The politics of international labour migration and globalisation in Africa

-- By Sergio Carciotto

While the conventional discourse on migration often emphasises the developmental effects of remittances and diaspora-driven investments on poverty reduction, in this article SERGIO CARCIOTTO also considers how the processes of globalisation and liberalisation that have resulted in the concentration of economic activities in large cities have driven significant population displacement of Africans not only seeking improved economic opportunities but also escaping conflicts, violence, natural disasters and climate change, highlighting the need for the protection of migrant workers' rights in the face of increasing precarity and exploitation.

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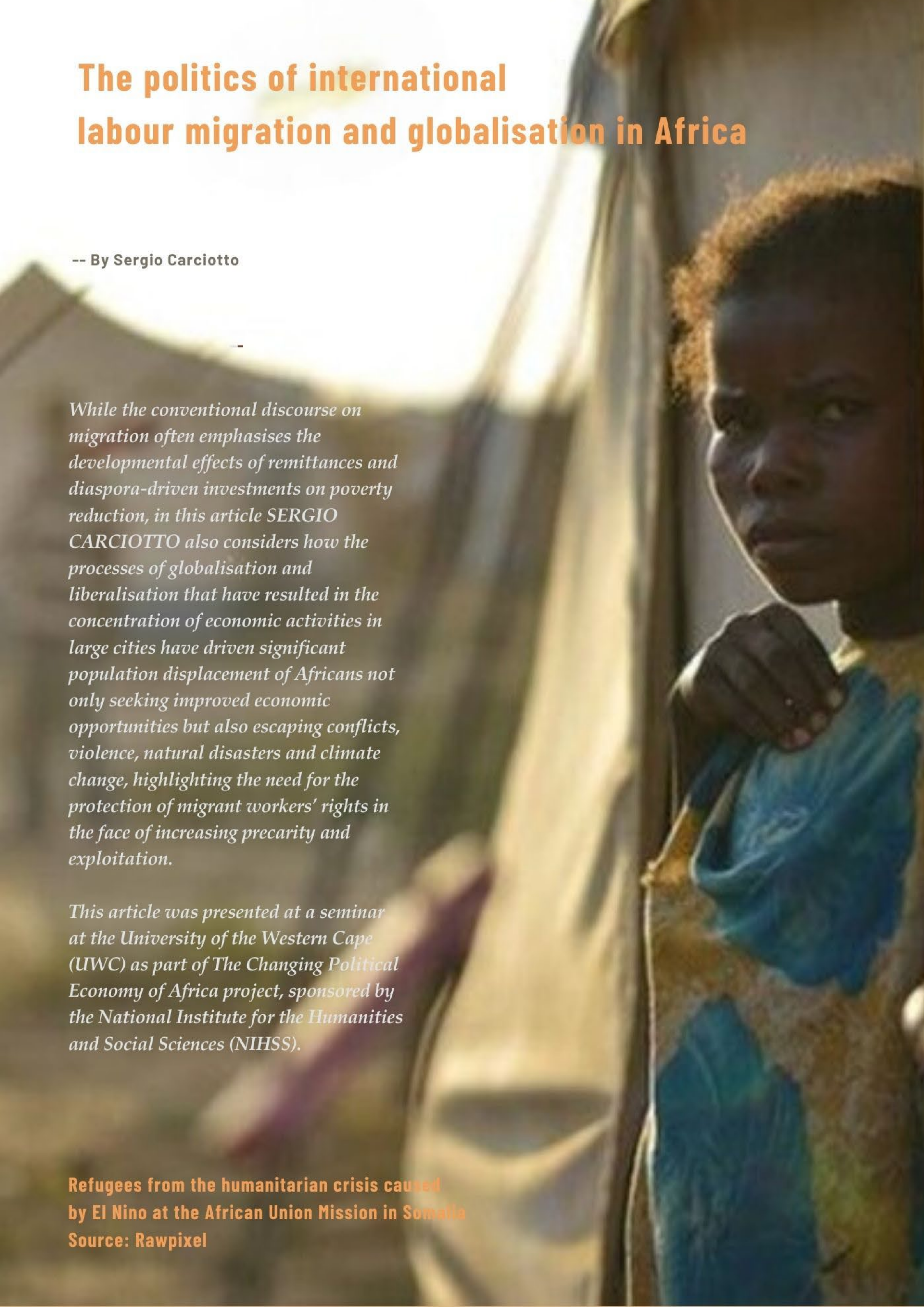

Refugees from the humanitarian crisis caused by El Nino at the African Union Mission in Somalia
Source: Rawpixel

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Abstract

This article examines the intricate relationship between migration, globalisation and socio-economic dynamics in Africa. It highlights the prevalence of intra-African migration, characterised by short-distance movements primarily driven by economic factors. The study critiques the dominant narrative framing migration as a purely developmental tool, arguing that the benefits of remittances and diaspora investments are often overshadowed by structural inequalities and the precarious conditions faced by migrant workers. The article also explores the role of states and international organisations in shaping migration policies, revealing a tension between the aspirations for regional integration and the realities of restrictive immigration practices. Ultimately, it calls for a nuanced understanding of migration that prioritises the rights of migrant workers and advocates for comprehensive governance frameworks to address exploitation and uphold human rights. This reflection contributes to the discourse on migration governance, highlighting the need for a collaborative approach that involves both state and non-state actors to effectively navigate the complexities of migration in the context of globalisation.

Key words

globalisation; immigration; migrants; Africa; migration, globalisation, socio-economic dynamics, migration policies, regional integration, human rights, governance frameworks

Introduction

In Africa, much of the migration movements take place within the continent, as opposed to previously held notions of Africans migrating mostly out of Africa (IOM, 2024; Crawley and Teye, 2024; Flahaux and De Haas, 2016). Short-distance mobility is a defining feature of migration across the continent, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of intra-African movements occur between nations sharing a land border. The high frequency of transitory or circular labour migration is reflected in the bi-directionality of various intra-African routes, such as those connecting Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, or Zimbabwe and South Africa (IOM 2024, 31). As Flahaux and De Haas (2016:9) assert the highest intra-continental emigration intensities are typically found in inland West African nations (such as Burkina Faso and Mali), certain Southern African nations and West Africa itself. They further contend that this tendency to have higher average emigration intensities appears to be related to the region's abundance of smaller nations, both in terms of population and land area.

In Western Africa, Côte d'Ivoire is a major destination for labour migrants due to the region's substantial demand for workers in agriculture and construction. In Southern Africa, numerous causes have affected modern economic migration. One of the main causes of economic migration continues to be the demand for labour in the region's diverse economies, particularly in main urban areas in South Africa and Botswana (UNCTAD, 2019). Besides economic factors, migration in Africa is also driven by conflicts, violence, natural disasters and climate change. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR's) 2024 planning figures, nearly 50 million people have been forcibly displaced in Sub-Saharan Africa. Of these, the vast majority are refugees to neighbouring countries (UNHCR, 2024). Furthermore, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicates that in 2022 more than seven million people were internally displaced in Africa due to natural disasters, while up to 40 million are expected to migrate within their countries by 2050 because of climate change (IOM, 2024).

This article is designed to provide a comprehensive and more nuanced understanding of the links between globalisation, described as the increased and rapid global trade in commodities, money, people and ideas in the world, and the dynamics of intra-African migration. The focus of this article is labour migration, defined as the movement of persons with the aim of employment or income-bringing activities (Oso *et al.*, 2022:17). Generally, the discourse around African migration is framed in developmental terms to emphasise the nexus between migration and development, as well as the positive effects of remittances and diaspora-driven foreign direct investments on poverty reduction (Teye, 2022; Ratha, 2013). Beyond these approaches, a growing body of literature describes the material disparity amongst working-class migrants from the Global South who fill labour demand in the Global North. However, relationships between South-South migration and socio-economic imbalances, gender inequalities, labour exploitation and environmental degradation are often overlooked and ignored. The emphasis on the relationships between migration and inequality in the context of Africa does not exclude prominent roles played by recognised actors such as states and other international institutions which this study focuses on in relation to their impact on the continental migration processes (i.e. documentation, border control, limitation of rights, etc.).

Urbanisation, poverty and migration

Between the mid-1990s and the 2000s, Africa's economies were amongst the fastest growing worldwide. The sustained expansion of Africa's average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through financial liberalisation and increase in the region's merchandise trade was remarkable progress in economic development, which was praised in 2013 by *The Economist* in an article that labelled Africa the "rising continent". According to the African Development Bank (AfDB) (2024a), Africa is expected to develop at a faster rate than the global average of 3.2% in 2024, which will keep the continent in its 2023 position as the second-fastest growing area after Asia.

The processes of globalisation and liberalisation have resulted in the concentration of economic activities in large cities. In Africa between 1990 and 2018 the employment share of agriculture decreased from 60% to 42% and workers moved from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs (*ibid.*). Agglomeration economies and growing returns to scale are frequently linked to urbanisation and, therefore, cities and metropolitan areas play an important role in attracting foreign direct investment (Beri *et al.*, 2022). In 2019, the urbanisation rate in Africa was projected at 43%, lower than the rate in the rest of the world (58%), while the urban population growth was the fastest globally. By 2030, six African cities, Cairo, Lagos, Kinshasa, Johannesburg, Luanda and Dar es Salaam, are expected to be amongst the world's 41 megacities with more than 10 million inhabitants (ISS African Futures, 2024).

Perhaps more significant is the fact that an increasing number of Africans currently migrate to urban areas to avoid the poverty and desolation of rural life, rather than in response to work opportunities in the manufacturing sector, which would enhance productivity. The share of intra-African manufacturing trade as a portion of all African trade has remained consistently below 15% in recent years, thus offering limited job opportunities through industrialisation (Kavei and Mbambo, 2023). As a result of the lack of formal employment, poverty is urbanising and the number of slum dwellers could triple by 2050 (ISS African Futures, 2024).

Despite economic growth and the increased value of Africa's merchandise trade, the lack of structural transformation continues to widen income and wealth inequalities in the continent -- with Southern Africa being the most unequal region. For example, in 2023, nearly 50% of Africa's cumulative GDP was contributed by five countries: South Africa, Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria and Ethiopia (AfDB, 2024a). Inequality provides incentives for international migration and characterises the negative relationship between growth and poverty reduction (Chancel *et al.,* 2023). Through privatisation, deregulation of economic activities and liberalisation, the neoliberal paradigm has produced an unequal development which has deepened asymmetries between nations and regions and increased social inequality (Delgado Wise *et al.,* 2013). To explain the effects of trade liberalisation on employment, Theron *et al.,* (2007) argue that the state of unemployment in South Africa has not much improved during the trade liberalisation era. Concurrently, there has been a shift in the employment structure, with a decrease in formal work. An unknown number of low-skilled workers, essentially unprotected by labour law, provide services to the formal economy. According to Carella (2024:590), the majority of labour markets in the Global South experience high levels of informality. For migrant workers, large informal sectors are both dangerous and attractive. These sectors include female-dominated labour intensive services (i.e. street trading, hairdressing, domestic work) and agricultural jobs which, in Africa, provide employment to nearly 50% and 40% of migrant workers, respectively (Mutava, 2023).

The discourse around the feminisation of migration gives prominence to migrant women and recognises that they do not only migrate to follow their families and husbands but also move independently. Women are active and independent agents in migration and for this reason there is a need for more sex-disaggregated data which is often absent in official governmental statistics. In Sub-Saharan Africa between 1990 and 2020, the female share of international migrants has remained almost stable from 47.2% to 47.1% (UNDESA, 2024). However, patterns are different depending on geographic areas. For example, in Southern Africa, during the same period the percentage has increased from 39.7 to 43.3, respectively (*ibid*). The drivers of female migration are multiple: some women migrate in order to escape discrimination and oppressive cultural norms; others run away from abusive relationships. Migrant women face numerous challenges and are at greater risk (a double disadvantage) because of their gender and status. They face exploitative working conditions and are often employed in low-paid sectors such as care, domestic jobs and agriculture (Jinnah, 2020).

Low-skilled migrants make up the majority of modern labour migration in Africa, which is mostly focused in industries such as agriculture, domestic service and informal trade. In Western Africa, for instance, a sizable portion of migrants from Burkina Faso work in the region's agricultural sector, primarily in Côte d'Ivoire (Dabiré and Soumahoro, 2024). Similarly, in Southern Africa the demand for services has become a major pull factor for low-skilled intra-regional migration. The decline in migrants from Malawi, Lesotho and Mozambique travelling to work on South African mines, as well as the casualisation of the sector, have resulted in job losses and in the widespread involvement of migrant workers in labour-intensive and unregulated economic sectors. For example, domestic work has opened up economic prospects for low-skilled migrant women from Lesotho to work in South Africa (UNCTAD, 2019). In the largest cities of Southern Africa, domestic work is the most prevalent paid occupation for women, followed by commerce, hawking and vending. Consequently, women's involvement in the informal sector is precarious and uncertain. Socio-economic inequalities and the lack of legal avenues for labour migration across the region have also increased irregular migration involving migrants from outside the region, most notably from the Horn of Africa. This has resulted in a proliferation of urban-based informal economic activities and atypical employment relationships.

Furthermore, there is a strong link between urbanisation, poverty and food insecurity. For example, in West Africa, decades of neoliberal policies which removed agricultural subsidies and reduced tariffs on imported grains, have favoured the movements of young men from farming households to urban areas (Mosley *et al.*, 2010). The high rate of urbanisation, coupled with the lack of employment opportunities and decent jobs, have several implications for the provision of basic services and food directed to migrants and their families. A study conducted in Mali found that compared to households in rural areas, those in urban areas are less food secure

(Macalou *et al*., 2023). Due to the high costs associated with urban life, impoverished families are compelled to compromise on food quality and quantity in order to make ends meet, which leads to food insecurity.

The drivers of labour migration and economic globalisation

Macro structural approaches contend that understanding labour migration requires a global perspective. Structuralist theories view capital and labour mobility as intertwined whereby the growth of export-led agriculture and manufacturing is connected to foreign direct investment flows, which disrupts traditional occupational and social structures and fuels both intra-regional and extra-continental migration in Africa (UNCTAD, 2019). As De Haas (2014:11) argues, historical-structural theories place a strong emphasis on how corporations and governments shape migration, and they typically view labour migration as a source of cheap labour that can be exploited to further the interests of the wealthy and perpetuate social and geographic inequality. For instance, the dual labour-market theory developed by Piore (1979) sees migration as an intrinsic process of capitalist accumulation rooted in the labour demands of modern industrial societies. This theory postulates that demand pressures generated in the primary sectors of the labour markets of more developed countries stimulate the supply of international labour migration from less-developed countries. The primary labour market (centre) is occupied by professionals and skilled workers with secure and high-paying jobs, while the secondary sector (periphery) is characterised by low-wage occupations, employment insecurity, low levels of unionisation and poor working conditions. In this context, the labour migration system depends on structures of power and economic inequalities whereby an array of actors, including government recruiters, employers, businesses, as well as international organisations, actively shape migration processes (De Haas 2021:7).

Similarly, the world-systems theory developed by Wallerstein (1974) argues that migration is a natural consequence of globalisation. According to this theory, migration is a result of the upheavals and dislocations that come with capitalist development (Massey *et al*., 1993). Wallerstein divided the world into core countries, semi-periphery countries and periphery countries. This third category includes most African states which rely on the export of primary commodities and are exploited by dominant capitalist countries. Rapanyane and Shai (2022) observed that core states also take advantage of semi-peripheral states much like the peripheral states, but the periphery is also exploited by the semi-peripheral nations. Furthermore, the peripheries that are successfully integrating into the global economy and achieving a sustained increase in their level of international competitiveness appear to be functioning as new growth hubs that draw in both labour and capital (Kay 1998:11). In the context of postcolonial Africa, South Africa is noted by Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan (1998:169) as a dominant state that politically and economically fits the concept of a semi-peripheral state in the world system, having contradictory functions as both "exploiter" and "exploited". Similarly, Theron *et al.* (2007) argued that South Africa has played an intermediary role in trade negotiations between the industrial powers of the North (core) and the various clusters of the least-developed African countries (periphery).

One of the key propositions of the structuralist paradigm is the notion of *unequal exchange*. Originally elaborated by Emmanuel (1972) the unequal exchange theory proposes that international trade between core and peripheral countries causes a systematic transfer of surplus value from the former to the latter. Because of this unequal distribution of advantages from international trade, core nations that export industrial commodities benefit while peripheral countries that export raw materials are penalised (Ricci, 2019:3). Growing migration to core countries is linked to the peripheries' integration into the global capitalist expansion process. Global economic interconnectedness urges scholars to redefine the concept of Global North and Global South beyond a geographical classification and towards a "North–South distinction [that] transcends equatorial divisions and development indexes" (Carella, 2024:588). In a global world, states experiencing economic growth and demographic transition benefit from improved infrastructures, increased trade and information exchanges with the core nations.

Migration management and the migration-development nexus

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by all UN member states in 2015, listed migration as one of the instruments to promote inclusive growth (United Nations, 2017). The overall euphoria that permeates the discussion surrounding the relationship between migration and development has prompted policymakers to harmonise their approaches to international migration, harnessing migration for development. This further cemented the relationship between migration and development. In this context, Africa's wider agreement on migration and development-related issues is reflected in the African Common Position on Migration and Development which states that "migration can be an effective tool for development by enhancing income distribution, promoting productive work for growth and enhancing women empowerment"

(African Union, 2006:4). It further urges member states, among other things, to mainstream migration into their development plans and to harmonise their laws with international conventions. Aligned with neoliberal policies and rooted in neoclassical economic theories, the migration-development nexus highlights the benefits of migration for all, that is for countries of origin, destination and the migrants themselves -- the so-called triple win scenario (Delgado-Wise *et al*., 2013). Generally, the discourse around African migration is framed in developmental terms to emphasise the nexus between migration and development, as well as the positive effects of remittances and diaspora-driven foreign direct investments on poverty reduction. Despite this newfound optimism, the connection between migration and development is neither straightforward nor free from criticism. Some authors (Gordon, 2010; Delgado-Wise *et al.,* 2013) argue that the purported benefits of migration and remittances as development accelerators in countries of origin are not supported by empirical data. Instead, the majority of the funds seem to go toward consumption without addressing development constraints. Moreover, evidence shows that remittances can increase inequalities among different communities and regions and are not always directed to the poorest areas or to those who are in greater need of them (Skeldon, 2007).

In capitalist production, neoliberal policies create a bipolarisation of the labour force and subordinate migration to the needs of capital. On the one hand, highly paid skilled workers are hired for management work while, on the other hand, a large pool of less mobile unskilled workers is recruited through temporary programmes which offer a restricted set of rights. In many ways, the interventions of both state and non-state actors reinforce global hierarchies which distinguish between those migrants who are 'acceptable' and those who are 'not acceptable' (undesirable). For instance, national governments exercise their influence to promote the interests of 'knowledge migrants'[1] to the detriment of other categories such as undocumented migrants. Relatedly, Duvell (2003) argues that the discourse around global migration management reinforces a capitalist and imperialist approach aimed at separating productive and unproductive individuals. Powerful actors that play a constructive role in the discourse around migration management include both states and non-state actors. For instance, the IOM has been instrumental in the development of the revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2018-2030) that assists member states in the development and implementation of sound migration policies and institutional frameworks.

In this context, the globalisation of migration processes has increased the role and activities of non-state actors (Geiger and Pécoud, 2014) but has also raised some concerns about their underlying policy objectives, as well as about the intersection between migrant mobilisation and political agency. This raises the question, are these bodies an extension of the regulatory arm of states, or do they rather operate as migrants' protectors?

Dini (2018) examined the role of the IOM in the management of borders and migration governance using Djibouti as a case study. The author asserts that the IOM's practices extend from being a neutral service provider to the endorsement and reification of pre-existing political authority. Evidently, the IOM's border practices have emerged as a tool for the implementation of sovereign power and the institutionalisation of a state of exception in the host state. The organisation is deeply engaged with and supports local institutions and the state in the dialectic of admission and exclusion of the undesirable (undocumented migrants). Geiger and Pécoud (2017) highlight that the aspiration to make planned and well-managed migration policies effective tools for development is a 'secondary agenda', subordinate to security and control issues.

Labour migration governance and regional integration

The relationship between globalisation and migration highlights the asymmetry and liberal dilemma of open borders. Despite the advancements in communication technology and transportation associated with the process of globalisation, overall international migration rates have declined (Czaika and De Haas 2014). According to Flahaux and De Haas (2016) the reason for a declining intra-continental migration intensity, since African states gained independence, lies with immigration restrictions and a rise in nationalism. This begs the question about why many countries still have high immigration barriers when trade barriers have dropped significantly.

The African continent has made significant progress in trade liberalisation and promoting free movement of persons. The Common African Position on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration represents the expression of the continent's migration aspirations. It is built on the premise that "human mobility and free movement of all persons within the continent constitute one of the pillars of an integrated Africa" (African Union, 2017). In accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union adopted Agenda 2063, which serves as the main framework for Africa's economic development and political-socioeconomic integration. One of the major steps toward continental integration is the adoption in 2018 of the protocol on the free movement of persons in Africa. The protocol comprises three phases to be progressively implemented, namely right of entry, right of residence and right of establishment.[2] Furthermore, in 2019, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) moved into its operational phase and is expected to be one of the largest global single markets with a collective GDP of US$2.5 trillion and consumer and business spending of more than US$4 trillion. Despite having reached the minimum required threshold of ratification, the AfCFTA is still lagging behind due to inadequate infrastructure, the lack of transportation networks, as well as the delays in the agreement among member states over trade technical issues.

An agreement which facilitates imports and exports among member countries with free access to the market and the removal of trade barriers can boost economic growth by attracting foreign investments and improving efficiency and competitiveness. Research shows that, on average, developing countries gain from free trade due to lower prices of agricultural and manufacturing goods (Artuc *et al*., 2019). Nonetheless, international trade can also generate negative socio-economic externalities widening the income gap, increasing inequality as well as affecting migration processes. For example, it might increase competitiveness in domestic markets to the detriment of local producers who lack capital and technological innovations. A comparative study conducted in the Gambia, Ivory Coast and Mali found that the neoliberal policy reform on food production led to a flood of cheap grains on local markets, leaving them exposed to the economic shocks of global food crisis (Moseley *et al*., 2010). Indeed, it is recognised that free trade lowers the earnings of workers in the sectors exposed to imports. If countries do not have the institutional and financial resources to address the negative impact on labour force participation and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the advantages of free trade may not be distributed fairly. One of the biggest issues facing many emerging countries is the lack of labour mobility between sectors (Kavei and Mbambo, 2023:260). Currently, the least productive industries in Africa (with relative productivity of 1 or lower) include personal services, retail, wholesale and agriculture, which together employ two-thirds of the labour population. Merely one-third of the labour force is engaged in industries where productivity surpasses the average for the entire economy. This shows that the reallocation of workers between sectors may have some potential to increase overall productivity (AfDB, 2024a).

At regional level, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has taken several steps to promote trade liberalisation in the region, and in 2008 member states agreed to establish a SADC Free Trade Area and remove tariffs on trade against each other. Earlier, in 2002, the governments of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Eswatini signed the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) Agreement creating a single customs territory. [3] The SACU Agreement, however, does not make provision for the free movement of labour. Trade within Africa, regional integration and the creation of policies with a progressive elimination of obstacles to the free movement of capital and labour, goods and services amongst member states are key priorities of this continental agenda. Notwithstanding the aspirations for political and economic integration and the steps to create an integrated migration policy framework, African states are trapped in a liberal paradox, where “international economic forces (trade, investment and migration) have been pushing states towards greater openness, while the international state system and powerful (domestic) political forces push states towards greater closure” (Hollifield, 2004:886). So far, the liberal discourse of freeing the movement of persons within the African continent has not yet replaced securitised and restrictive domestic immigration policies towards certain groups of immigrants.

According to the AfDB (2024b), several countries have implemented beneficial visa reforms in the direction of a more open continent. However, the “paradoxical misalignment between countries’ visa openness and support for facilitating intra-African travel, reveals the reluctance of states towards easing the movement of persons within the continental integration agenda” (*ibid*:43). Gordon (2010:1110) attempts to offer an explanation for the sharp contrast between the limitations placed on people’s freedom of movement and the relative ease of mobility associated with globalisation for capital, goods and investments. She argues that free trade and free movement of labour are not substitutes and above all “the flow of human beings has political, cultural, social and economic effects that differ from the flow of money and goods and these effects play out politically in distinct ways”. Furthermore, she contends a difference between these two provisions is the weak global system that governs the free movement of people as opposed to the strong framework that governs the circulation of goods and services. In general, labour agreements are more restrictive than trade agreements, exclude low-wage workers and prefer bilateralism over regionalism and multilateralism (*ibid*:2010). Liberalisation of trade, goods and services on one side, and the restrictions in low-skilled workers’ movements on the other side, reveal the skewed and exploitative nature of globalisation.

Regional agreements such as the SADC and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocols on free movement of persons provide their citizens with the right to free entry into another member state without a visa, the right to seek permanent and temporary residence and establishment, and access to employment in the host country. However, free movement on the continent is hindered by socio-economic and political barriers which brings to the fore the underlying tensions between national legislative frameworks and regional integration activities. Furthermore, the introduction of new technologies and digitisation of immigration processes have resulted in more burdensome travel arrangements for some African citizens (AfDB, 2024b). Another issue hampering regional migration governance is the protectionist approach of member states and the lack of political commitment around the enforcement of workers' rights. The reluctance to adhere to the 2008 International Labour Organization (ILO) Decent Work Agenda and the disappointing rate of ratification of international conventions are two examples that highlight how member states are unable to create a policy environment in which the rights of all workers, including migrants, are protected.

Globalisation, international labour migration and the rights of migrants

Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa is largely intra-regional and driven by the neoliberal modes of production that have come to dominate national, regional and global economies (Crawley and Teye, 2024:3). Deregulation and neoliberal globalisation have led to the growing exploitation and increasing vulnerability of migrant workers. Both in the Global North and the Global South, precarisation of employment and a reduction in social and labour rights for low-skilled migrants are characteristics of globalised society (Schierup *et al.*, 2014). 'Precarious' or 'non-standard' forms of employment are "terms which include most jobs that tends to offer less security than standard employment relationship with respect to hours, earnings and benefits" (Vosko *et al.*, 2003:39).

Jinnah (2020) has further explored the notion of *precarity* as a conceptual framework to explain the intersection between migration and low-waged work in the Global South. In her work on migrant domestic workers in South Africa she provides a conceptual framing of *precarity* as a negotiated and survivalist strategy to secure livelihoods. She defined *precarity* as "the existence of a class of workers (precariat) characterised by a sense of instability and vulnerability" (Jinnah, 2020:211). The notion of *precariat* introduced by Guy Standing (2012) further defines a multitude of individuals subject to insecure and flexible labour relations whose rights and entitlements are limited. Flexible labour markets create a structural demand for migrant labour whose movements are regulated through temporary worker programmes. Such programmes only grant a limited range of rights in comparison to those of native workers (Gordon, 2010). Ruhs and Martin (2008) contend that the necessity of the economy justifies denying equal rights to temporary low-skilled workers. They contend that there is, in fact, a 'trade-off', or an inverse link, between the rights granted to migrants and the number of migrants working in low-skilled professions in high-income nations. This raises the question whether temporary migrants "are better off because they are more likely to be employed, or less well off because they endure poorer working conditions" (Fauvelle-Aymar, 2015:14).

In South Africa, low-skilled SADC migrant workers have benefitted from regularisation programmes targeting irregular migrants and former refugees. In a similar way, low-skilled migrants in the agricultural sector have benefitted from bilateral agreements to regulate the demand for labour. Mauritius also actively recruits foreign workers through bilateral temporary work programmes to meet labour needs. Temporary migrant workers are employed in labour-intensive sectors of the economy such as sugarcane production, fishing, construction and manufacturing.

There is evidence that the perceived and/or real advantages and costs associated with migrant worker protection -- which may be social, political, cultural, economic or other -- are the driving forces behind the lack of political agreement in the SADC area over the standards for migrant worker protection. Perhaps, as suggested elsewhere (Ruhs, 2012), the development of a list of fundamental rights for migrant labourers to supplement current international legal instruments might help member states achieve their objectives and ease receiving nations' concerns about potential negative economic effects. Furthermore, the Transnational Labor Citizenship model (Gordon, 2010:1144) which established cross-border networks of migrants could help link the right to migrate for work to a commitment by migrants and governments to enforce baseline workplace standards in destination countries.

Conclusion

The dynamics of migration in Africa are deeply intertwined with the forces of globalisation, trade and labour, which have significant implications for inequality and human rights. The continent's economic development and urbanisation have led to a concentration of economic activities in large cities, driving internal migration from rural areas to urban centres in search of employment opportunities. The urbanisation process has also led to a rise in poverty and food insecurity, particularly for migrant families. The relationship between migration and development is complex, with the discourse often emphasising the positive effects of remittances and diaspora-driven investments on poverty reduction. However, empirical data shows that this relationship depends on large structural factors which generate a demand for migrant labour. It also highlights the need for greater protection of migrant workers' rights in the face of increasing precarity and exploitation. Furthermore, the liberal paradox of open borders and free trade juxtaposed with immigration restrictions reflects the challenges of achieving regional integration and free movement of labour. While regional agreements exist to facilitate labour migration, the lack of political commitment and protectionist approaches hinder the realisation of these principles in practice. In this context, the rights of migrant workers must be prioritised, and the development of comprehensive frameworks for labour migration governance is crucial to ensure that migration is not only a tool for economic growth but also a means to uphold human rights and reduce inequality in the continent.

The development of a list of fundamental rights for migrant labourers to supplement current international legal instruments might help member states achieve their objectives and address the concerns of receiving nations about potential negative economic effects, thereby promoting development and trade. Furthermore, the Transnational Labor Citizenship model, as proposed by Gordon (2010), establishes cross-border networks of migrants that could link the right to migrate for work to a commitment by migrants and governments to enforce baseline workplace standards in destination countries. It is not only the process of policy formulation and the role played by sovereign states that deserve more attention, but also the direct involvement of international non-state actors involved in practices of migration management that requires thoughtful analysis. Further research could, for example, investigate the political context in which international agencies operate, their social legitimacy to participate in policy formulation and how their function can be ascertained in relation to an inter-state and regional approach to migration and to the international government of borders.

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ENDNOTES

[1] According to the Dutch government, a knowledge migrant is one who has graduated with a Master's degree or PhD from a university ranked in one of the recognised World University Rankings, who obtained this higher degree not more than three years ago (or graduated from a Dutch University). Additionally, the knowledge migrant should earn at least 51,239 Euros per annum (or 37,575 Euros if younger than 30 years). This income criterion does not apply to a person who is admitted for doctoral studies at a Dutch university, or if the person is fulfilling a medical residency as a specialist. This information is difficult to find and changes frequently.

[2] To date, 32 member states have signed the Protocol and only four countries have ratified it (15 are needed for the Protocol to enter into force).

[3] Founded in 1910, SACU is the world's oldest customs union comprising Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Eswatini, South Africa.

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