CHAPTER 15

# Migration and Integration in a Post-Pandemic World

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## Introduction: Beyond Using the Rear-View Mirror as a Compass

The Covid-19 pandemic, which started in 2020, left a stark mark on migration, irrespective of form, origin or destination. Lockdowns and quarantine rules, along with the subsequent disruptions to global supply chains and an economic slowdown have all played their part, as has insecurity in global modes of transportation as well as the natural reluctance to move about as the risk of being exposed to the virus mounted. Transnational movement and ways of living have also changed character, not least because labour migrants were cut off from their seasonal or long-term

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sources of income and those already abroad were at least partly cut off from their place of origin.

Yet, the pandemic appears to have had a mixed impact. The number of asylum seekers declined—at least temporarily—even though reasons for seeking protection are as evident now as in the pre-pandemic period. Indeed, the number of refugees and internally displaced people have not significantly changed. In Europe, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 added to an already very sizeable number of the internally displaced: within six months it resulted in an exodus of more than six million people to Europe and beyond. Many fled temporarily and subsequently returned home, many others remain displaced with unclear prospects for returning home (Mykhnenko et al., 2022; UNHCR, 2022). In parallel, other major streams of refugees (in the Middle East, Central and South America, South-East Asia) show few signs of abating.

The Covid-19 pandemic can be characterised as a critical event, one that's impacts are far from over, but also an event that may allow us to consider the migration and integration literature with the perspective afforded by Rushdie's (1992) 'broken mirror' metaphor. Though mostly over now, we have seen new waves of lockdowns in China and increasing incidents of new Omicron variants during the summer 2022; thus, the lasting impacts on migration and integration are not yet possible to isolate or fully know. This is compounded by the fact that, despite heroic efforts of demographers and relevant agencies, statistics on migration flows are anything but exhaustive, precise or up to date. Moreover, as the pandemic was playing out within a larger geo-political and macro-economic context, it is difficult to separate out the impacts of the pandemic from other processes and events taking place in parallel. Of special importance, for instance, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, its effect on food and energy security as well as inflation across a great many countries and the risks of stagflation in high-income economies might have a high impact on international migration and successful integration interacting with the parallel effects of the pandemic.

Of course, with no immediate end to the impacts of Covid-19 fully known it may be futile to ask what lies ahead. Can a return to the original status quo be expected and, if so, when? Or will we see a 'new normal' with modified patterns of behaviour, including different uses of all forms of social and physical mobility? Does this spell the end of physical mobility and, therefore, transnationalism as we have come to know it? What might replace it? Perhaps ever-increasing use of digital means of communication,

but less short-term physical mobility? Will return and onward migration change in magnitude or character? Could it be that we might see more displacement because of conflicts and climate change, but less of labour or opportunity migration, as Massey (2023, this volume) suggests? Or perhaps a shift in favour of more temporary labour migration under more restrictive programmes, as Gamlen (2020) suggested at the very beginning of the pandemic? Equally importantly, how will the status of migrants and their children themselves change? Xenophobia, racist everyday practices and other expressions of exclusion and discrimination increased alongside the spread of Covid-19, not to forget its political fallout in the form of strengthened nationalist extremism and growing anti-Asian sentiments. Or will there be a lasting impact of appreciating immigrants during the pandemic as "essential workers"? These are attitudes that may or may not wear off. It may also have an impact on diaspora relations and policies. What does this imply for origin and destination countries and processes of integration?

Given questions like these, it is useful to distinguish between trends that have been accelerated by, as opposed to originating in, the pandemic. As Singh (2022, p. 105) puts it, in many cases the "noxious seed of divisions has flourished in the case of COVID-19 […] because it was planted in the fertile soil of exclusionary nationalism where us-them boundaries were already deeply furrowed". Increasingly stringent restrictions on in-migration and mounting difficulties just to apply for asylum on grounds of human rights violations are a case in point. If the conjectures of Gamlen (2020) are correct, the overall drop in migration that was expected following the initial impact of the pandemic (and which has since been confirmed, at least for major destinations among high-income countries, OECD, 2021) may also, in fact, be a continuation of, rather than a break with, the past. Similarly, although nationalism has been spurred on by recent events, it is but a continuation of prior trends (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021; Bieber, 2022). Finally, whether economic and social trends are correlated to the pandemic or caused by the pandemic itself should be carefully considered.

On the other hand, it would be more than of passing interest to see whether changes that have occurred since early 2020 will have any long-term impact, regardless of whether such changes are structural in nature or reflect adjustments in behaviour considering the experiences reaped during years of lockdown, reduced mobility and an increased sensitivity to the unpredictable qualities of life. For instance, observations to the effect that

protectionism, nationalism and discrimination may have increased in conjunction with the pandemic can neither be assumed to have been started by the pandemic, nor simply be extrapolated into the post-pandemic era. These come in different forms (Wang, 2021; Wang & Tao, 2021), some of which are distinctly tied to the different phases of the pandemic. For example, nation-state protectionism became ever more salient because of pandemic-related disruptions to global supply chains, leading to political priorities shifting from free trade towards national security concerns and domestic societal resilience. Thus, the European Union (EU) as well as the United States are rapidly branding specific sectors and technologies of 'strategic importance', shutting these off from foreign competition or competition from firms deemed to pose potential security risks (Wennberg & Sandström, 2022). It is still too early to tell to what extent such economic nationalism in high-technology sectors affects global migration patterns, but it could lead to high-skill workers being less mobile than before. The first half of 2022 saw an exodus of nearly all foreign workers (along with many native professionals and specialists) from Russia following its invasion of Ukraine and a rapid departure of expatriate workers from China following the repeated and strict lockdowns in Beijing and Shanghai. With respect to the large group of international university students, we are yet to see a return to pre-pandemic figures. This is a substantial source of both temporary and permanent migration with significant knowledge spillover and, therefore, a matter of concern in many countries. Sectors typically relying on foreign workers, like hospitality and agriculture, remain understaffed globally in 2022. However, with agriculture increasingly seen as a sector of national security concern, we are likely to see governmental efforts to increase labour supply—foreign and domestic—into the sector, as has already happened, if selectively, during the pandemic (Macklin, 2022). Post-pandemic working conditions and wages will no doubt affect migration, as will policies and implementation against modern slavery and human trafficking. These are important empirical questions for the near future.

Other pandemic-induced effects, including 'vaccine nationalism', clearly originated in the pandemic but were likely to spread across larger geographical space, often regionally. For instance, the EU centrally purchased and distributed Covid-19 vaccines to its member states according to population, while more than a dozen countries in the Global South banded together in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) in a long-term initiative to build vaccine and drug-making capacity. Meanwhile, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries came together to

support equitable access to vaccines. Although there were self-serving reasons for global coverage, many low-income countries had limited access and low coverage continued to fear vaccine hoarding by high-income countries. A pandemic, after all, cannot be combatted in one country alone and a lack of vaccines implied an increased number of cases and a prolonged presence, as "sustained transmission in low-access regions results in an increased potential for antigenic evolution, which might result in the emergence of novel variants that affect epidemiological characteristics globally" (Wagner et al., 2021, p. 1).

However, there may also be other, less clearly negative impacts from the pandemic of a more social nature. Perhaps transnationalism will take on a new meaning as digital technologies became more widely used to communicate, socialise and work in lieu of physical mobility. As Bilgili et al. (2023, this volume) argue, transnational relationships maintained through digital means were even more important for individual and collective resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, as many workers and employers were forced to adopt remote working or chose to become "digital nomads", many families and parents became accustomed to and valued increased flexibility. Simultaneously, employers could enlarge their physical recruitment market beyond those in proximity. Many employers changed their policies to include distance work, while some nations are even considering remote working laws, like the ones proposed in Ireland and the Netherlands in 2022. How the development and acceleration of remote and hybrid working will affect migration and integration remains uncertain.

History and prior experiences are of critical importance here, not least because it helps mould our immediate reactions and forward-looking strategies alike. Yet the rear-view mirror, broken or not, has its limits as a compass to chart a course into the future. With only our repository of historically derived experiences, we find ourselves highly constrained in trying to work out an account of where we might be heading, be it in terms of the nature, extent or role of migration in a post-pandemic society. This is reflected in the contributions to this volume. These include the full range of verdicts, from those based on a deep understanding of the structural features of the demographic landscape that in the long run are likely to trump the effects of the pandemic to those that caution that it is premature to follow in the footsteps of early discussions as to where we might be headed. However, before commencing to draw out the conclusions of the collective effort that this volume on migration, integration and the pandemic represents, we must remind ourselves of the rationale for embarking on this project to start with.

## Impact of the Pandemic on Migration and Integration

Sifting through the academic commentary that was generated during the first few months of the pandemic in early 2020, both the impacts of the pandemic and of the measures taken to prevent its effects from playing out were quick to make themselves felt. Although the actions failed to work, in many cases, as far as the spread of Covid-19 was concerned, an understanding of its short-term impact on migration and integration gradually crystallised. With respect to its health effects, it transpired that the aged, those in poor health and "members of underprivileged socio-economic groups [were] quite simply more at risk of not being able to stay out of the way" (Lerpold & Sjöberg, 2021, p. 352). As noted by Platt and Warwick (2020, p. 260), with "well-documented ethnic inequalities in health and in the labour market, we might expect unequal consequences of COVID-19 for ethnic minority groups" and much the same was often true for migrants (in addition to those listed in introductory chapter to this volume, Lerpold et al., 2023, also e.g. Hu, 2020; Kluge et al., 2020; Strang et al., 2020; Chetail, 2021; Bonizzoni & Dotsey, 2021; Hayward et al., 2021; Mukumbang, 2021). Indeed, it was suggested that weak "social support structures, bleak socio-economic prospects, unequal access to health care and social services, precarious housing conditions, tenuous living and working conditions, and higher risks of exploitation and abuse", as Mukumbang et al. (2020, p. 3) report about South Africa, was made worse by the 'lockdown containment measures' that were quickly put in place.

As if this is not evidence enough, more systematic empirical surveys started to pour in, as detailed at some length in Lerpold et al. (2023). Even so, also in light of the often very real and serious problems that set the tone for much reporting on migration and integration during the pandemic, for a complete picture—and if at all relevant and possible—we also need to identify and discuss other types of changes as might occur. Such reports are far fewer in number, yet these include observations on the importance of essential workers, where a shift in focus from those with high qualifications to those who allow production and public services to weather the crisis can be observed (Anderson et al., 2021; Macklin, 2022). This, along with the noticeable difficulties that many industries, including critically those that often employ migrants, have already experienced in securing a workforce once the initial impact of the pandemic wore off could count as changes that, in some sense, put things right. After all, it

sends a signal that we should also value those engaged in occupations that do not carry as much prestige or allow for generous pecuniary rewards—and that how employers or society treat employees in time of distress does matter for the ability of society and its firms to bounce back. Similarly, regulatory changes that allow migrants a more secure existence in destination communities are noted (Triandafyllidou, 2022). The insight that we are all very much connected and that there might be other values than those upheld by consumerist society are other potential candidates.

On balance, migrants and their families—particularly those in precarious work or subject to uncertain status with respect to the right of residency—were clearly amongst those most heavily impacted by both the coronavirus and the measures taken to stop the pandemic. To the extent that the effects were immediately material, as was clearly the case, could it be that some of these effects might have a lasting impact on the status and fate of those groups? As outlined in the introductory chapter of this volume (Lerpold et al., 2023), although we limit our scope to the most affected, international migrants, there are a barrage of questions that came across as potentially relevant and worthwhile. Though it is not possible to address all questions, let alone to come up with exhaustive and solid answers that cover not just those countries and settings that have provided the best prospects of getting close to the issues at hand (not necessarily those that would provide the most enlightening answers), the questions in the section on temporary or permanent impact of the Introduction can be grouped into several categories.

The first concerns issues of demography. While immediate impacts are often assessed by recourse to the number of infected, could the excess mortality found in the wake of the pandemic (Wang et al., 2022) have a more lasting impact? Or, conversely, that the effects of the pandemic might be trumped by structural conditions that, unlike individuals experiencing the pandemic, were effectively immune to the latter's long-term consequences. Migration, of course, is not just the mechanical movement of people from one place to another, with those taking place within a country typically dwarfing international movements by a considerable margin. It is also about individuals who experience a need or desire to move, whatever the reason. As they move, they face the need of gaining some form of foothold wherever they might end up. Historically, this is typically a case of establishing oneself in an expanding urban area or immigrating to lands of greater promise (or lower levels of harassment, as the case might be). In the past, host country economic and social assimilation,

rather than multiculturalism, was essentially taken for granted as the consequence, irrespective of it being desirable or not (e.g. Glazer, 1993). We now believe that we know better, with debates over assimilation or multiculturalism and its impact on integration high on the agenda of both researchers and policymakers. This then forms our second area of interest, migration and integration, however conceived.

One reason why issues of integration are ever more important is that in the world of 2023, the opportunities for maintaining contact with those left behind are so much better than was the case during previous periods of great international migratory flows; 'digital kinning' (Baldassar & Wilding, 2020) may not have solved all problems of distance care and caring (e.g. King & Vullnetari, 2009), but it clearly lowered the threshold for maintaining contacts across both short and long distances. In that sense, international migration is now more like domestic migration and urbanisation. Since the 1990s, transnationalism has been the favoured framework within which this is assessed (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). As such, even though it might seem straightforward to keep a strong connection with the societies migrants were previously, and continue to be, attached to, the reality is that it is anything but. For one thing, it might not just include contacts and activities in two countries, but many more. For another, it upsets neat binaries, such as migration versus mobility, or clear-cut forms of migration. It also raises issues of synergies and tensions, just as it may well affect a sense of belonging. In short, transnationalism raises many issues and the pandemic has certainly served to put additional spanners in the works, beyond those related to the traditional ebb and flow of administrative hurdles typically affecting the progress of international migrants throughout the ages.

Perhaps it is best for others to address whether this also rubs off on the attitude of native-born relative newcomers or if it, in some sense, makes the full commitment to the host environment less pressing or attractive. Yet the reception at destination and how immigrants react to it (Verkuyten, 2016) is a factor to reckon with. In this context, current residents, be they native-born or relative newcomers, their organisations and officialdom, are all relevant. Importantly, it is not only a question of red carpet versus red tape, but also sentiments and identification. How do locals and natives react to inflows of migrants, how are migrants received and how do the different groups perceive themselves and others? The pandemic has served to put the spotlight on some of these issues, ranging from open xenophobia, racist slurs and outright violence to unconscious biases and

discrimination. It also includes diaspora politics and loyalties, the ability to move and how migrants can support their families back home. Thus, pecuniary remittances are an important adjunct here, alongside the social equivalent. Indeed, perhaps also reverse remittances might be affected?

## Empirical Findings and General Insights

> Although it took 50 years of migration between the imperfect democracy of Mexico and the more established democracy of the United States for 10% of all persons born in Mexico to end up in the United States, it took just five years for 10% of the population to exit Venezuela in response to decisions taken by the autocrats Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro; and it took just one month for 10% of Ukraine's population to relocate abroad in response to Vladmir Putin's autocratic decision to invade. (Massey, 2023, p. 73)

Although migration might take the form of slow-moving processes, it may likewise be triggered by unexpected critical events that turn normal conditions upside down within a matter of hours or days. Massey explicitly refers to the at times unexpected decisions of autocratic rulers unconstrained by due political and democratic procedures. He therefore implores fellow migration scholars to establish a 'greater engagement with political sociology' (Massey, 2023, p. 72), but also notes that the same unpredictability can emanate from other sources. Natural disasters are a case in point. Consider, for instance, the effects of climate change compared to earthquakes or volcanic eruptions.

Starting in early 2020, one such critical event has towered above most other: the appearance on the world scene of Covid-19. Declared a pandemic by the WHO on 11 March 2020, in many parts of the world it quickly served to change normal routines into something extraordinary. Groping in the dark, societies struggled to find ways of containing the virus. Other than observing what others did, under similar conditions of uncertainty, not much by way of prior experience was at hand to draw upon (Sebhatu et al., 2020).

Indeed, it took a while before a modicum of normalcy returned and, in some respects, we may never again return to the previous status quo. As at the time of writing the pandemic's impacts have not completely run its course, we cannot know for sure. Early observations, some of which are detailed on the opening pages of this chapter, suggest that the impact was heavily differentiated. Alongside those of old age, suffering from prior adverse health

conditions and comorbidities, migrants appeared to rank amongst those most heavily impacted. However, as migration is not a unitary phenomenon, different groups of migrants were also differentially affected.

This forms the background to our invitation to a diverse range of scholars (1) to consider the effects of the pandemic on past and current trends in international migration and integration and, if possible or worthwhile, (2) to try and identify significant impacts that might be with us as the coronavirus pandemic impacts, presumably, recedes. As this initiative was taken at the point when vaccines had become available, there was a sense that we might have weathered the worst and that there might be an end to the pandemic in sight. Thus, it should be possible to assess not just the immediate effects on various dimensions of migration and migrants' lives but perhaps also allow a reasonable chance of thinking about what the future might hold.

Recognising that it is not at all possible to address all topics related to trends in migration and integration potentially impacted by the pandemic, we cast the net wide and we attempted to include phenomena of very different character, if it could help us shed light on a core, yet often perceived as contentious, issue, that of migration and integration (e.g. Saharso, 2019). The results, reported in previous chapters of this volume, are structured to accommodate the logic of moving from macro issues to those more micro-orientated in nature. This mirrors "broader processes of development and social transformation" and those that reflect "(1) capabilities and (2) aspirations to migrate within a given set of constraints" (de Haas et al., 2019, p. 43), respectively. In other words, we move from the (potentially or notionally) stable to the possibly more transitory, from the more predictable to phenomena that also under normal, calm circumstances might be liable to change over short periods of time.

As far as the objects of study in the social sciences are concerned, and our ability to make forecasts, it is probably fair to say that demography is about as good as it gets. Often it is possible, even in the face of non-trivial changes in reproductive behaviour or mortality, to look a generation or so into the future. Adding migration increases the complexity, of course, and it all becomes more fluid. Yet the difference between stocks and flows implies that it takes time to build momentum. In the book's first contribution, by Douglas Massey, factors such as economy, environment and governance are added to the calculation. All of these, on their own or in combination, have the potential to influence demographic developments, in general, and migration, specifically. It appears that these structural

factors are such that they are likely to trump any lasting changes that the pandemic might produce. Although neither geography nor demography is destiny, the relative proximity of the main future centre of global population growth and areas of comparative stability and affluence will imply a continued focus on migration across the Mediterranean and along other well-established migration corridors. Indeed, to the extent that trends since the turn of the millennium imply a "pattern of growing threat-based movement relative to opportunity-based migration continues", not only Africa but also "Western Asia, South Asia, and portions of Central and South America will figure prominently as likely sources of future migration" (Massey, 2023, p. 70). If so, it will have implications for both sending and receiving areas.

It is precisely at the point where migrants meet the host environment and those who consider their right to be there, by birth or by virtue of some other attribute, as a given, that migration and integration combine to create a success story or its direct opposite. As contentious as the issues surrounding integration might be, Penninx (2019) reminds us that it is not just useful to keep the policy world and the world of research apart, but also to move beyond inclinations of confirmation bias or a reliance on simple one-dimensional quantitative indicators. The pandemic added yet another dimension to what is already considered a complex issue that is best tackled in an open-ended and open-minded manner. As Bilgili et al. (2023; cf. Freitag & Hofstetter, 2022) show, various groups of migrants found their position in host society changed in non-trivial and often adverse ways. In parallel to encouraging examples of constructive diaspora diplomacy and politics (also e.g. Jindal et al., 2023), many migrants found themselves increasingly marginalised and often ostracised. As we will return to the issue of discrimination below, for now suffice it to note that support and encouragement from home, along with calls for the diaspora to help, was one immediate reaction, especially as the pandemic served to close borders and increase the risk of groups being pitched against one another.

In host societies, where the picture is more mixed, the pandemic has often served to play into the hands of pre-existing divisions in society or added a twist to ongoing ideological debates. The protectionism and nationalism that was clearly on a rise prior to 2020 got an additional boost as the supply of, and access to, protective gear, vaccines and many other things was suddenly couched in terms of national survival no less. It would not be surprising if the pandemic had an impact on long-standing debates

on 'the good society' and how best to achieve it. Few studies document or consider such impacts, other than its connection to various forms of extremist political positions and actions that, as often as not, target migrants along specialists and politicians seen as responsible for lockdowns and other restrictive measures (e.g. Davies et al., forthcoming). Visible, and dangerous, as extremism is, it may prevent us from seeing more mundane and far less destructive expressions of such shifts. Helping us fill such lacunae, several research initiatives have been launched, for instance looking into the policy response of the EU (e.g. de la Porte & Heins, 2022). While pan-national policies and common initiatives are not always spectacular, they do play an important role for their member states and their development. Put differently, in addition to fundamental principles (such as on free movement), there are deeply held views, indeed paradigms, that have received less attention even though they have not remained unaffected by the pandemic.

Thus, Jerneck (2023, this volume) brings the potential for a change that, at first glance, might seem less seismic. Looking at expressions of 'welfare chauvinism' and how it interacts with notions of migrants representing a cost to society, he identifies a possible source of a paradigmatic shift in favour of not only seeing the reception of refugees and other migrants as a drain on society. After all, the experience of the pandemic (like that of the financial crisis in 2008) was one of liberal public expenditure expansion without destabilising the economy. As he focuses on Sweden, this might be explained, indeed explained away, by the positive result of the prior regime of austerity: a very low public debt-to-GDP ratio. However, he argues that the inflation we have since seen return is driven by supply-side issues rather than by the expansion of public expenditure. While our ability to assess the relative importance of various sources of inflation will have to wait for more solid evidence to be assembled, for now this suggests that the pandemic might help put the debate on the costs and benefits of migration to host societies on a slightly different footing.

The societal level not only encompasses debates such as these, but also more formal arrangements. To use a favourite of institutionalist approaches, both formal rules and social norms feature prominently. Amongst the former, legislation is a core consideration and developments during the pandemic often play out here. At times, policies designed to protect and support the population required support or justification by law or occasioned new legislation. Precisely because these addressed issues of mobility, they came to impact migrants as well. As related previously, legislative

provisions of this sort had to be adjusted considering developments deemed of societal importance (see the various contributions to Triandafyllidou, 2022; cf. Szelewa & Polakowski, 2022). Thus, pre-existing legal rules were subject to revision or debate, one example being the (temporary?) re-evaluation of occupations that were seen as essential. Another, rather different, example is the Swedish 'High School Law' allowing unaccompanied minors without asylum status to complete upper secondary school and to remain in the country provided they found a permanent job within six months of graduating. As Bucken-Knapp and Zelano (2023, this volume) describe, the pandemic made it increasingly difficult for these individuals to find first permanent jobs, especially in the hospitality sector that was severely impacted during the pandemic. Intricate as the debate might seem—and it was not always flattering to those who participated in it—the early observations that migrants were particularly badly hit by the labour market conditions as they evolved during the early stages of the pandemic did little to ease the tension. As labour markets picked up in 2021 and 2022, when the most drastic measures to counter the pandemic were halted across most countries, it remains to be seen how national and international labour markets are shifted—or not—due to changes seen during the pandemic. Will guest workers and seasonal labourers return after a few years of travel bans and hurdles, given the precarious work conditions this type of labour often entails? Will the segmented nature of national labour markets with immigrants typically occupying low-skilled positions shift and, if so, what is the impact of new and stricter migration legislation? Further, will the acceleration of pre-pandemic trends, such as digitalisation and related job polarisation, continue (Goos et al., 2014)?

National migration policies, good or bad, require implementation. Early in the pandemic, the ability to implement policies as formed before the virus became difficult for those practically responsible for carrying out migration laws. Malm Lindberg (2023, this volume) describes experiences in return and deportation implementation, especially various legal and mobility issues in implementing policy during the pandemic. It was not just the travel restrictions in place and the lack of available flights, but also the policies of the countries of origin that played an important role. The Covid-19 pandemic has been characterised by unexpected and continuously changing circumstances with implementation hinging on a constant bidirectional information flow between policymakers and front-line staff. This is a useful supplement to pioneering research by Mencutek (2022) on return migration during the crisis: by focusing on the aspirations of

migrants—including irregular and undocumented migrants—the perspective of policy implementing agencies is, less usefully, left out.

The hospitality sector is frequently seen as an 'entry path' for individuals with limited domestic labour market experience, including immigrants. As Kazlou and Wennberg (2023, this volume) document, jobs within hospitality are strongly segmented along both ethnic and gender lines with migrant males occupying jobs characterised by technical requirements of a more routine character, while women—especially native—are primarily occupying jobs requiring social skills, such as communication and customer interaction. As the nature of these jobs continue to shift due to digitalisation and the permanent closure of workplaces, a critical event like the pandemic may lead to sustained increased requirements for technical skills in the sector. While these changes might offer potential for immigrants, as it decreases requirements for communication and language skills, these are also positions that can be readily rationalised. At the same time, working conditions and low wages in the hospitality sector are often considered unattractive, with employers around the world struggling to recruit after the pandemic lockdowns. This would seem to suggest that migrant workers in the sector are in a fairly good position to not just meet labour market demand but also achieve improved wages and working conditions. However, the proliferation of non-regulated and illegal workers alongside comparatively low unionisation rates among migrant workers in hospitality, as documented by Bender (2023, this volume), also means that the bargaining position of employees is much weaker than in other industries. Although it is too early to assess the final outcome, including the possibility that many of the foreign-born have actually weathered the employment crisis generated by the pandemic fairly well (see e.g. Andersson & Wadensjö, 2022a, 2022b), the tenor of the discussion provides ample evidence of the multifaceted nature of the labour market integration of migrants.

Following the suggestion of Penninx (2019), the reception and integration of migrants within the new setting can be assessed at the level of societies (or the institutional level, as he labels it) or individuals. He also recognises a collective level that sits in-between and includes host society organisations of various sorts. Again, it is only two years into the pandemic that research on the way organisations have approached the twin issues of migration and integration during these unusual times is beginning to appear. This includes two contributions to the present volume, both putting the spread of the coronavirus vis-à-vis trade unions, their manner of organising and their stance with respect to migrants and migrant workers

at the centre of their research. As trade union workings and engagement varies depending on national context, public welfare state systems and employment laws, the challenge to economic and social inclusion of immigrants during the pandemic became even more visible. Marino et al.'s (2023) chapter on trade unions in France, Italy and Spain and Bender's (2023) on trade unions in Sweden both show that migrants were especially prevalent in those sectors most negatively affected by the pandemic. That said, outcomes, even during the pandemic, are contingent on strategic pre-pandemic decisions. While trade unions in France, Italy and Spain have specifically targeted immigrants with territorial and spatial inclusion strategies since the 1990s, this was not the case among Swedish trade unions. Although blue-collar trade union density in Sweden increased during the pandemic, partly because of emergency changes made regarding the length of membership required to obtain unemployment benefits, membership is still more strongly related to labour market sorting than to being an immigrant or being native born (Bender, 2023). It remains to be seen how the EU Commission's 2022 proposal on adequate minimum wages included in the European Pillar of Social Rights initiative will impact the trade unions and their strategies regarding immigrants in the case countries.

Of course, the unions are not the only types of organisations that may engage in questions of migration and integration. Another example, also drawn from the present volume, are the so-called work-integrating social enterprises (WISE) with hybrid business models. This is the focus of Nachemson-Ekwall (2023, this volume), who discusses the conditions for those the furthest away from the labour market and how they might secure a foothold. While the ultimate effects of the pandemic remain to be seen, the consequences of the spread of the coronavirus have made it still more obvious that alternative ways of achieving integration should be contemplated; traditional policy interventions often fall short.

It is in a context like this that the various expressions of transnationalism play out. A key insight is that no matter the nature or extent of host country initiatives, from the migrants' perspective, it always takes place in relation to some other setting or context beyond the reach of host country policy interventions. Not only is the diaspora engagement that Bilgili et al. (2023) document a component here, but so is the core reality of transnational living. As Erdal (2020) notes, the simultaneity and friction, be it antagonistic or productive, experienced by migrants is at the heart of how the diverse social fields that migrants owe allegiance to influence the range

of actions open to them. Implying both opportunities and challenges, including access to material support and exposure to various constraints, it also embodies fundamental questions about identity and belonging.

Since the 1990s, remittances and remitting behaviour have taken pride of place. As a visible expression of transnational living and solidarity, it is also hailed as a sounder and more individually reliable alternative to development assistance and potentially more important than foreign direct investment. In parallel, it is recognised as an expression of the strong bonds between individuals, families and communities often separated by considerable distances. Thus, it comes as no surprise that during the early phases of the pandemic, concern was raised over the negative impact that the disruptions might have, not least in labour markets. As noted by Bilgili et al. (2023), some of these fears have been laid to rest. Even so, they indicate that, in other respects, remittances have not necessarily gone unaffected. Not only has the salience of reverse remittances (Mazzucato, 2011) been heightened by the pandemic but the nature of social remittances (Levitt, 1998) may have also been affected. We can even speak of reverse social remittances, as information on how the pandemic is fought in other places filters back to migrants who find themselves exposed to conflicting information on how best to behave or what stance to assume on, for instance, the wearing of masks, social distancing and vaccinations.

That this might be important is amply illustrated by Rogstad (2023) and Valdez (2023) in their respective chapters in this volume. Beyond labour market participation, health as a proxy indicator of integration (though not necessarily correlated, as Rogstad's chapter shows) is commonly understood among OECD and EU nations (Ager & Strang, 2008; OECD/EU, 2018). Both chapters focus on specific immigrant groups and their vaccination levels relative to native born. In common, the impact of transnational relationships with family and friends in origin countries and their partly homophily formed social networks in host countries seems to play a significant role. Indeed, in both Norway and Sweden, where vaccinations were highly promoted, free of cost and, ultimately, readily available, the adage 'birds of a feather flock together' seemed evident in whether to vaccinate and or not. As groups, Polish immigrants in Norway and Somali immigrants in Sweden had lower vaccination levels than native-born residents, with respective rates on par with levels in their origin countries. Differing levels of trust in public institutions seem to be sustained across more recent immigrants to Norway and Sweden. A contrast, though, are the Pakistani immigrants to Norway, who arrived in the 1960s

and 1970s: their vaccination levels are on par with native-born Norwegians. Another commonly used indicator of integration is that of housing. Valdez (2023) connects vaccination levels with the built environment in a novel way, shedding light on yet another dimension.

Finding themselves at the intersection of multiple social fields, as Erdal (2020) notes, migrants may indeed feel the effects of friction. If so, the existence of discriminatory behaviour exercised by the majority population does not make it easier. Irrespective if it is thought of in the strict sense of a "disadvantage, harm, or wrong" imposed on someone based on that individual's "membership in a certain type of social group" (Altman, 2020: Sect. 1) or some wider reading, the phenomenon is, of course, not a novelty. This is true across different types of discrimination, as outlined by Ahmed et al. (2023, this volume). Rather, the question is if the pandemic was instrumental in introducing any changes to it, be it the incidence or nature of discrimination. Usefully summarising the yet rather sparse literature on the topic within the discipline of economics, a main message is that the long-recognised categories or types of discrimination remain relevant during the period under study. Indeed, there are indications that certain forms of discrimination may have been aggravated as the pandemic made landfall. If so, this is also in line with the observations of Bilgili et al. (2023) and, for instance, early assessments investigating access to public health services (Marchi et al., 2022).

Extending this to comprise not just disadvantages (e.g. seeing someone else gain access or be selected for a position that is more meritoriously yours) but also the harms and wrongs that Altman (2020) includes under the heading of discrimination, the pandemic is a proven conduit for xenophobia, increasing racism, hate and, indeed, violence directed against foreigners. As Boris (2022) notes, there is a long history of blaming migrants, regardless of whether the individuals are indeed migrants or just perceived to be such. No doubt in part because the coronavirus pandemic is assumed to have originated in China, Bilgili et al. (2023) find that East Asians have suffered consequences. Any privileged position within the ranks of the foreign-born that East and South-east Asians may have enjoyed—as the 'model minority'—quickly evaporated. Then again, as Osanami Törngren et al. (2023, pp. 335–336, this volume) emphasise in their study of Sweden, there is "no indication that Asians are a model minority group, succeeding and excelling in employment and education, especially when we look at the children of immigrants." Apart from harassment of a similar type to that seen in the Netherlands, the pandemic itself put this set of the

foreign-born apart from other migrant groups. They were subject to the same restrictions as everyone else, with the added observations that East, South-East and South Asian groups like all other members of transnational communities suffered the consequences of the restrictions introduced in the countries where their kin and friends resided.

It remains to be seen if this is a temporary consequence of the pandemic or something that will stay with us also once Covid-19 and its many variants become just yet another source of seasonal flu. While we are keen to leave any forecasts on the future of the virus itself to those who have the requisite expertise to make such pronouncements, it is unfortunately unlikely that similar discriminatory behaviour observed during the coronavirus pandemic will recede or disappear. Instead, and unlike the case of demography, where we started, there is a distinct risk that the observed deterioration will remain with us for a long time to come due to ingrained structures and related ratchetting effects. In that sense, the rear-view mirror might tell us something about future after all.

## Final Words

As the literature on the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic multiplies, it is increasingly clear that Covid-19 has caused many changes to our world. Although we should be careful to not express it in quantitative terms, be it in absolute numbers or proportionally, in the wake of the pandemic, it is easy to sense that the emergence of entirely new phenomena or trajectories are rare. Instead, contributors to the present volume and those to the wider literature emphasise that many of the developments observed imply a strengthening of trends already in progress or phenomena already present. The relative importance may have shifted, but there is little to suggest that entirely new phenomenon dominate the landscape arising from the rapid spread of a deadly virus and the measures taken to stop or otherwise slow its advance. From access to labour markets and public health services, to the increase of nationalist and protectionist sentiments, to discrimination and racist actions, problems may well have become more acute, more visible and more damaging; yet few would claim that any of these did not exist prior to the arrival of Covid-19. In parallel, there is little to suggest, in the contributions to this book or as yet in the wider academic literature on the impact of the pandemic, that there is a permanent re-evaluation as to whom is seen to perform essential work, that there is a return to regarding labour an asset rather than a cost or that human trafficking has been stamped out.

Even the early observations of reduced migration flows do not necessarily represent a clean break with the immediate past. Although the closing of borders and the reduced opportunities for all forms of mobility that followed in its wake would suggest a break with previous trends, we are not in an ideal position to tell. At first glance, while published statistics seem to imply substantial reductions in migration flows, figures as exist are either partial in geographical coverage or are built on assessments of changes in stocks of the foreign-born. Deducing flows from such data is fraught with problems and, further, the counterfactual is not available. Yet, as we move away from quantitative information and the time lags that are an inevitable part of the production of statistics, the observer trying to make sense of what is going on also faces other obstacles. Out of necessity, studies rarely provide more than a snapshot of what is happening in one place over a short period of time—effectively a single data point or, at best, a cross-section rather than an assessment of developments over time. This is certainly not desirable, but one cannot do much about it, especially at a time when there is a need to find one's feet here and now. Indeed, this very volume was inspired by the opportunity to take stock of our extant knowledge and the impact of the pandemic through a mirror broken by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the need to make the best possible out of it. In this way contributing to a growing body of research that, step-by-step, adds to the accumulated repository of knowledge about the effects of the critical event that the pandemic represents. Thus, like any other project, the present volume represents work in progress, albeit with an inevitable deadline attached. The baton is now passed to others in this never-ending relay race in the pursuit of knowledge.

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