

## **Extract from 'Modes of governing global migration' (Gamlen and Marsh, 2012)**

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A new phase in migration policy-making has emerged in recent years. States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alike are increasingly directing their efforts towards cooperative management of transnational flows and networks, in the hope of thereby promoting development for all. This transnational turn is at the heart of innovative currents in the global governance of migration; currents that contrast markedly with many older areas of migration policy, where inter-state cooperation remains marred by impasse and disagreement. Our aim in this anthology is to explore the rise of this distinctive new dynamic in relation to other pre-existing and emergent modes of governing global migration.

Unlike other global flows, migration lacks a dedicated multilateral institutional framework, but this is not to say that it lacks global governance *per se*. Rather, as Alexander Betts puts it, migration is governed by a 'fragmented tapestry of overlapping, parallel and nested institutions' at the global level (Betts 2011: 2). This multilayered patchwork is more thickly woven for some forms of migration than others ...

### **Key concepts: global, governance and migration**

Our threefold framework is underpinned by distinctive understandings of 'global', 'governance' and 'migration'; each of which are the subject of rich and diverse literatures in their own right. The term 'global' can be broadly understood as a geographical scale encompassing dynamics of world-wide extent. However, the concept of scale is itself slippery; at one end of the spectrum, scales are often understood simplistically as hierarchically nested levels: the local is contained within the national, which is in turn subsumed by the international ... At the other end of the spectrum, geographers have insisted on sophisticated and elaborate understandings of scale, rejecting the assumption of neatly separate, static containers of social interaction, and arguing that scales are in fact overlapping, socially constructed and dynamic (Brenner 1999). In line with this approach, this volume illustrates that global migration governance is not simply synonymous with the international system, but is instead intertwined with and constituted by processes involving multiple geographical scales – including an emergent transnational scale.

Two central features of 'governance', as a type of political organization, are plurality and self-organization (cf. Finkelstein 1995; Rosenau 1995: 14). First, governance involves the interaction of a diverse array of traditional and non-traditional political actors. Nation-states are crucial players within global governance, as we emphasize in our sections on the national and international modes of migration governance. But they are not the only players: NGOs, corporations and various networks and 'communities' also play an increasingly important role. Second, governance entails self-organizing interactions among these actors. In this sense, governance can be distinguished from government by the absence of an overarching central authority (Betts 2011: 4). As Rosenau (1995: 14) states, governance is 'the process whereby an organization or society steers itself' ...

Though at first glance it is the simplest of the three main concepts at issue here, the term 'migration' in fact comes with its own baggage. To begin with, there are many types of migration ... In this anthology we focus on the governance of international labour migration, because this is the most under-researched area. At the same time, we avoid the common mistake of equating migration and migration policy with immigration and immigration ...

## **The national mode**

What we call the national mode of regulating global migration revolves around the nation-state – that form of political organization which is defined by a population nominally sharing a distinctive national identity and territory, governed by a more or less unitary bureaucracy (e.g. see Gottmann 1973; Hartshorne 1950). The idea of global migration governance is often set up in explicit distinction from national regulation of migration, but this distinction is to some extent false: migration, unlike most other global flows, is still almost exclusively regulated at the national level, and discussions of global migration governance must therefore take this as a starting point. This is not to suggest that the nation-state can be taken as a given ... Indeed, the problems and limitations associated with the national mode of governing migration are the primary catalysts to current debates about global migration governance.

What is distinctive about how nation-states regulate population movement? From our perspective, the central mechanism through which nation-states regulate migration is the boundary: the intricate but imperfect membrane that separates the 'inside' of the nation-state, with its ordered symmetry of identity, territory and political authority, from the 'outside', the realm of relatively anarchic interactions among other such nominally self-contained nation-state units (Morehouse 2004; Walker 1993). Boundaries can be defined by their functions (see Agnew 2008); for example as barriers, natural phenomena, filters, expressions of nationalism, points of conflict or alternatively of contact and cooperation, or as contexts in themselves (Morehouse 2004). As Morehouse puts it, 'in their most basic forms, boundaries locate difference through establishing identity and mediating flows' (2004: 20). Yet boundaries are not only defined in the abstract, but also by and through the techniques and activities used to protect them (Pickering and Weber 2006b: 209): through 'boundary maintenance', to use Frederik Barth's term (1969)

But boundaries are inherently fallible: they perform these functions only imperfectly. At one level, this reflects their simplicity as a membrane through which flows pass and are filtered: there is only so much they can do to paper over the reality that migration, like birth and death, has always defined human populations. Humanity cannot be parcelled into static, homogenous blocks. The simple existence of migration is itself a challenge to the 'interdependence sovereignty' of the nation-state. At another level, however, the fallibility of national boundaries is a reflection of their dynamic complexity: different processes can conflict and undermine each other, especially when defined and implemented in complex political environments, by elaborate bureaucratic conglomerates ...

## **Migration and territory**

The articles we have selected for the section on migration and territory illustrate three main points. First, they highlight how modern nation-states are primarily concerned with regulating *inflows* rather than *outflows* – although exit controls of various kinds have been more important in previous periods. Second, the articles expose as simplistic the notion of the territorial border as a fixed and uniform *physical* barrier to entry, and instead emphasize a more nuanced concept of bordering, one that incorporates intricate and uneven processes of documenting, differentiating and filtering populations. And third, these articles begin to highlight the *fallibility* of territorial border controls – a point that reoccurs throughout the literature on nation-state efforts to regulate migration ...

## **Migration and the nation**

... In order to understand the ‘boundary maintenance’ practices (Barth 1969) through which nation-states regulate migration, we should therefore examine not only territorial border controls, but also the citizenship regimes through which nation-states control access to membership, belonging and rights. In this section we shift from a focus on the management of spatial entrance and exit using physical barriers, to the regulation of membership, including through what Xiang Biao terms ‘temporal borders’ (Xiang 2011): that is, mechanisms such as administrative processing periods, time-limited entry permits, and residence thresholds for the acquisition of status and entitlements ...

## **Migration and the state**

Until now we have focused on the dynamic and multilayered processes underpinning territorial borders and citizenship regimes, avoiding the question of how these diverse components of nation-state boundaries are actually coordinated. This question draws attention to the role of the state in formulating and implementing migration policies. Avoiding the oft-committed realist error of depicting the state as a unitary and neutral instrument of government policy (see, for example, Gilpin 1984), this section presents articles highlighting the need to disaggregate the state into an array of overlapping and competing institutions and practices that not only implement and mediate different political orientations towards migration, but also actively formulate them (see, for example, Checkel 1998; Smith 2006). Indeed, this complex and uneven process in part explains the central paradox explored in this section of the anthology; that is, the persistent failure of liberal states to regulate migration effectively, even as efforts to do so become increasingly central to the defining aims of these states ...

## **The international mode**

Often when people talk about global migration governance, they have in mind what we refer to as the ‘international’ mode of governing migration. They begin from the premise of international relations, of a world portioned into nation-states that are internally ordered but externally anarchic, and they seek to understand how migration is implicated in the rules and processes surrounding conflict and cooperation among these bounded nation-state units (for discussion see, for example, Agnew 2001). In contrast, we

see this as only the most visible tip of what global migration governance entails, and accordingly we dedicate equal space to other modes of governing migration.

Still, there is no denying that the international system, as a counterpoise to the nation-state, is crucial to the notion of global migration governance. Supporters of greater international cooperation dispute the claim that migration control must remain the sole prerogative of nation-states, arguing instead that migration is a global problem requiring a global solution (Ghosh 2000; Koser 2010; Martin et al. 2006). However, while national and international modes of governing migration differ in the extent to which nation-states act autonomously or as members of a group, they converge on the more fundamental point that nation-states remain the primary units of political organization; the 'abstract individuals' whose actions facilitate or inhibit international migration.

We identify three levels of international migration governance: the bilateral level, through arrangements between two countries over the regulation of migration in the 'corridor' connecting them; the regional level, through arrangements among groups of countries interconnected by migration flows; and the level of the entire international system, involving both institutionalized cooperation between states, as well as more informal multilateral arrangements. We suggest that while progress has been relatively slow in the more formal areas of multilateral cooperation, there has been a proliferation in bilateral, regional and informal multilateral structures. This speaks of a growing recognition of the limitations of unilateralism, but also of the ongoing reluctance of states to relinquish sovereignty over migration decision-making ...

## **The transnational mode**

Transnationalism refers to the 'economic, social and political linkages between people, places and institutions crossing nation-state borders' (Vertovec 2009: 1). In this section we point to the emergence of a transnational approach as a kind of middle-way between the national and international modes of global migration governance. This approach has its conceptual roots in 'the new migration and development optimism' (Gamlen 2010): a neoliberal reassessment of the role of states in regulating market mechanisms such as migration. In place of the regulatory abstinence prescribed by classic *laissez-faire* economic liberalism, neoliberal approaches preach an ideal mix of private sector-led economic growth, supported by state infrastructural investment and robust but fiscally sustainable social policies.

Central to this regulatory approach is the aim of optimizing the 'externalities' of market processes (including various forms of migration): the costs or benefits that are not directly reflected in the price of particular goods or services. This involves interventions to support and amplify positive externalities, and to dampen negative externalities or 'market failures'. In the case of migration, externalities include costs or benefits not directly borne by the migrant. Positive externalities include the contributions migrants make to countries of destination, and the remittances, investments and ideas that migrants transmit back to communities of origin. Negative externalities include the political divisions that long-term settlement can exacerbate in destination communities, and the brain drains and 'brawn drains' (Penninx 1982: 793) they can cause in origin countries.

The new migration and development optimism recommends cultivating positive externalities (in the form of remittances) through infrastructural support and 'light touch' regulation, while discouraging and dampening negative externalities (in the form of unintended permanent settlement) through temporary labour migration programmes and policies of 'engaging the diaspora'. As long as a coherent mix of the appropriate policies are in place, the new optimism holds that migration will tend to benefit migrants as well as their origin and destination communities ...