDG 10.7 and GCM), but also about its longer term repercussions. Migration entails both 'costs and benefits' to individuals and societies, now and in the future - 'costs' and 'benefits' here understood as shorthand terms for diverse positive and negative impacts, not limited to economic ones, but rather including political, social or cultural impacts.

It is also, following Bivand, Carling et. al., important to note how different stakeholders perceive the various impacts of migration differently, depending on, for example, where they are located in the migration chain. Furthermore, the ways in which migration brings both costs and benefits depends on the context, as for example labour market needs, political climate, demographic trends, culture etc. The question 'what is sustainable' is also dependent on what

type of sustainability is discussed. Even if immigration yields clear economic benefits in a country, it may foster social unrest or political distress.

A definition: Bivand, Carling et. al. define 'sustainable migration' as follows: "*Migration that ensures a well-balanced distribution of costs and benefits (widely interpreted) for the individuals, societies and states affected, today and in the future.*"

'Well-balanced' is, as Bivand, Carling et. al. further argue, open to different interpretations and indeed to political dilemmas of balancing different concerns. There is no unbiased solution to such dilemmas, and choices have to be made about which stakeholders' perspectives are to be dominant, which perspectives are potentially excluded, and how the costs and benefits of migration are gauged, in order to achieve well-balanced outcomes.

Following Bivand, Carling et. al.'s definition, migration is sustainable if the costs and benefits are shared among the involved parties in a balanced manner. 'Sustainable' is understood in relation to a balanced distribution of costs and benefits and *not* in relation to issues like volume, composition and speed of migration flows. This is a crucial distinction we revert to in the B&C section below.

Is 'sustainable migration' a fruitful concept? Bivand, Carling et. al. are doubtful: 'Sustainable migration' can, according to them, serve a narrowly restrictionist function and carries the potential for dog-whistle politics: it might seem harmless to the public at large but can be taken as an expression of support by those who feel that current levels of immigration are intolerable and endanger 'our' way of life. On the one hand, 'sustainable' has liberal and progressive connotations, underpinned by the concept of 'sustainable development'. On the other, it appeals to those who hold restrictive views on immigration, because the word itself serves as a warning about 'excessive immigration'.

Bivand, Carling et. al. still conclude: With these caveats in mind, 'sustainable migration' should be anchored in a definition that emphasizes the holistic perspective on costs and benefits to different stakeholders. And if a rigorous and transparent approach is adopted, in which normative dimensions are acknowledged and scrutinized, the concept of sustainable migration may offer opportunities for genuinely holistic analysis of international migration and its short-term and long-term effects. Such analysis can provide foundations for future policy making.

B&C's papers: Sustainable Migration Framework (2018a) and Sustainable Migration in Europe (2018b)

These papers are closely related and are key products informing the Sustainable Migration Approach. The B&C papers develop what they call a «*Sustainable Migration Framework*» - a framework for thinking holistically and ethically about migration in order to debate and inform policy development. This is not an empirical investigation into what *is*, but a framework for knowledge- and policy development from which proposals and ideas and what *ought* to be, can be deduced.

The point of departure for B&C's framework is their definition of 'sustainable migration' 2018a) consisting of three components:

i) "*Migration that has the democratic support of the receiving society*", relates on the one hand to volume, composition and speed of migration from or to a country and to the economic, social, cultural and political context of that country. We assume that democratic support is related to the balance between migration and the context in which it takes place. More about this in the final chapter.

ii) "migration that meets the long-term interests of the receiving state, sending society, and migrants themselves,…" To which extent migration meets the interests of the parties involved and thus proves sustainable according to this criterion, will materialize in due course when the parties involved conclude *«regrets or no regrets»* with the migration chapter concerned.

iii) The third component of B&C's definition «*fulfils basic ethical obligations*" refers to the earlier mentioned moral imperative «*rescue*» operationalized in two ways: a)'Rescue' as 'saved' from danger caused by persecution, war, natural disaster etc. – what we may call a broad refugee policy portfolio, and b)«rescue» as aid to help lift poor and vulnerable societies out of poverty and insecurity – i.e. a humanitarian and development policy portfolio.

Is 'sustainable migration' a fruitful concept? According to B&C, the answer is clearly yes: *"….. the concept of sustainable migration …..has the potential to reset the debate on criteria on which a new consensus can be forged...Our goal is to avoid the destabilising politics of panic. ..we offer a framework for sustainable migration based on a securely defensible ethics that can help guide and inform governments and elected politicians around the world.* (2018a)"

Labour migration:, While international protection is based on a humanitarian logic of 'gift giving' with no expectation of any return to the host country, labour migration is based on a transactional logic of reciprocity as the host country is expecting a return of equal or higher value than the benefits for the migrant workers.

The Framework paper makes a clear distinction between highly qualified and low skilled workers. Talents and highly qualified workers are in high demand in rich countries. The sustainability issue here is the possible 'brain drain' from the countries of origin, with serious consequences for those left behind.

B&C's paper 'Sustainable Migration in Europe' states as follows (2018b p. 7): *"Every year 10-12 million young Africans enter the labour market, yet only 1-2 million new jobs are created. ….Africa needs jobs, but it also needs a transformed narrative, one that no longer identifies Europe as the default outlet for youthful aspirations."* Related to this, is the idea of moving jobs to people rather than people to jobs. Africa is short of firms and lacks knowledge on how to run them. International firms can establish branches and train staff in African countries. Incentives as well as projects under the development cooperation umbrella could support such initiatives.

For low skilled workers, the sustainability challenge is the limited labour market possibilities in rich destination countries, related to increasing automatisation and robotisation and a decreasing number of elementary jobs, something which B&C describe as a coming '*game changer*' for migration to rich countries. What will be the possibilities for low skilled workers on, for example, the Norwegian labour market 2040 – see the Occasional paper on this issue (link above). A related issue is the extent to which immigrant workers replace locals and/or their impact upon wages for those competing with the 'guest workers'?

Context matters for sustainability assessments: One way to meet this game changer could for example be to deconstruct the Scandinavian welfare state's equality ideal and emphasis on universal rights. An example: A society based on 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' with huge differences in salaries, like for example the Emirate Dubai with 85% immigrants among its residents, is able to absorb many more 'low skilled' immigrants than rich, egalitarian welfare states. Most of the workers in elementary jobs in Dubai are from Asian and African countries where poverty and inequality are the order of the day. These immigrants will only come if they expect to gain a surplus to send back home under a situation which is livable as per their standards. Sustainable migration in Dubai is a quite different thing than sustainable migration in welfare states like the Scandinavian countries.

Circular migration, rather than long-term migration, could be a 'triple win' for country of origin, migrant as well as host country, and help to share the benefits of migration to more people. B&C argue for this temporary and circular model through which migrant workers can gain more competence and save some capital to bring back home to the country of origin. Circular migration is already being practiced for many years for example with seasonal workers arrangements and with good resultas for parties involved. Circular migration could be more systematically implemented as a development policy initiative for poor and vulnerable countries which are also countries of origin for Scandinavia and Europe. But again, to which extent will there be any demand for low skilled workers – will there be jobs for them in the future or will the robots do even the tomato picking?

Asylum in Europe: Europe has seven percent of the world's population, roughly a quarter of the world economy, spends some fifty per cent of the global welfare expenditures and received some eighty per cent of all the asylum applications in the world. Asylum is, in other words, a distinctly European way of permitting immigration from countries outside the members of EU/EFTA.

A significant proportion of the people coming to Europe from Africa and Asian countries are not refugees but economic migrants searching for a better life (See, for example, UNDP 2019: *Scaling fences*). Many of those crossing the Mediterranean, to take that example, are young men, often driven by an idealized narrative of Europe and trying to enter under the asylum umbrella as this, in most cases, is the only legal channel open for them to Europe. To cope with the asylum challenges in Europe, B&C propose that EU Asylum Policy needs to address five main questions. (2018b:7-9):

First, 'harmonization of asylum criteria': EU policy for distinguishing between refugees and economic migrants must be consistent across time and space. The ambitions of the *Common European Asylum System* (CEAS), namely the harmonization of asylum criteria in the different member states, has to be achieved.

Second, where should asylum decisions be made? The bulk of decisions should be made outside of Europe, thereby reducing the need for people to embark on dangerous journeys.

Third, how should responsibility be shared? Histories and cultures are diverse also within the EU/EFTA. Thus a solution to this difficult question is only possible if distribution criteria respect citizens' preferences and receive a democratic mandate in the respective host countries. Refugees who do not have a permanent residence, should stay in the country to which they have been assigned. They should not be entitled to free mobility.

Fourth, how should Europe deal with boats? The EU members must becommitted to the saving of lives at sea and they must agree on clear procedures for disembarkation, mostly through agreements with countries outside the Schengen area, where the merits of an application for protection in EU/EFTA-member country could preferably be considered. Disembarkation points should be financially compensated and they will need assurances that unsuccessful claimants will be returned to an alternative safe haven country.

Fifth, how can it make returns work? Europe needs an effective and humane mechanism for returning unsuccessful asylum claimants, either to a regional haven country or to the country of origin. For difficult cases, sustainable migration relies upon creating bargains that are beneficial for all stakeholders involved in the migration enterprise.

Temporary protection – the Scandinavian experiences (Brekke, Vedsted-Hansen and Stern 2020)

Brekke, Vedsted-Hansen and Stern in their EMN Norway Occasional Paper *Temporary asylum and cessation of refugee status in Scandinavia – Policies, practices and dilemmas* (2020 – see the link above) have delivered an interesting and important perspective on the renewed use of temporary protection in the Scandinavian countries. They note that the Scandinavian countries are currently testing different types of temporary protection statuses, thus moving in the direction that the EU Commission suggested in 2016 and, indeed, in full correspondence with the 1951 Convention.

The authors of the paper hold that temporary asylum permits do not seem to raise any issue under international law. However, restrictions on family reunification have been challenged in both Sweden and Denmark, and a complaint against Denmark of the violation of ECHR Articles 8 and 14 is currently (January 2021) pending before the European Court of Human Rights.

As observed by the authors, the current policy change after the 2015 crises is not the first time the Scandinavian governments have made use of temporary protection. In the 1990s, Bosnian refugees were provided different versions of temporary protection in the three Scandinavian countries. However, they received protection on a collective basis, not as individuals, making this earlier use of temporary protection different from the reintroduced versions we see today, where individuals are recognized as refugees but lose their status when conditions in their home countries improve.

Let it also be noted that Norwegian authorities in a key green paper from 2006, argued against reintroducing the use of the cessation clause criteria because: (1) Only a limited number of cases are likely to fall under the cessation clause's reference to "changed conditions in the home country;" (2) It would appear non-expedient to withdraw permits from persons who may already have integrated well; And (3) the amount of resources needed to administer the practice and secure forced returns would not be proportionate compared to the potential benefits. The committee also provided further arguments, including the high probability of refugees being transferred to new permits, securing the best interest of the child, and dragged-out court cases (Ot. Prp. 75 (2006–2007):102).

The new move towards granting temporary protection was, accoreding to the authors, an outcome of political decisions made as immediate responses to the 2015 crisis in Norway and Denmark which Sweden followed up in 2016. The policies seem to have developed differently in the Scandinavian countries. Sweden applies a balancing standard in revocation cases, while the Danish "paradigm change" has introduced a mandatory revocation rule under which only very few exceptions on human rights grounds are expected. In Norway, the *Directorate of Immigration* shall not only consider whether cessation of the residence permit is a reasonable measure, but also consider whether the person qualifies for other residence permits taking into consideration individual humanitarian reasons, the right to family unity and the best interest of the child.

Due to time constraints and pressing needs in 2015, it was left for later to sort out the detailed legal and practical consequences of the changes introduced, at least in Norway. Temporary permits were issued so to say *post hoc*, without having signaled at the outset of the asylum process that the permits were temporary for as long as protection would be needed. Permanent residency was still the default expectation for everyone involved when the practice was to be changed. This left all parties unprepared, possibly explaining the reactions and resistance when the temporary principle was re-introduced. The unintended consequences of this policy change,

as for example stalled integration, drawn-out case processing, and challenging return procedures, were just starting to appear when the paper was written.

Temporary protection for refugees is, as argued by the authors, a policy instrument that carries with it a set of potential advantages and a list of challenges. Temporary protection may seem to be the emerging new standard of asylum policies in Scandinavia, most systematically by the Danish "paradigm change," as observed above, according to which all asylum permits since 2019 are being issued with the stated purpose of temporary residence until the situation in the country of origin has improved sufficiently for safe homecoming.

Brekke et al. conclude their paper with the following recommendations to governments that would like to implement or proceed with an asylum policy based on temporary asylum permits. Such a policy should include (1) clear communication to the refugee or asylum seeker upon arrival and when temporary residence permit is approved, of the temporary premise; (2) clear communication of this premise also to all local and national government bodies, NGOs, and the general public; (3) designing reception systems, activities, and settlement practices that allow for integration while remaining open for return; (4) effective assisted and forced return practices with the full cooperation of home country authorities; (5) stable political support for the policy throughout the period of temporary residency and political backing of forced return; and (6) international acceptance of the practice, including by other European countries, the UNHCR, and international courts.

Comments: Brekke et. al.'s paper is a good and indeed useful comparative analysis of the temporary asylum policies implemented in the Scandinavian countries after the 2015 crises. What is highlighted in Brekke et. al.'s paper is that the temporary protection was reactivated *because of* the 2015 crises *in order to r*educe the inflow of migrants and refugees, *inter alia* the *triggering* causes. But the more *formal* causes linked to the 1951 Convention principles and to the 'uniqueness' of the asylum institute, i.e. its essence determination to use a more philosophical term, is not discussed.

What is missing is an assessment of, 'temporality' as a fundamental principle of the Refugee Convention 1951, indeed of the asylum institute. Why these basic principles have been mostly 'sleeping' since 1951 is an important question which asylum and migration experts, as well as social scientists rarely ask. Is the asylum institute sustainable, will it survive in the future if asylum and refugee protection continue to function as an 'immigration channel'? Such questions are not addressed in Brekke et al's paper.

The *Sustainable Migration Approach* upholds 'temporality' as a fundamental principle for asylum and refugee protection. Protection for as long as protection is needed.

Human Rights and Migration. A critical analysis of the jurisprudence of the European court of Human Rights (ECtHR)" (Gjems-Onstad 2020)

The Convention is seventy years old. For it to continue to be relevant, judges follow *the doctrine of dynamic interpretation*. At times, ECtHR's interpretations of the convention are *so* dynamic that the appointed judiciary may be seen to act more like an elected legislature than a judge assessing a case under existing law. When the Court in this way, so to speak, creates new law, it is still not expected to consider the economic and political consequences of this "new legislation". Some excamples:

Recently, the ECtHR has decided some cases that may be categorised under the heading "health immigration". Thus far these decisions have not received the attention they deserve. The Paposhvili case concerned an asylum seeker with a long criminal record and in need of very

expensive medication. The ECtHR Grand Chamber concluded that deportation could not take place, because Georgia – Paposhvili's home country – might be unable or unwilling to offer the same treatment as the one available in the host country, costing hundreds of thousands euros. As the prohibition against inhuman and degrading treatment is absolute even if 'the life' of the host nation is at risk, the host state cannot muster economic or budgetary arguments or any principle of proportionality in its defense for reducing very expensive medication and the decision to deport a heavy criminal asylum seeker.

Decisions by the ECtHR concerning prison conditions have also proved to prevent deportations of criminals in ways that may be considered controversial. A non-citizen responsible for serious crimes may not be deported to any country where he may be subject to what the Court regard as inhuman or degrading treatment. This result *may* be seen as controversial, given the wide definitions the Court has applied to the terms 'inhuman' and 'degrading'.

The judgement that may have had the strongest impact on European migration policies and the fate of many migrants, is the Hirsi Jamaa case from 2012. Hirsi Jamaa – a migrant from Somalia and 200 other migrants - were saved from drowning by the Italian Coastguard and returned to the harbour of departure in Libya. The case was brought forward for the ECtHR and an unanimous Grand Chamber ruled that the extraterritorial exercise of jurisdiction shall also encompass a vessel belonging to the coastguard of a state operating in international waters. The judgement of the ECtHR was that all the migrants involved should be brought to Italy for individual asylum processes there. They also received 15 000 Euro each in reparation. This judgement *may* have contributed to the practice where smugglers use dangerous and condemnable boats and migrants risk their lives to get close to European coasts and European coast guards?

"Rights" are often used to trump other interests. If an interest is defined as a legal right, and even more so as a human right, it will be exempt by the ECtHR from a balancing of competing interests. The legal paradigm or model for human rights, 'the individual vs the state', is formally and judicially correct, but not really reflecting a complete picture. In addition to 'the individual versus the state', 'the individual vs other individuals' is also a reality. For the state to pay out, someone must pay in. As a slogan or headline, one might say that 'behind every human right there is a taxpayer'.

The author concludes: Moderate and wise judgements are required to secure human rights and the Strasbourg Court for the future. The Court must strive to be in tune with the sense of justice in European countries. The Court needs to consider the implications of its judgements for costs and policy consequences.

Robotisation and the possibilities for low skilled immigrants on the Norwegian labour market of tomorrow (Economics Norway 2019)

Studies published by Statistics Norway indicate that the participation rate as well as the employment rate of low skilled third world immigrants are already significantly lower than those of the majority populations. This difference is expected to increase in the years to come:

> *"The demand for low-skilled workers will…be significantly lower…Our projections imply that almost 50 per cent of the low skilled immigrant population will be dependent on… welfare benefits in 2040." (Economics Norway 2019 p.: 4)*

There are important differences in labour market participation and employment rates between immigrants from different country groups. Immigrants from countries in Africa and Asia have particularly low participation rates – 58% for Asians and 51% for Africans in 2018 q4 according to *Statistics Norway*. For all refugees, on average, the labour market participation rate was 48,5% in 2017 (op.cit).

Some political circles have been convinced that migration would be the solution to the problems associated with "ageing Europe", not least in the health sector. But, robotisation and automatisation are already changing the health sector and elderly care in Norway with notable speed, which will influence the demand for workers in the health and care sectors. In Norway we are still far behind e.g.Japan in this respect. The positive employment effects of the "ageing Europe" argument for low and medium skilled immigrants may not materialise in the years to come?

Finally, another challenge in the years to come which could be mentioned here, is the possibility that investments in production capacity have little or no impact on job generation. On the contrary, jobs will get lost to robots and automatisation, also in the developing countries with the lowest salaries (World Development Report 2016). The net effects of increased investments are hard eto estimate.

What is the significance of culture in analysing sustainable migration? (Toje 2019)

Toje, in his Occasional paper *The significance of culture for sustainable migration* (2019) states that migration to Europe from developing countries in the 2000s has three key traits in common: It is largely supply-driven and largely consisting of low skilled migrants. Thirdly, and most important here, European host countries have persistently underestimated the scale of the influx, the cultural distance between immigrants and natives and the impact these immigration flows have on European countries.

The turning point was the 2015 migration crises when the historically unique combination of large scale low-skilled immigration from distant cultures into European welfare states led to a backlash against multi-cultural ideologies, migration liberalism and 'over-dynamic' rights thinking – in short among what we may term the 'migration romantics'recruited, most possibly, from the 'Brahmin left' (Piketty 2020:869) and 'The humanitarian-political complex' (Tvedt 2017) - political forces that had so far dominated the agenda.

It would, as Toje adds, be a mistake to think that the backlash against liberal multiculturalism is solely caused by 'populist' rhetoric or policies. The liberal consensus was mainly an outcome of elite perceptions supported by social science scholarship failing to make any principled discussion on what degree of cohesion a nation state requires, as well as failing to take majority culture into account when discussing the effects of large scale migration flows from third world countries. Such failures can create political turbulence, as witnessed in may European countries, not least after 2015.

Toje claims that *nation building* is the answer to the cultural challenges stemming from influx of immigrants from developing countries and distant cultures. The goal must be that new citizens/residents embrace the basic 'constitutional values', acquire the general trust the majority populations has in state and government authorities, learn the same cultural reference points and understand that the welfare state is, at its core, a collective insurance scheme, not 'free money'.

Toje concludes as follows: "*Put simply, a workable definition of culturally sustainable migration might be 'migration that has the democratic support of the receiving society', as illustrated in polls taken up at regular intervals."* Such polls could use questions like: "*In your opinion, should we allow more (culturally distant/low skilled) immigrants from countries outside Schengen to move to our country, fewer immigrants, or about the same as now.*" If public opinion is negative, this can be taken as a sign that current policies are unsustainable.

Is there a limit to the absorption capacity of host societies, and if so, how can it be determined? (Brochmann and Grødem, 2019)

Brochmann and Grødem's paper *Absorption capacity as means for assessing sustainable migration* (2019 – see link up front) is an innovative attempt to operationalize 'sustainable *im*migration:

"Rate, volume and composition of immigration do influence absorption capacity, economically, socially, culturally." (op.cit.:6). The *kind* of immigrants that dominate the influx is of importance and their qualifications are central. Typically, refugees will have a different impact on the host country's system than (skilled) labour immigrants. Impact will again depend on the rights and welfare benefits granted to refugees and asylum sdeekers as well as the broader immigration regime of the host country. This, we remember, reflects the need to analyse and understand sustainability in context.

The labour markets in Scandinavia have typically been hard to enter for some immigrants, because of high productivity and skill requirements, a compressed wage structure which has given high relative wages for low skilled jobs. High wages for such jobs is a driving force for automatisation. This leads, as we have seen from the earlier paper by Economics Norweay (listed above), to the erosion of jobs that are available for low skilled workers.

Unemployed immigrants, often with significant health and social security needs, do drain public budgets disproportionally and generate increased inequality and low wage competition – in other words, challenge the absorption capacity of the welfare state. If, however, immigrants are productively absorbed in the labor market, and are blending in culturally speaking, the challenging issues will most likely not be addressed.

The limits of absorption capacity vary considerably across host countries depending on socio-economic factors, welfare regimes in place as well as the country's culture and traditions. All of these factors have an impact on a host society's absorption capacity. The Nordic welfare model is vulnerable to large inflows of persons with qualifications not matching the labour market demand and with cultural backgrounds different than the natives'. The costs to public budgets of such immigrants will be higher in Scandinavia than in countries with less ambitious welfare models. Natives competing with such immigrants in some labour markets pay the major price. Low skilled immigration also increases social inequality.

However, the Nordic model is also a resource for promoting long-term integration. Limited economic inequality and solid educational institutions, mostly free, contribute to long-term integration of immigrants and their descendants. This is reflected by the fact that many descendants of immigrants are successful in education as well as in important areas of society.

Following Brochmann and Grødem, the limits to absorption capacity can in general terms be formulated as follows:

"The inflow must not exceed a rate and a volume that the nation-state system can manage to include in ways that do not drain public budgets disproportionally and which do not generate

substantially increased inequality. Besides, the composition of migrants must be balanced in ways that are perceived as politically legitimate…." (op.cit.: 7).

Brochmann and Grødem ask: If Europe becomes more like the US in terms of diversity, will it also become more "American" in terms of welfare spending (op.cit.:19)? Political debates are ongoing on how governments' costs, and hence services and benefits, should be limited or even cut. Should benefits be reduced for all, or just for some? The results from an opinion survey done by the *European Social Survey* indicate that only 16 per cent of respondents held that immigrants should have immediate and unconditional access to welfare services and support. 7 per cent said immigrants should never get such access while the remaining held that immigrants should get such access after working and paying taxes for at least one year or when they become naturalized citizens. The idea that newcomers should contribute through working and paying taxes and demonstrate their belonging before they gain access to welfare benefits, was thus seemingly popular, but probably more so on the continent than in Scandinavia where the Brahmin left (Piketty 2020) and The Political-Humanitarian Complex (Tvedt 2017) have had stronger impact.

4. Towards a common platform - a Sustainable Migration Approach

As stated in the introduction, a *Sustainable Migration Approach* can prove to be a promising platform on which to build political consensus in a language which is also intelligible both to political decision-makers and the broader segment of public opinion. *Sustainable Migration* may also prove to be a promising approach for knowledge- and policy development to help deal with the prevailing migration challenges of European countries and the EU?

Based on the theoretical roots and papers above as well as independent thinking, I propose the following leads to a common platform: A *Sustainable Migration Approach* with a set of principles and perspectives informing knowledgebased policy development as well as discourse on migration in a certain direction. Investigations to identify what is a sustainable *level* of migration from or to a specific country will require empirical research and *sustainability analysis* according to these principles and perspectives.

What is presented here is a platform in the making and certainly not any confirmed 'general theory'. Nor has there been any empirical research to quantify what could be sustainable levels at the different sectors of the migration chain. Comments and suggestions to the draft model presented are highly appreciated.

Principles

Distinguish between the refugee and labour migration systems: These systems have different logics and serve different purposes. Of course, refugees cross international borders, but their primary need is safety and a return to normality, not international migration *per se*. Rescue and refuge are matters of compassion without expecting anything back – a 'categorical imperative' in Kantian terms. Labour migration on the other hand, is a matter of reciprocity, exchange/transactions of equal values and thus something which should be mutually beneficial for the parties involved.

Migration can offer significant benefits. But these benefits are not equally distributed. Often the costs of migration fall on those who are already socio-economically disadvantaged. High-skilled movement from poor to rich countries is usually economically beneficial to receiving

states as well as the migrants, even if not always perceived as politically or culturally beneficial in the host country. High-skilled emigration may also harm sending societies if they lose needed human capital. It is important to find ways to manage such movements in a way that addresses sources of political and cultural concern, and also ensures that sending societies benefit from such movements.

Political governance: Migration cannot be left to 'the ruling of the market'. On the contrary, sustainable migration demands political governance of the migration flows, indeed *migration realism* implemented with a regulatory regime which is justified, clear, fair and well managed.

Recognise the underlying purpose of refuge: First rescue: When people flee danger or face persecution, they must be given access to safety, and to the satisfaction of basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The duties of rescue must be fulfilled. Second, autonomy must be ensured. In order to enable refugees to live dignified lives, contribute to host communities, and be equipped to ultimately return home, they need to be able to access jobs and education. Thirdly, a route out of limbo. Refugees must eventually either move back home or be permanently integrated somewhere else. Support and help to refugees in regional havens as well as resettlement or asylum in third countries should continue for as long as such assistance is required. After that, if repatriation is not possible, permanent settlement in a host country should be offered.

'Rescue' has a second meaning according to B&C's Framework paper, as it also refers to humanitarian and development aid/cooperation with poor and vulnerable states and regions. The dual meaning of the categorical imperative 'Rescue' is a key fundamental in the Sustainable Migration Approach. This imperative provides the ethical fundament for a platform interlinking migration- and development policies.

Regional solutions: Refugees should be assisted where they are first given protection. In most cases, this is in regional havens close to their country of origin. Regional havens are mostly, but not always, similar in culture and socio-economic standards with country of origin. Therefore, host countries of regional havens have a comparative advantage for 'housing' the refugees for as long as needed. Geographical closeness also add to the chances for repatriation to build own country when the conditions there allow safe homecoming. Regional solutions are 'effective altruism' in comparison with humanitarian migration from distant countries and cultures to rich welfare states.

Regional havens should primarily be supported and managed by development agencies operating according to the development policy paradigm. The targets of support should be host nations and local populations living in the areas of the regional havens, as well as the refugees and vulnerable migrants who have been rescued and assisted there. The international community should assist with needed finances and competencies to enable, for example, business development and the creation of jobs (cf. the 'Jordan compact'), and eventually follow up with import and custom advantages. In this manner, the host region is supported in a comprehensive way, based on the comparative advantages of parties involved.

Providing refuge is a collective responsibility, and all states should contribute. However, not all states can or should contribute in identical ways. Expecting Japan to admit 200,000 refugees onto its territory within a short period would not work, but equally unrealistic would be to expect Kenya to donate a billion dollars to UNHCR. We must recognise that different states face different capacities and political trade-offs, and a degree of specialisation and implicit exchange may lead to a greater and more sustainable level of provision.

The ‘regional solution principle’ is certainly equally – if not more - valid if the refuge flows are coming in from our neighbouring countries. This is important to keep in mind as the world situation can change quite rapidly, new refugee producing countries enter and others go etc.

As we may understand from the text above, migration and refugees are not ‘Home Affairs’ issues alone. Better coherence across many policy fields is urgently needed.

Resettlement is an important tool for refugee management, but the main criteria of selection should be the need for protection and the possibilities/capacities for integration: The expectation is that well managed regional solutions with good international support, will reduce secondary migration flows. For refugees who have no prospects for a solution, resettlement in a third country is a possible option. Criteria of selection should be the need for protection and prospects for integration.

Temporary asylum and cessation of refugee status: As mentioned above, ‘temporary asylum’ has its constitutional basis in the 1951 *Refugee Convention* and, yes, the Sustainable Migration Approach takes a ‘fundamentalist’ view in this regard and includes ‘temporary asylum’ as a necessary principle. If this institute shall be able to survive in the future with the support and respect of future generations, it is difficult to see asylum continue as an ‘immigration channel’.

Develop and support circular migration, from poor countries**:** Circular migration can have substansial reciprocal benefits. This is especially the case when it is based on careful matching between sending and receiving societies’ needs, not just at national levels, but also on the local levels. Circular migration from poor developing countries may be a promising scheme for development cooperation working in tandem with migration authorities.

Perspectives

The ‘part system’ perspective: Sustainability must be analyzed from economic, social, cultural and political perspectives. The economic perspective is obvious and exemplified by the two Brochmann Government reports (2011, 2017) and research along that line. Currently (early 2021) the social perspective has been less developed, but will probably have to focus on phenomena such as ‘parallel societies’, social cohesion, the question of trust etc. The cultural perspective is also less developed, but Toje’s paper on the significance of culture for sustainable migration, has argued for the role of culture for a sustainable migration approach. The cultural perspective will focus on values, concepts and ideas as well as culturally defined behavior, for example the roles of honor and clan culture which are frequently discussed in public discourse in the host countries. Finally, the political perspective is particularly highlighted by B&C in their Framework paper. Policies must have a democratic mandate.

The perspective of the ‘whole of route approach’: Sustainability must in principle be assessed in relation to the whole migration chain, *inter alia* in relation to the following sectors: i) countries of origin = ***e***migration, ii) regional havens/transit countries – **secondary** migration and repatriation; iii) host/destination countries = ***im***migration-integration-absorption; iv) sustainable return and v) sustainable circular migration. Thus, the *Sustainable Migration Approach* deals with all the sectors of the migration chain and endeavors to see these in context when valuable for the migration phenomena in focus. One example in this regard could be how changing rules of immigration in countries of destination, may impact on *e*migration from countries of origin with, for example with negative brain drain results. Focus, interest and political relevance decide when to assess something in relation to the greater whole.

The national and the local**:** Sustainability may, for example, mean quite different things for a nation as a whole than for a specific local community, e.g. for a city or village. A sustainable

migration approach could use ‘a strategy of scale’ to better think and act to ensure sustainability for the different levels and units from nationstate to municipalities and from one city to another, indeed within bigger cities from one district to another. With a strategy of scale, one could better deal with the specific needs and challenges of the locality in focus.

For example, a typical challenge for many communities in the peripheries of the nation state – at least in Norway – is depopulation and the need for immigrants to move in and settle to fill up the empty slots. For certain districts in bigger cities like Oslo, the challenges are quite the opposite. Namely localised diasporas growing into parallel societies reaching the tipping points of volume and density too fast and thus the critical mass to reproduce traditional culture instead of positive integration. The challenges could be much the same in countries of origin where, for example, villages can loose most of their important members due to migration.

Today parallel societies are definitely an unwanted phenomen in Norwegian migration politics. When multiculturalism prevailed as the dominant ideology, as in Norway 20-40 years ago, then ‘parallel societies’ were seen by many as a desired goal of migration policies.

Sustainability analysis

Sustainable migration is, as claimed in this paper, a question about the volume, composition and speed of migration.These are ‘brute’ facts which are adviced as a set of governing parameters for a sustainable migration approach in adittion to settlement pattern.

Governing parameters’ should here be understood as quantifiable facts which describe the more objective side of the migration situation. Governing parameters do not, in principle, inform anything about how the migration situation is experienced, assessed and handled by the country or locality in focus.

To investigate this ‘other side of the picture’, we have to look at the context - the economic, social, cultural and political realities - of a country or locality. This context impacts upon how people experience, assess and handle migration and migrants and gives rise to the ‘softer’, more qualitative, ‘subjective facts’ of the migration situation - the opinions and understanding of the various segments of the population. And these differ profoundly as we very well know from the current and recent years debate and discourse on migration.

Sustainability analysis will obviously have to deal with both sides of the migration situation in the country or locality in focus. Sustainability analysis also have to take into consideration ‘the whole of route approach’ in order to properly define the sustainable levels of migration.

Let me first define the governing parameters I advice for a sustainable migration approach. Our focus will be the immigration-integration sector and the case Norway:

- *Volume*: How many arrives (flows) during a defined period? How many are present (stocks) on a particular date? In the country as well as in relevant municipalities/localities.

- *Composition*: Who arrives/resides here, as described by country of origin, educational attainment, skills, willingness and capacity to integrate/assimilate.

- *Distribution/settlement pattern*: How are different immigrant groups settled and distributed in relation to need, district political goals, degree of ‘critical mass’ with special attention to creation of parallel societies, social cohesion, trust etc.

- *Speed:* The speed of immigration – the speed of change - (flows and stocks) relative to the capacity to integrate new arrivals, is an important governing parameter with reference to the risk of getting parallel societies, lost of trust and social cohesion, as well as 'political backlash' and systemic tipping points.

As we have repeatedly stressed: Context matters. These governing parameters may have very different impacts depending on the economic-social-cultural and, not least, political context of the country in focus.

How to proceed?

With B&Cs' definition of 'sustainable migration'. The three elements of this definition can serve as indicators for deciding whether the current migration flows are assessed as sustainable by the majority of the population. This holds for analysis of both *e*migration from countries of origin and *im*migration to countries of destination.

The three elements of the definition are discussed in the B&C section of chapter 3. Here we note the following:

i) «*Democratic support*» relates on the one hand to volume, composition and speed of migration and on the other to the needs and absorption capacity of the country in focus, what we in other words could term the economic, social, cultural and political context. If these elements are imbalanced, the situation will probably not be perceived as legitimate and we may expect less democratic support. A dramatic example here is the earlier noted European migrant/refugee crises in 2015.

ii) *«Meets the long term «enlightened» interests…*". To which extent migration meets the interests of the parties involved and thus proves sustainable according to this criterion, will materialize in due course when the parties involved conclude *«regrets or no regrets»* with the migration chapter concerned. If the majority of the population in the host country experience the immigration as too large, too complicated and too fast – if they have such regrets – then the immigration policy that led to this result is perceived as non-sustainable. The same kind of 'regret-no-regret' logic is also valid with regard to the migrant himself and to 'those left behind' in country of origin. If the migrant is having regrets with his migration venture, then it was not a sustainable project for him. And if those left behind in the country of origin do not receive remittances and assistance as expected and home country needs the skills of those who left, then that *e*migration case was non-sustainable.

iii) The third component of B&C's definition «*fulfils basic ethical obligations*" has to be investigated as a part of the overall sustainability analysis performed. Are all responsible parties involved operating according to the two interpretations of the moral imperative «*rescue*»: a)«Rescue» as 'saved' from danger caused by persecution, war, natural disaster, and b)«rescue» as aid to help lift poor and vulnerable societies out of poverty and insecurity? For example, rich countries should, according to their ethical obligations and comparative advantage, contribute with finances, development cooperation, direct investments and custom preferences. Thus, 'mutual benefit' could be achieved: Host/transit nations and their local populations could receive better and more development aid. Refugees/vulnerable migrants could get better protection and support for normalisation, autonomy and incubation for repatriation. Rich destination countries may receive less secondary migration.

If this would be the outcome – time will have to show - released funds in destination countries due to less costly immigration as well as more humanitarian and development funding due to better and more secure political governance of migration – may become available to target a

much larger number of refugees, vulnerable migrants, local populations and host societies in regional havens.

Sustainable migration, as a policy goal, is migration *realism* representing the middle path of current policies seeking to establish a more 'whole of government approach' to migration and development-humanitarian policies – different policy areas, but in many cases working in the same poor and vulnerable developing countries, targetting the same populations and facing many of the same challenges.

BRIEFING PAPER

EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK ROUNDTABLE

Sustainable migration from Africa to Europe

9 December 2020

9 am - 4 pm CET

SHORT BACKGROUND PAPER

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this introductory paper is to outline thoughts and ideas on how to define and operationalise the concept of 'sustainable migration' in preparation for the European Migration Network (EMN) **online roundtable on sustainable migration from Africa to Europe which will take place on 9 December 2020.**

By bringing together distinguished interlocutors from both continents, the sustainability of current and prospective patterns of this inter-continental migration will be discussed, from the perspectives of both European and African countries, and measures that could be taken to make migration more sustainable will be identified.

The concept of sustainable migration

'Sustainable migration' is a basic concept in Norwegian Government documents; indeed, the Government's goal formulation for immigration policies is *'sustainable immigration*'. We also find the term now established in several EU documents. But what we should mean by 'sustainable migration', and how we should measure what this entails, is not explained in these documents. Nor will a dive into migration research reveal many sources which try to define or explain 'sustainable migration' beyond what is linked to the current EMN Norway project. However, a Google search for "sustainable migration" in 2017 gave two hits; today the figure will be around 180 million.

EMN Norway has been putting 'Sustainable migration from poor to rich countries' on the agenda since 2016. We have been fortunate to work with leading researchers who have contributed to the development of a *Sustainable Migration Approach* through a series of roundtable conferences and the EMN Norway occasional papers identified in Annex 1.

As conceived so far, 'sustainable migration' is a *normative* concept, and like 'sustainable development', a goal that may provide direction to policy making. Furthermore, sustainable migration must be measured in relation to parameters such as the volume, composition and speed of migration. Sustainable migration must also be conceived in the context – economic, social, cultural, political - within which migration occurs. Thus, sustainable migration would not be understood in the same way in Norway as it would be in a Gulf State such as Dubai, where some 85% of the population are foreign-born.

The roundtable discussions will have as a background the *Sustainable Migration Framework* developed by Oxford University Professors Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, on the initiative of EMN Norway. Papers developed by these two distinguished authors, plus complementary papers developed by other leading academics and commentators were presented at conferences hosted in Oslo and Brussels respectively in June and December 2018.

EMN Norway's occasional paper *Sustainable Migration Approach* provides a wider overview of relevant contributors to this framework and develops the approach further – paper is attached in the distributed reporting package from the webinar. For the up-coming roundtable, EMN Norway coordinator Øyvind Jaer will set the stage and give a short introduction to 'sustainable migration' in the opening of Panel 1: *Roadmaps to sustainable migration*.

Is 'sustainable migration' a fruitful concept? Oxford Professors Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, key contributors to the sustainable migration approach, have a clear reply to this question:

> *"… the concept of sustainable migration …has the potential to reset the debate on criteria on which a new consensus can be forged…Our goal is to avoid the destabilising politics of panic. …we offer a framework for sustainable migration based on a securely defensible ethics that can help guide and inform governments and elected politicians around the world.* (2018)"

Theoretical roots

Professor Collier's book *Exodus* (2013) and his joint book with Professor Betts *Refuge* (2017), do not use the term 'Sustainable migration'. Indeed, as mentioned above, this term was not widely applied when these books were published; Still, they provide the point of departure for a *Sustainable Migration Approach*.

Exodus sets the stage and brings forward 'the whole of the route' approach. *Exodus* also stages a provocative, but important question about migration:

> *"'Is migration good or bad?'… is the wrong question …as sensible as it would be to ask, 'Is eating good or bad?' In both cases the pertinent question is not good or bad, but* ***how much…and what kind of composition … is better****." (Exodus p. 26 and p. 260).*

Closely linked to this, is the 'warning' of 'tipping points': if migration accelerates, what then? Marginal growth in quantity can suddenly lead to a qualitative jump – to an 'explosive' situation of «regrets and panic» which demands a 'dramatic' change in policy. An example here is the European migrant/refugee crises in 2015.

Refuge is a solid argument for '*regional solutions*'- the key topic of Panel 3 exploring prospects for the provision of protection for displaced persons in their neighbouring regions. How may development assistance by European countries contribute in this regard? *Refuge* argues for a development approach to regional solutions targeting both refugees, local populations and host societies. *Refuge* also argues for *«burden-sharing»* based on the principle of *«comparative advantage»*: The comparative advantages of neighbouring host countries are as regional havens which are mostly, but not always, similar in culture, social and economic patterns and standards, with country of origin. The comparative advantages of rich countries are capacities to finance the costs as well as provide the required expertise and trading opportunities. Rich countries are *"…far less well-placed geographically and culturally, but much better placed to provide the finance:.."* (p. 104). In short, regional solutions are super 'effective altruism' in comparison with very costly and not unfrequently challenging humanitarian immigration from distant countries to European welfare states.

DEFINING 'SUSTAINABLE MIGRATION'

The *Sustainable Migration Framework* (Collier and Betts, 2018) – see link below – is a key background paper for the current roundtable. Particularly valuable is the definition of 'sustainable migration' which goes as follows:

> *"Migration that has i) the democratic support of the receiving society, ii) meets the long-term interests of the receiving state, sending society, and migrants themselves, and iii) fulfils basic ethical obligations" (2018).*

i) «*Democratic support of the receiving society*» is related to the numbers, composition and speed of immigration on the one hand and economic, social, cultural and political absorption capacity on the other.

If these elements are unbalanced, the situation will probably not be perceived as legitimate and we may expect falling democratic support.

ii) *«Meets the long term «enlightened» interests…*". To which extent migration meets the interests of the parties involved and thus proves sustainable, will materialise when the parties conclude *«regrets or no regrets»* with the migration chapter concerned. If the majority of the population in the host country experiences the immigration as too large, too complicated and too fast – if they have such regrets – then the immigration policy that led to this result is perceived as non-sustainable. The same kind of 'regret-no-regret' logic is also valid with regard to the migrants themselves and to 'those left behind' in the country of origin – i.e. the *e*migration perspective. If those left behind do not receive remittances and assistance as expected and the country of origin needs the skills of those who left, then that *e*migration case was non-sustainable.

iii) The third part of the definition «*fulfils basic ethical obligations*" refers to the moral imperative - «*rescue*» - operationalised in two ways: a)«rescue» as 'saved' from danger caused by persecution, war, natural disaster etc. – what we may call a broad refugee policy portfolio, and b)«rescue» as aid to help lift poor and vulnerable societies out of poverty and insecurity – i.e. a humanitarian and development policy portfolio.

Toje, in his occasional paper (see Annex below), reflects on 'cultural sustainability', the challenges that cultural differences can bring to host societies, and to which extent the public accepts cultural diversity and socio-economic inequality. Toje defines cultural sustainability as follows: *"Put simply, a workable definition of culturally sustainable migration might be 'migration that has the democratic support of the receiving society', as illustrated in polls taken up at regular intervals."*

ROADMAPS TO SUSTAINABLE MIGRATION

The assessment of the sustainability of migration from Africa to Europe will be related to a major and recent policy initiative, namely *the New Pact on Migration and Asylum*, launched by the European Commission on 23 September 2020. This initiative indeed aims at a comprehensive migration governance. Even though the Pact does not explicitly have sustainable migration as a policy goal, the framework and approach referred to above may serve as an analytical tool for reflection. We will consider, is the European Pact fit for the sustainability test? The presentation of the external dimension of the Pact will be followed up under Panel 1 by the Head of the International Unit of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Ms Davinia Wood.

Throughout the roundtable, particular references will be made to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and its emphasis on further development of the external dimensions of EU migration and asylum policies through migration partnerships with third-countries, including African countries. These partnerships will take due account of the interests of partner third-countries, and attempt to create win-win-situations, where migration may be sustained while accommodating the interests of countries of origin, transit and destination.

'The whole of route approach'

This and the following sections will be particularly relevant for the proceedings under Panel 2 of the Roundtable: *Costs and benefits of sustainable migration from Africa to Europe*.

Questions of sustainability as well as costs and benefits - broadly understood - of migration, have to be assessed in context – also in the context of the 'whole of the migration chain': i) countries of origin = ***e***migration, ii) regional havens/transit countries – **secondary** migration and repatriation; iii) host/destination countries = ***im***migration-integration-absorption. This perspective is valuable, enlightening the question of sustainability for all parties involved. For example, how changing rules of immigration in countries of destination may impact on *e*migration from countries of origin with negative brain drain' results.

Sustainability may also mean different things for a nation state than for a local community. A typical challenge for rural areas – at least in Norway – is depopulation and the need for people - immigration. For cities like Oslo, the challenge may be quite the opposite, namely 'parallel societies' reaching a 'tipping point' of numbers - critical mass and densification - to reproduce its traditional cultural logic and behaviour, instead of integration and assimilation.

THE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability as well as costs and benefits, should be assessed from economic, social, cultural and political perspectives. The economic perspective is obvious and well researched here in Norway. The social perspective has a basis so far in Putnam's work on trust, but will have to focus more on immigration related phenomena as 'parallel societies', cultural diversity and the question of social cohesion, trust etc. The cultural perspective is less developed and will have to focus more on the reproduction of immigrants' values, ideas and culturally defined behaviour. Finally, the political perspective is highlighted by Professors Betts and Collier in their Framework paper, discussed above. Policies must have a democratic mandate. The thresholds that may lead to political 'backlash' – to political *tipping points* - will differ according to how migration is socio-culturally perceived and policies supported by the public.

Consider labour migration, particularly circular migration, from poor countries:

Economic migration, in opposition to humanitarian migration (asylum, protection) is primarily transactional. It should be based on a logic of reciprocity and should benefit all parties involved as receiving societies, migrants, and sending societies. Circular migration can have considerable reciprocal benefits. This is especially the case when based on careful matching between sending and receiving society needs, not just at national levels, but also the local level. Circular migration from poor developing countries can be a promising scheme for development cooperation having then to work in cooperation with migration authorities.

High-skilled movement from poor to rich countries is economically beneficial to receiving states as well as the migrants. But it is not always perceived as politically or culturally beneficial in the host country, and it may very well harm the sending societies if they lose needed human capital. It is important to find ways to manage such movements in a way that addresses sources of political and cultural concern, and also ensures that countries of origin benefit from the movements.

THE GOVERNING PARAMETERS OF MIGRATION

Migration policies should be designed to maintain a sustainable level with reference to i) number of immigrants, ii) composition/categories of migrant groups, iii) the distribution and settlement of immigrants in the localities/municipalities and iv) the speed of immigration.

- Number: How many arrivals (flows) during a defined period? How many migrants are here (stocks) on a particular date? What is their distribution in the country as such, and in specific municipalities/localities?
- Composition: Who arrives/is here mapped according to educational attainment, skills, willingness as well as ability – cultural competence - to integrate etc.
- Distribution/settlement pattern: How are different migrant groups settled and distributed in relation to need, district political goals, degree of 'critical mass' with special attention to avoidance of the creation of parallel societies, social cohesion, trust etc.
- Speed: The speed of immigration changes (flows and stocks) at the national and local level is important with reference to the potential for parallel societies to develop, trust, social cohesion and systemic tipping points.

As we have repeatedly stressed: Context matters. These governing parameters may have very different impacts depending on, for example the immigrants' participation in the labour market, the rights and

welfare benefits granted as well as the broader immigration regime hereunder the economic, social, cultural and political situation and set up of the host country.

HOW TO PROCEED?

With B&Cs' definition of 'sustainable migration'. The three elements of this definition can serve as indicators for deciding whether the current migration flows are assessed as sustainable by the majority of the population. This holds in principle for analysis of both *e*migration from countries of origin and *im*migration to countries of destination: Does the current migration regime:

i) have democratic support, that is: Is the volume, composition and speed of migration in balance with the needs and absorption capacity of the country in focus. If these elements are imbalanced, the situation will probably not be perceived as legitimate and we may expect less democratic support. A dramatic example here is the earlier noted European migrant/refugee crises in 2015.

ii) meet the long term «enlightened» interests of all parties involved – regrets or no regrets - if the majority of the population experience the migration as too large, too high/low skilled, too fast – if they have such regrets – then the migration policy that led to this result is perceived as non-sustainable. The same kind of 'regret-no-regret' logic is also valid with regard to the migrant himself and to 'those left behind' in country of origin. If those left behind do not receive remittances and assistance as expected and if country of origin needs the skills of those who left, then that *e*migration case was non-sustainable.

iii) fulfil basic ethical obligations. Are responsible parties involved operating according to: a)«Rescue» as 'saved' from danger caused by persecution, war, natural disaster, and b)«rescue» as aid to help lift poor and vulnerable societies out of poverty and insecurity? For example, rich countries should, according to their ethical obligations and comparative advantage, contribute with finances, development cooperation, direct investments and custom preferences for better regional solutions. Thus, 'mutual benefit' could be achieved.

If this would be the outcome – time will have to show - released funds in destination countries due to less costly immigration as well as more humanitarian and development funding due to better and more secure political governance of migration - can be spent with altruistic efficiency to target a much larger number of refugees, vulnerable migrants, local populations and host societies in regional havens.

Sustainable migration, as a policy goal, is migration *realism* representing the middle path of current policies seeking to establish a more 'whole of government approach' to migration and development-humanitarian policies – different policy areas, but in many cases working in the same poor and vulnerable developing countries, targeting the same populations and facing many of the same challenges.

ANNEX 1

Links to EMN Norway Occasional papers on sustainable migration

- Sustainable Migration approach (in pipeline, not online)
- Temporary asylum and cessation of refugee status in Scandinavia – policies, practices, and dilemmas, Jan-Paul Brekke, Jens Vedsted-Hansen og Rebecca Thorburn Stern (2020)
- Human Rights and Migration. A critical analysis of the jurisprudence of the European court of Human Rights, Ole Gjems - Onstad, (2020)
- Automation/Robotisation – Demography – Immigration: Possibilities for low-skilled immigrants in the Norwegian labour market of tomorrow, Rolf Røtnes ET. AL. (2019)
- The significance of culture, Asle Toje (2019)
- Absorption capacity as means for assessing sustainable migration, Grete Brochmann and Anne Skevik Grødem (2019)
- Sustainable migration in Europe, Alexander Betts and Paul Collier (2018a)
- Sustainable migration framework, Alexander Betts and Paul Collier (2018b)
- Defining sustainable migration, Marta Bivand Erdal, Jørgen Carling, Cindy Horst and Cathrine Talleraas (2018c)

Sustainable emigration from Africa to Europe: Perspectives from countries of origin

Joseph Kofi Teye

Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana

Summary note of presentation at EMN Roundtable on 9th December 2020 on 'Sustainable Migration from Africa to Europe'.

Introduction

While population mobility has, historically, been an integral part of livelihoods in Africa, the region has become the focus of academic and policy discussions on migration governance, in recent years (Adepoju, 2020). This is partly due to the high level of labour migration and forced displacement in Africa. Although media images and political narratives tend to portray an 'exodus' of Africans to Europe, a majority of migrants from the region move to destinations in the region (UNDESA, 2018). Europe is a major destination of Africans who migrate to destinations outside the region. While irregular migration from Africa to Europe has attracted the attention of the media, there is little understanding of the sustainability of migration flows from Africa to Europe. The presentation examines the costs and benefits of migration from Africa to Europe, and outlines measures for making such migration flows more sustainable.

Key Features of Migration from Africa to Europe

Europe is a major destination of Africans who migrate outside the region. Migration flows from Africa to Europe are rooted in historical antecedents. There is some level of movement between the two regions during the colonial era. Since 1970s, economic crisis and political conflicts have contributed significantly to migration from Africa to Europe. Males dominated the migration streams to Europe in the past, but the flows are being feminized. Both highly skilled and unskilled migrants continue to migrate to Europe. While media narratives tend to focus of irregular migrants, a majority of Africans in Europe are in the regular migrants. The cost and benefits of migration for migrants depend on certain factors, including type of migration (e.g. regular or irregular), skills level of the migrants, and strength of social networks with other migrants in Europe.

Costs of Migration from Africa to Europe: African countries perspectives

Brain Drain from Africa

Brain drain is the most serious negative impact of emigration from Africa to Europe. It became a major problem in the Health sectors of many African countries since the 1980s. A study by Anarfi et al (2010), for instance, showed that about 56% of doctors and 24 % of nurses trained in Ghana were working in developed countries, especially in Europe and North America. Countries such as Nigeria, Somalia, Sierra Leone also lost many of their top qualified doctors to European countries and North America. As a way of dealing with brain drain, some African countries have implemented various strategies, including the bonding of health professionals to work for some years before being allowed to migrate, training of more health professionals, periodic upward

adjustment of salaries of health workers, and relying on WHO to influence developed countries to reduce active recruitment of health professionals from poor countries. These strategies have moderately helped to reduce the impact of brain drain from the relatively more resourceful Africa countries, such as Nigeria and Ghana which have been able to train mode health professionals. However, the health systems of countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone are still seriously affected by brain drain. Meanwhile, even the countries that have managed to reduce brain drain the impact of brain drain are still have sections in their National Migration policies to prevent brain drain which is still seen as a major threat to the sustainability of health systems in Africa. Section 3.2.3 of the national migration policy of Nigeria, for instance, noted:

> "*The challenge before the Nigerian government, as with many African governments, is to reverse brain drain, or at the very least mitigate its effects on social and economic development (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2015: 29).*

The national migration and national labour migration policies of Ghana, Liberia, Niger, and Sierra Leone have also identified brain drain as a major challenge. As Professor Paul Collier noted in his presentation, the poaching of skilled Africans is highly detrimental to Africa. It is also quite worrying that poor African countries use their scarce resources to train health professionals for European countries.

Unemployment, Brain Waste and Declining Living Standards

While many Africans, especially the youth, embark on risky journeys to reach Europe due its portrayal in the media as a region with vast employment opportunities, high income levels, and high standards of living, some Africans realize, upon arriving in the 'surprising' Europe, that these narratives are too simplistic. Some African migrants become unemployed because they do not have the right legal documents to work in Europe. Others end up 'wasting their brains' as they do menial jobs that are lower than their qualifications. Both unemployment and 'brain waste' tend to reduce the living standards of some African migrants and some of them regret going to Europe. However, as shown in the statement below, failed migrants find it difficult to come back to Africa:

"*I really regret coming here [UK]. As I told you, I sold my shop and two cars to secure the visa to come here. Now on arriving here, I realized the visa they gave me in Ghana cannot be used to work. I only do difficult jobs and receive very little pay ...Life in Ghana was better but how can I go back with empty hands ? (Luuyu, 2017).*

It is obvious from the statement above that Luuyu was doing very well economically before leaving Ghana, but he sold his property to a migration broker to secure 'visitors' visa. He did not even know that the visa he was given could not allow him to legally work in the UK. There are other young migrants who convinced their parents to sell family property to pay money to brokers to help them travel to Europe. Their unrealistic plans to pay back the money to their parents did not work, as highlighted in the story below:

"My father sold his land and gave me the money to process my documents. It was 40,000 Cedis [USD 8000) and I told him that I would pay back within three months when I get to London ... Now I have been here for 2 years and I have not been able to pay even 10, 000 Cedis" (Hyu, 2017).

Benefits of Migration from Africa to Europe

Improved wages and high living standards

Despite the challenges associated with migration, some African migrants benefit from employment opportunities and higher wages in Europe. In some cases, the wages are not very high by European standards but very good when compared with salaries back home. For instance, nurses that move from Africa to Europe, averagely experience about 700% increase in the monthly salaries compared with what they were receiving in Africa. Some African migrants also have better conditions of services and improved living standards in Europe. Some migrants also have improved access to health and educational facilities in Europe. As Professor Collier noted, "there is little that African governments can do to counter the incentive for their skilled people to emigrate. Raising pay levels to the European levels would be hugely costly, and impose massive inequalities on African societies".

Remittances and skills transfer

In addition to the benefits that accrue to individual migrants, some African countries also benefit from migration of their citizens to Europe through the flows of remittances. International remittance flows to most African countries increased tremendously in the last two decades. In 2018, for instance, Nigeria received US$24.3 million while Ghana received US$ 3.5 million as international remittances, from various countries including those in Europe. The contribution of remittances to GDP is high sin some countries such as Liberia (14.09%), the Gambia (12.47%), cape Verde (11.81%) and Senegal (10.06 %). Some African countries are also implementing programs to facilitate skills transfer from their emigrants in Europe. This is seen as brain gain. In view of the increased flow of remittances and skills from emigrants, some African countries such as Ghana, Liberia, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo, have developed National Migration Policies, National Labour Migration Policies/strategies and Diaspora Engagement Policies to harness the benefits of migration for socio-economic development. Most of these policies seek protect the rights of emigrants, while promoting the transfer of remittances for socio-economic development. For instance, section 3.3.2 of the Sierra Leone Labour migration policy states:

> *The State shall provide a sound macro-economic environment to facilitate the efficient flow of remittances…..the State shall work with financial institutions to reduce the cost of sending remittances to Sierra Leone. The State shall also adopt programmes to enhance the knowledge of migrant workers and their families regarding the management of remittances*

Sustainability of current migration flows and policies in African countries

The current pattern of migration from Africa to Europe is not very sustainable. First, the high level of irregular migration raises serious sustainability concerns. While African governments' commitment to combating irregular migration to Europe has been questioned, they (African governments) have also been raising concerns over strict visa regimes which is the main cause of irregular migration. As captured in the statement below, some Africans want to migrate irregularly to Europe because they feel they will not get visas:

" I just want to go to Europe to work so that I can also help my family but if I go to the embassy, they will not mind me… So that is why I want to go with the connection man.. I have heard of the dangers but what else can I do?.. I know some went and died. Some did not get anything and were deported. I also know some people who went to Europe and they made it big. So I trust God that I will also make it.

On the other hand, EU programmes being implemented to deal with the 'root causes' of irregular migration include development assistance, job creation, promotion of good governance, and dissemination of information on the risks of irregular migration (Knoll and de Weijer 2016). While these strategies are good, it is important to understand that the Africans who migrate to Europe are not the poorest of the poor, given the huge cost of relying on illegal brokers to migrate. Also given that migration is an integral part of social transformation, enhanced development will not significantly reduce migration to Europe in the short-term. In addition to development assistance, there is a need for European countries to provide channels to make legal migration possible. Short term guest worker programs between Europe and African countries can promote safe, orderly migration.

Another area where the current migration pattern from Africa to Europe is not sustainable has to do with the poaching of highly skilled health professionals from Africa. While such poaching provides some benefits to migrants and countries of origin, it has to be discouraged because of its serious effects on the health systems in Africa. There is also a need for European countries to support the training of health professionals both in Europe and Africa.

Conclusions

While irregular migration certainly raises sustainability issues, migration from Africa to Europe per say is not a bad phenomenon as it has both positive and negative impacts on both Africa and Europe. It is difficult to generalize the costs and benefits that accrue to different categories of migrants and countries in Africa. Migration can be good or bad to different people, depending on the context. There are no figures on migrants who gain and those who lose from moving to Europe. However, there are several local cases of both positive and negative outcomes of migration. There is a need to change narratives to highlight both the costs and benefits migration in both Africa and Europe.

African governments and migrants support the creation of more legal channels for both highly skilled and low skilled migrants. Short term guest worker programs between Europe and African countries can promote safe, orderly migration. European countries also need to discourage active recruitment of health professionals from poor African countries that do not have adequate health professionals. Additionally, European countries can support Universities in Africa with funds to train more health professionals for employment in both Africa and Europe.

Migration: what works best for Africa?

Paul Collier
University of Oxford

Summary note of presentation at EMN Roundtable on 9th December 2020 on 'Sustainable Migration from Africa to Europe'.

Not for citation without author's permission.

Average incomes in Africa are far below European levels. This is unsustainable socially and politically unsustainable. Such extreme inequality with our neighbouring continent is an ethical affront, and also implies that African societies are too poor to contribute to vital global public goods such as disease control, the suppression of international crime and terrorism, and the reduction in carbon emissions. Hence, an increasingly important priority for Europe is that African incomes should converge closer to European levels. European policies on migration from Africa to Europe can either help or hinder this objective. Currently, they are neither ethical nor sustainable.

The problem of the training drain

The wide incomes gap gives individual Africans an incentive to move to Europe. The incentive is much greater for the fortunate minority of Africans who have received a tertiary education in a globally valuable skill. The archetypical example of such a skill is training in a medical school that equips someone to be a doctor. Quite evidently, African societies need doctors, and so all African governments spend substantial resources to train their brightest students to become doctors. However, once trained, by migrating to Europe, African doctors can earn the high salaries that European countries pay their doctors. For example, more than half of Ghanaian doctors emigrate. Yet Ghana is at the top end of the African spectrum of incomes and governance. Nearer the bottom end the situation is extremely damaging: more of Sudan's doctors are working in London than in the whole of Sudan. While the opportunity to emigrate increases the incentive for young Africans to go to medical school, it reduces the incentive for African governments to provide places. Perversely, the plentiful of supply of African doctors to Europe also reduces the incentive of European governments to train doctors: it is much cheaper to poach reduce-trained medics from Africa. The worst offender has been Britain, which despite having the highest-rated universities in Europe trains less than half the doctors that its health service needs. Hence, the net effects of Europe poaching skilled Africans such as doctors are highly detrimental. Primarily, Africa is condemned to be acutely short of doctors, producing charitable responses such as *Medicins sans Frontiers*. The palliative of European doctors substituting for missing Africans is no only numerically inadequate but medically inefficient, since the high incidence of psychosomatic illnesses makes cultural familiarity valuable. Finally, poaching seems likely to have reduced the combined European plus African investment in training, thereby reducing the overall availability of doctors.

As indicated by Ghanaian experience, there is little that African governments can do to counter the incentive for their skilled people to emigrate. Raising pay levels to the European

levels would be hugely costly, and impose massive inequalities on African societies. Nor would it be very effective since it would still not compensate for Europe's large advantages in public goods. Yet African governments cannot be asked by Europe to impose restrictions on emigration: right to emigrate from a country is ethically basic, only denied by the most abusive governments such as the former Soviet Union and North Korea. But the right to emigrate, even from a poor country, does not imply the ethical right to immigrate. Let alone to a rich country of the emigrant's choice. All societies, including African ones, insist on the right to restrict the entry of non-citizens, this being a basic social right.
Hence, the ethical responsibility for curbing the training drain to Europe from Africa rests unambiguously with European governments. We suggest a simple rule that Europe should not issue work permits to Africans for skills in which its annual training provision falls short of its annual needs. This rule would, for example, permit Africans who trained in European medical schools to work in Europe, as long as the overall number of doctors being trained was sufficient for European needs.

The need to puncture damaging narratives among African youth

The feasibility of irregular migration has created a mythology among African youth that hope lies in the courageous individual act of illicit emigration. In West Africa a widespread youth narrative is 'Europe or death.' This offers a self-image likely to appeal to youth since it suggests that a heroic act of risk-taking is likely to be rewarded by transformed prospects. Once again, this is very difficult for African governments to counter. Two of the West African countries with high emigration – Senegal and Ghana – have among the most rapidly growing economies in the world, to objectively they are already generating rapidly improving opportunities. But of course, these opportunities are less attractive than well-paid jobs in Europe. Once damaging narratives are established, it is hard to shift them but it can be done even while the income gap with Europe remains wide. China provides the evidence for this hopeful conclusion: is still far poorer than Europe, but it has now successfully created a narrative that it has a promising future. Inadvertently, Europe and the USA have helped this along by their common narrative of 'Chinese technology as a future threat'. In consequence, most of the Chinese students trained in Europe choose to return home.

Inadvertently, European emphasis on Africa as a continent mired in poverty and needing hand-outs from Europe even for basic social provision such as primary education, reinforces the narrative of escape as the solution to despair. This apparently ethical narrative of Europe-as-saviour, can more reasonably be seen as ethically irresponsible. Public policy could, instead, characterize Africa as the new frontier of economic opportunities for European businesses. The 2017 German G20 initiative *Compact with Africa* is an example of such a re-imagining, as a result of which major German companies such as VW and Bosch are now manufacturing in Ghana.

The emigration trap

The fake narrative of individual heroism for a bright future creates a cruel trap into which young Africans are lured. Once they have survived the risks of illicit travel to Europe, they encounter a reality which is far inferior to their hopes and dreams. Their enterprise seldom rewards them with happy outcomes; all too often, reality is the bleak experience of being on

the margins of society facing limited and humiliating options for scrounging a living. The fake narrative of bondless opportunity lures people into costly and irreversible decisions. Professor Teye, Director of the Centre for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana, has shown this sad reality through his survey of Africans illicitly arrived in Europe, a typical example being: *"My father sold his land and gave me the money to process my documents. It was 40,000 Cedis [USD 8000) and I told him that I would pay back within three months when I get to London ... Now I have been here for 2 years and I have not been able to pay even 10, 000 Cedis" (Hyu, 2017).*

Yet worse, they cannot admit to their friends back home that they have failed. Since their friends in Africa share the same fake narrative that Europe abounds in opportunities, to admit failure would risk being interpreted as being due to weaknesses of the individual rather than accepting the dismaying news of the falsity of the entire narrative. He is another of Professor Teye's interviewees: "*I really regret coming here [UK]. As I told you, I sold my shop and two cars to secure the visa to come here. Now on arriving here, I realized the visa they gave me in Ghana cannot be used to work. I only do difficult jobs and receive very little pay …Life in Ghana was better but how can I go back with empty hands? (Luuyu, 2017).*

And so, even unsuccessful emigrants tend to send back exaggerated accounts of their economic and social situation. Crucially, to return home would be an irrefutable admission of personal failure, since few do return other than on brief visits laden with expensive presents.

Despite the warm glow from bringing boatloads of illicit migrants safely to harbour, the larger context of such responses is unethical. While ever, having reached European soil they are left to disappear into the informal economy, the fake narrative that lures young Africans and their relatives into a trap of damaged lives is reinforced. Hence, the policies which leave borders porous and enable illicit immigrants who have no genuine basis for asylum to remain regardless of their prospects are unethical, breaching the principle 'thou shall not tempt.'

The transit trap

An analogous critique applies to policies which create an incentive to reach transit countries, currently and most notably, Libya, but also Greece. Transit countries are highly dangerous places for illicit migrants because organized criminal gangs are drawn to operate there, extorting migrants by a range of appalling techniques from further fake narratives of attractive jobs which turn into prostitution, through to kidnapping and extortion. Quite clearly, no migrant goes to a transit country in order to live and work there. And so European policies which make illicit travel appear attractive are entirely responsible for the migration to them. The attraction of transit cannot, either realistically or ethically, be countered by physical controls introduced by the governments of countries such as Mali which lie on the route to Libya. Rather, they depend upon decisively severing the current link between physical arrival on European soil and the chance of remaining in Europe. In turn, this depends upon a twin strategy of new licit means of access, and reduced prospects of illicit access. These are discussed more fully below, but in essence, the former requires opening viable legal routes of access to Europe through applications made from a country of

origin, or a country of safe haven. The latter requires more effective policing of borders and behind-the-border controls, combined with a rapid and certain system of return.

Ethically defensible and politically viable expanded migration from Africa to Europe

Europe needs net immigration and Africa needs remittances from a stock of emigrants. Hence, there is potential for mutually advantageous migration. But currently, public policies on migration and asylum are not enabling these potential gains to be sufficiently realised. On the contrary, the narrative of 'burden-sharing' currently emphasized by the European Commission, tells European citizens that migration from Africa inflicts net costs (unwelcome 'burdens') on European societies, and so the natural response of citizens is to oppose it. As with 'Europe as saviour', the current narrative is attempting to address one problem by intensifying another. Yet just as 'Chinese technology as a future threat' helped to persuade Chinese youth that their country had a promising future, with the right immigration policies, 'Africans as useful to Europe' can credibly persuade citizens that immigration at higher levels than currently can be beneficial. The example here is the immigration levels sustained by the countries of the Arabian Gulf. All of these societies are considerably more socially conservative that any in Europe, yet their citizens accept remarkably high levels of immigration that provide very valuable remittance flows to Africa and the poorest societies of Central Asia. The explanation is that in the Gulf the migration is circular, and the rights of immigrants are precisely defined and bounded. No Gulf society thinks of African immigrants as a burden. Europe can, of course, offer migrants much better conditions that those offered in the Gulf, where wages of immigrants are set at market-clearing levels unrelated to wages for citizens. It is not wage levels, but circularity that give Gulf societies the confidence to accept high levels of immigration: individual immigrants are there on a temporary basis and so do not provide a threat either to the massive social welfare system that all Gulf states provide (broadly equivalent to Europe), or to the highly distinctive culture of their societies. But not only would circular migration permit a much higher level of immigration from Africa to Europe, it spread the opportunities for European income levels and training far more equitably within African societies. African migrants would know with certainty that after a set time, such as three years, they would return home. This would give them an incentive both to save and to remit their temporarily high earnings. Further, and more fundamentally, since the entire pool of migrant jobs would be refilled every three years, there would be a massive increase in the number of opportunities to get the pulse of income and skill that a given number of jobs for immigrants would create.

The potential for a mutually advantageous deal

If the dominant message from European governments to African governments is 'we don't want your citizens and will give you aid if you take them back', no African government can do other than reject it. But this is not the offer that Europe should be making even for its own advantage.

Consider instead the offer 'we want to take more African immigrants, but on a circular basis.' For an African government this is now attractive: it keeps its skilled people, gaining skills instead of losing them. As Professor Teye reported, the national migration policy of Nigeria noted: "*The challenge before the Nigerian government, as with many African*

governments, is to reverse brain drain, or at the very least mitigate its effects on social and economic development (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2015: 29).

In addition to switching from training drain to training gain, participating African governments would benefit from a substantial increase in remittances: not only do individual emigrants remit more; there are more of them working in Europe at any one time.

Within this context, welcoming back their own nationals, whether returning as part of circular migration flows or because they have taken an illicit route, would be intrinsic to the mutually beneficial package. African governments would have an interest in encouraging those wishing to emigrate to use the legal circular channel.