

Chapter 1

Introduction



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1.1 Introduction

It is the main contention of this book that there is a decisive and urgent need for migration research from a southern African perspective. The chapters in this book contend that South-to-South migration will dominate migration trends, leading to an increase in migration *within* the Global South and *to* the Global South. The predominant literature on the Global South adopts theoretical and methodological scholarship rooted in South-to-North migration. While there is an emerging body of knowledge in the sociology of migration within the Global South (Landau & Bakewell, 2018; Batisai, 2017; Rugunanan, 2016), here we assert that there is a noticeable absence of theorising migration *from* the Global South *about* the Global South. We build on Segatti's (2011) assessment that the migration literature has ignored population mobility and international migrant workers in Africa and, in particular, southern Africa.

In view of the efforts to centre theories from the South (Connell, 2007, 2009), and the decolonial movement in South Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mbembe, 2004, 2017), this volume contributes to an emerging scholarship calling for a redefining of how we view and theorise migration in the Global South. To engage in widespread theoretical reconceptualisations about African migration, the contributions in this book pose the following questions: who is migrating, to which countries, and what are causes of migration? In addition, the contributions interrogate whether the migration is a renewed form of circular migration, how southern African migration influences transnationalism, the continuities and discontinuities of

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remittances sent to places where migrants originate, and how migrants are received in the countries of the South.

In South Africa specifically, migration in the twentieth century consisted of two main types: (1) immigrants, exclusively white until the mid-1980s, arriving primarily as “family class” migrants from Europe, with women accompanying their working spouses and (2) migrants, primarily black and male, from Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, who were permitted temporary entry into South Africa under bilateral agreements. Although temporary migration was male-dominated, women later followed their spouses or travelled on their own to South Africa. Early studies on migration in South Africa focused on the migrant labour system, and were situated within neo-classical economic theories of migration. In the 2000s, the emphasis shifted to the impact of immigration and permanent migration. The current emphasis appears to be on the negative stereotypes of immigrants, xenophobia, and policy implications from a human rights and regional perspective (Landau, 2009; Posel, 2003).

A primary reason for migration to South Africa is its relative political stability and economic prosperity. This view is confirmed by an extant body of literature in South Africa (Rugunanan, 2016; CDE, 2008; Landau & Gindrey, 2008). Migrants search for and make informed choices about their destination. The Global South and South Africa, in particular, have become preferred destinations. This view supports the new economics of labour migration theory, which purports that the decision to migrate is based on government initiatives and multinational corporate investment decisions that offer the potential to economically diversify and develop new labour market skills. For many migrants, their choice to migrate is not only driven by the search for ostensible individual freedom and opportunities, but also the hope that such freedom and opportunity would provide for migrant worker families and possibly economic interests in their countries of origin.

Therefore, this book ultimately proposes to explore and interrogate the existing definitions of a ‘migrant’ with a view to conceptualise a definition which speaks to the complexities, envisioning a more inclusive southern African region. We investigate the various levels of migration, moving from the local (rural to urban and urban to rural) to cross-border migration; middle-class versus working-class migrant; household livelihoods; livelihood procurement vs. wage earning; social capital (networks) and how migrants make meaning of their circumstances in a ‘foreign’ space, among other avenues of inquiry. The importance of the history of migration and generational change is also missing from recent studies of migration in South Africa. While migrants of the 1950s faced conditions similar to those facing migrants today, the biggest difference is that men dominated the process of population mobility¹ in the region. The feminisation of migration has elevated the importance of women migrating within southern Africa, and the role of children has become an important dynamic within this space.

¹For the purposes of this book, the terms migration and population mobility are used interchangeably.

The historical unfolding of cross-border migration² in southern Africa is complex and unpredictable; the influences are both locally induced and internationally exacerbated. Although cross-border migration intersects with local mobility, it clashes more than it converges. There has been a reconfiguration of the way we understand geographical spaces (productive and reproductive spheres; inbound and outbound) and identities, and what we understand as (paid and unpaid) work. Labour migration particularly, both local and cross-border, has contributed to ‘new forms of labour’, continuing to exert pressure on existing workers as well as the South African labour movement. The feminisation of labour, organising and mobilising migrants, and the precariousness of mobile populations are some of the immediate challenges that confront us as a society and as scholars in developing a sociology of migration.

1.2 Key Contributions of the Book

This book begins by proposing new ways of theorising migration in the southern African region, arguing that dominant western perspectives do not fully fit the dynamics of South-to-South migration. The majority of the book comprises empirical perspectives from different parts of southern Africa. The book recognises the interweaving of gender and class as crucial in analysing migration processes. In a novel way, rather than allocating specific chapters to address each of these social issues, we blend them together across the chapters in varying dimensions to highlight the intersectionality of migration. This is one way of elevating the complexity of labour migration. The migration processes cannot be categorised as those of either low skilled or highly skilled migrants; rather, the everyday lived experiences of migrants reflect a different and complex reality. In the field of migration, it is a norm that scholars research either rural-urban/urban-rural migration or international migration, assuming that there are no similarities or relationships between the two. This book, however, incorporates the two types of migration, rural-urban and international migration, and examines their shared complexities and challenges. We give serious consideration to the presence of children in population mobility in the region. Children have been largely ignored by migration scholars, as well as the complicated positions that women with children find themselves in throughout the migration processes. This book examines South African policy and legislation on migration, refugees, asylum seekers, workers and workers’ rights. We use case studies of the application of policy to examine where it is applied accordingly. The key contribution that the book makes is bringing a Southern-theory focus to the sociology of migration.

²We use the term cross-border migration and international migration interchangeably.

1.3 Theoretical and Methodological Processes That Brought the Book to Life

One of the foundational aims of this collaboration was to give prominence to African voices engaged in South-to-South migration. The recently established sociology of migration research collaboration between the Department of Sociology at the University of Johannesburg and the Chris Hani Institute embarked on a two-day colloquium, with approximately 30 delegates, on 1 and 2 July 2019 as an initial step in a long-term programme to develop and consolidate a South African and a Global-South centred body of knowledge on migration and its sociological implications.

The colloquium aimed to bring together academics working in the area of migration studies and to begin the discussion, aiming to develop a comprehensive, up-to-date sociology of migration that is focused on identifying different research interests to further the development of research on migration in southern Africa, from a theoretical, conceptual and methodological level and with a Global South perspective, focus or orientation. One of the initial goals of the colloquium was to produce a peer-reviewed edited book based on presentations at the colloquium, to consolidate the emerging strands in the sociology of migration scholarship in southern Africa. One of the longer-term goals is to envision relevant institutional formations for broader research collaboration across southern Africa and a home for a sociology of migration.

We accept Posel's (2003) recommendation that further research explaining patterns of migration through case studies and ethnographic approaches is necessary, with a southern African perspective. While much of the research on migration in South Africa has been quantitative, this book's approach uses mainly qualitative methods that provide greater flexibility and also offer deeper insights into communities of migrants across southern Africa. Methodologically, the majority of these chapters are based on primary data collected at different times, and on research projects based in countries of southern Africa.

1.4 Structure of the Book

The book is divided into six parts.

Part I begins by proposing new ways of theorising migration in the southern African region, by elucidating how Western forms of theorising fail to capture the differences and complexities of South-South migration. The last quarter of the twentieth century has witnessed a change in the direction, pace and nature of migrant populations, with Asia, Africa and Latin America replacing Europe as the major area of origin (Arango, 2000). Mbembe (2017: 9) pre-empted our argument when he claims: "Europe is no longer the centre of gravity of the world." This key insight underpins the crux of the book's pronouncement that the scholarship of South-South migration has often ignored intra-African migration, despite the increase in North African migration to southern Africa.

Batisai's thought-provoking chapter lays the conceptual groundwork for part one of this edited volume, which calls out the obsession of migration literature for its 'Asian biases', where the focus of Asian migration has either been amongst Asian countries or to the Global North. While an extensive body of literature on migration in Africa exists, it is often through the conceptual gaze of Northern theories and literature, and she challenges these universalistic overtones when examining migration in southern Africa. Making a strong argument for interrogating what it means to be 'foreign', and debunking the concept of a black African migrant in Africa, Batisai convincingly calls for a "conceptual renegotiation of the meaning of Africanness and African identities."

Rugunanana's chapter argues for the development of a retheorising of migration from the Global South with emphasis on South-to-South dynamics. Her chapter on the flows of South Asian migrant workers to South Africa demonstrates that insufficient attention has been given to why migrant workers migrate from less-developed countries to developing countries, which culminates in new(er) geographies of growth.

Hadebe uses the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in Zimbabwe to explain precisely the argument that large-scale labour migration erupted as a result of neoliberal capitalist practices, giving rise to competition between nationals and foreigners, often resulting in xenophobic violence that destabilises working class solidarity.

Part II of the book examines the legislation and policy frameworks governing migration. Here we seek to question why, despite having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, significant anti-immigrant sentiment persists in South Africa.

Gordon demonstrates that despite developing progressive migration policy and legislation in South Africa, implementation remains fraught with anti-immigrant sentiments amongst the populace at large. One of the failures of the South African government, evidenced by recurring and violent xenophobia, he argues, is the lack of a coherent immigration integration policy. He questions why a young democracy such as South Africa has struggled to develop meaningful policy.

Moyo and Botha engage with the South African state's policy practices for refugees and asylum seekers. The chapter traces the evolution of the decision-making timeline when reviewing the policy landscape, whilst examining the migration infrastructure or lack thereof for refugees and asylum seekers.

Extending the discussion on legislation and policy, **Xulu-Gama, Nhari, Malabela and Mogoru** embrace the South-South migration framework to situate their chapter about foreign national migrant workers and worker education programmes at the workplace. This chapter is based on research by the Chris Hani Institute (CHI), focussing on worker education and worker control. Trade unions in South Africa have been criticised for their neglect of organising migrant workers and in particular unskilled and semi-skilled migrant workers. This chapter provides some insight into a body of research largely ignored in the South African landscape on migration.

Part III reveals the crucial interplay of policy and legislation juxtaposed against internal migration and regional mobility. The focus on internal migration in South Africa has lapsed in recent decades. Since the Abolition of Influx Control Act in 1986 and the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the lens of migration studies has shifted to a focus on international migration into the country. The case studies on internal migration show how the rural and urban landscapes in South Africa have changed the spatial segregations in South African towns and cities.

The case study by **Aziona and Oksiutycz** showcases an interesting nexus where internal and cross-border migration overlap in informal settlements. The chapter captures the views of the participants in the informal settlement of Zandspruit, a culturally rich melting pot, populated by internal and cross border migrants. The chapter is a good reflection of the failed promise of South Africa to its citizens and migrant population.

Xulu-Gama uses feminist standpoint epistemology as a way of validating the experiences of women in the migration field when men have traditionally been given preference. Xulu-Gama makes an important contribution by showing the similarities between rural-urban and cross border migrant women, an aspect of research often ignored in the southern African context.

In **Part IV**, a neglected area of research in the southern African space is a focus on mothers and children as migrants.

Mokoene and Khunou demonstrate how young mothers in historically migrant families are forced by circumstances to become internal migrants and how their search for work interfaces with South Africa's social security system, through the child support grant. The chapter is a reality check on how cycles of poverty are reinforced in rural areas by the lack of employment prospects in urban areas.

Onukogu examines, more broadly, children as participants in international migration. She considers second generation immigrant children who embrace an alternate migration trajectory. The chapter foregrounds a conceptualisation of second generation from a South African perspective. It applies resilience theory to explain the challenges the children face and the protective factors that provide support and promote resilience among the children.

Extending the discussion on second generation immigrant children, **Chiyangwa and Rugunanan** study crucial development issues at the intersection of migration and education for second generation migrant children in the rural context of South Africa and how they access education. Using a relational approach, the chapter found that second generation Mozambican migrant children strongly valued access to education.

In **Part V**, the discussion on second generation migrant children brings to the fore notions of identity politics in migration studies.

Sitto provides insight on voluntary economic migrants seeking new professional opportunities. Adapting to the host country contexts requires that migrants reconsider "social representation barriers arising from acculturation schismogenesis". The chapter considers how migrants reconstruct their identities within transnational places whilst building a new social reality. The issue of identity and social realities is not the same for all migrants to South Africa, the destination of choice. While

migrants are drawn to the country because of its strong constitutionalism and respect for human rights, the repeated upsurges in xenophobic violence against certain groups of migrants raise questions about the issue of migrants' identities.

Kaziboni explores how intra-African migration and xenophobia are related in a post-apartheid state. The chapter demonstrates that discrimination and oppression are manifest in covert and overt experiences of xenophobia. He claims that xenophobia is rooted in South Africa's racist past, and further contends that immigrants are surviving in a "post-apartheid apartheid" South Africa.

Continuing with the concept of identity, **Misgun** explores the tactics and strategies of integration of Ethiopian migrants in South Africa, examining how they make sense of and construct their social identities as African migrants. By problematising integration, Misgun contextualises sameness and difference, movements and moments in the unfolding and recreation of their identities in these transnational social spaces.

Part VI of the book expands on worker rights and new forms of work.

Machinya scrutinises the work practices of undocumented Zimbabwean migrant daily-wage workers in eMalahleni, South Africa. Rising unemployment in South Africa is detrimental to documented and undocumented migrants. Machinya's chapter examines how the Zimbabwean day labourers develop a series of work habits guided by values of hard work, trustworthiness and reliability "just to get by".

Lorgat contends that international human rights are not inclusive of undocumented migrants, but the demand for their inclusion is made on a pragmatic and human rights basis. Trade unions in South Africa have been unsuccessful in accessing and organising atypical workers, many of whom are migrants. Lorgat engages with trade union representatives in the construction sector in Cape Town to interrogate trade unions' responsiveness to migrants' rights claims.

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