

Position Paper: A Migration, Business & Society Network

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ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The Migration, Business & Society Network seeks to establish itself as a global network of scholars, business practitioners, experts from the non-profit sector, and policy makers dedicated to the generation, exchange, and dissemination of knowledge on migration.

The founding members are based at the Vienna University of Economics and Business. Our cosigners and endorsers come from across the world, a range of disciplines, and professional backgrounds.

VISION

We understand migration as a global phenomenon embedded in economic, cultural, socio-psychological, legal, and political contexts, with important implications for the activities, strategies, structures, and decision-making processes of firms. The intersection between migration, business, and society is germane to practitioners (ergo, to most of our students' presents and futures). As business scholars, we hold it our responsibility to produce meaningful knowledge and engage in impactful teaching. We strive to achieve this by collecting and analyzing insights on migration from various disciplines and opening a dialogue with decision makers outside of academia.

BACKGROUND

The absolute number of international migrants has significantly increased over the past five decades. However, the world's population has also undergone extraordinary growth, which renders the relative number of cross-border migrants remarkably constant at around 3.5%. This means that most people still reside in their countries of origin. If global migration is not accelerating at an alarming rate, why should business practitioners and scholars bother?

The answer lies in both the current context and emerging trends. First, global migration patterns have changed drastically since the mid-20th century in geography and direction (climacteric shifts from traditionally migrant-sending to migrant-receiving countries and dramatic increases in domestic migration in big economies such as China and India), composition (much greater ethnic diversity, different social stratifications, and legal differentiation of migrant populations), and educational levels (notable increases in highly skilled migrants).¹ Secondly, economic immigration policies have consistently become less restrictive, with governments across all levels of development relying on labor migration as a growth strategy.² Third, the relative stability of the 3.5% may be subverted by climate change and other ecological pressures.

In response to these changes, collaboration on migration issues has increased between intergovernmental organizations, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), and the private sector. For example, the Global Forum on Migration and Development encompasses efforts to get the private sector on board and to “enable business to play an increased role in shaping migration and skills mobility policy.”³ And the International Organization for Migration calls upon business leaders to become active in shaping perceptions about migrants within their communities and contacts.⁴ The role of business in tackling migration-specific issues is also reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN Agenda 2030, including those that refer to training and retaining health workers in developing countries (3c), ending human trafficking (5.2, 8.7, 16.2), respecting the labor rights of migrant workers (8.8), facilitating orderly and safe mobility of migrants (10.7), and providing legal identities for all (16.9).

In business and management scholarship, migration is no longer “terra incognita,” but research on it remains in a nascent state. This is also echoed in business schools’ curricula.

¹ Cf. Czaika, M., & de Haas, H. 2014. The Globalisation of Migration: Has the world become more migratory? *International Migration Review*, 48(2): 283–323; also de Haas, H., Czaika, M., Flahaux, M.-L., Mahendra, E., Natter, K., Vezzoli, S., & Villares-Varela, M. 2019. International migration: Trends, determinants, and policy effects, *Population and Development Review*, 45(4): 885–922; Vertovec, S. 2007. Super-diversity and its implications, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(6): 1024–1054; and International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2020. UN World Migration Report 2020. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf.

² de Haas, H., Natter, K., & Vezzoli, S. 2018. Growing restrictiveness or changing selection? The nature and evolution of migration policies. *International Migration Review*, 52(2): 324–367; and World Bank. 2019. Migration and Remittances. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/labormarkets/brief/migration-and-remittances>

³ Global Forum on Migration & Development. 2019. The Business Advisory Group on Migration. Retrieved from: <https://gfmdbusinessmechanism.org/>

⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2017. *Integration and social cohesion: Key elements for reaping the benefits of migration*. IOM Global Compact Thematic Paper.

We believe that migration should be at the heart of business research and that we as scholars should be at the forefront in educating (future) business practitioners and leaders about this important topic.

The close relationship between business and migration demands that business scholars join the debate on **Migration, Business & Society**.

CORE TENETS

- *Foster credible and useful research on migration in business, management, and economics*

The complications of migration “permeate the facets of psychological, organizational, economic, and managerial life that are at the core of our expertise.”⁵ Unfortunately, even the scholarly debates over migration are prone to misunderstandings and inaccuracies.⁶ Thus, it is imperative to foster credible and applicable research on migration in our disciplines, looking past self-imposed dichotomies that have prevented us from advancing our thinking about this important global phenomenon.
- *Actively collaborate with scholars from other social science fields*

To a large extent, research on migration to date has been carried out “within narrow disciplinary boundaries, reinforced by the academic and institutional landscape of most universities, which are departmentalized into discipline-based degree and research programs. Each discipline tends to bring its own epistemological orthodoxy, scale of analysis and privileged types of data.”⁷ Yet migration is “a subject that cries out for an interdisciplinary approach.”⁸ In order to embrace its full complexity and understand its implications for firms, societies, and individuals, we need to break away from the disciplinary enclosures. This implies acknowledging and building upon the enduring fundamentals of migration theory from other social science disciplines that

⁵ McGahan, A.M. 2019. Immigration and Impassioned Management Scholarship. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 29(1): 111–114.

⁶ de Haas, H. 2017. Myths of migration: Much of what we think we know is wrong [Blog Post]. Retrieved from: <http://heindehaas.blogspot.com/2017/03/myths-of-migration-much-of-what-we.html>

⁷ King, R. (2012). Theories and typologies of migration: An overview and primer. Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in *International Migration and Ethnic Relations*, 3/12.

⁸ Brettel, C. B., & Hollifield, J. F. (Eds.). 2015. Preface. *Migration theory. Talking across disciplines* (3rd ed.) London and New York: Routledge, p. xi

have dominated the field for decades: sociology, anthropology, population geography, political science, economics, and others.

- *Seek to clarify the pedagogical grounds for integrating migration issues into business and management education*

As stated in a recent Forbes article, “today’s business schools are busy teaching . . . 20th century management principles and, in effect, leading the parade towards yesterday.”⁹ The issues related to migration that businesses of all sizes face are doubtless a 21st century problem. Unfortunately, the topic of migration has yet to find its way into business schools’ curricula. The pedagogical utility of migration as a subject topic is evident. It provides a way to reshape students’ ways of thinking about the complex and often paradoxical relationships between corporations, nation states, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, and industry. As such, it is applicable at all levels of study: undergraduate, graduate, executive MBA, and doctorate.

- *Promote a compassionate and humane management of migrant workers and employees*
As noted in our vision statement, at the core of this initiative is the aim to produce knowledge that bears on the migrant experience, which inevitably finds expression in workplace, managerial, and organizational contexts as well as the broader society. We hold that migration research and teaching have the potential to contribute to real-world improvements regarding human rights, sustainability, geopolitics, and economic development. Important areas of impact include, but are not limited to: reducing workplace discrimination and stabilizing the employment opportunities for migrant workers, addressing the social sustainability challenges low-status migrants face in global value chains; raising awareness of the importance of migrant remittances in fighting inequality; reducing xenophobia while fostering diversity and inclusion; and, in line with the Brundtland Report, meeting the present and future needs of children of migrants and refugees. All these undoubtedly also have implications for the broader societies in both migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries.
- *Connect thought leaders in science with practitioners, policy makers, and activists*
For business practitioners, the presence of migrants – low- and high-status as well as international and domestic – is becoming their day-to-day reality. The private sector

⁹ Denning, S. 2018. Why Today’s Business Schools Teach Yesterday’s Expertise. Forbes, May 27.

has been involved in influencing migration and skills mobility policies.¹⁰ Businesses of all sizes are invited every year to provide their perspectives on labor market needs and economic effects of migration at the Global Forum on Migration and Development. As business and management scholars, we should also join these conversations and, more importantly, assume an active role in connecting thought leaders in science, policy, and practice. With this in mind, our network will bring together scholars from interdisciplinary backgrounds, practitioners, policy makers, and NPOs' representatives. We commit to bridging migration research and practice, hereby co-creating knowledge of direct relevance to the persistent business and social challenges of our times.

We would like to acknowledge that in preparing this position paper, we sought and received advice from human rights experts and executives from leading multinationals, including: Paul Baldassari (Executive Vice President, Flex), Judy Glaser (Global Head of Sustainability and Product Compliance for HP Inc.), Janina Kugel (former Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO), Siemens), Laura Owen (CHRO, Maxim Integrated), Jean-Christophe Deslarzes (former CHRO ABB Group; Chairman of the Board of Directors, Adecco Group), Berthold Stöger (CHRO, Semperit Group), Trine Rulffs (Emerging Market Lead, Novozymes), Gabriele Friedinger (former Head of Human Resources CEE, Western Union), Deborah Alberts (Vice President, Responsible Business Alliance), Kevin Fraklin (Chief Product Officer, ELEVATE), Shabarinath Nair (Migration Policy Specialist, International Labour Organisation), and Neill Wilkins (Head of Migrant Workers Program—Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment).

NETWORK ACTIVITIES

To achieve the vision and objectives highlighted in this position paper, we plan to engage in the following activities: hosting academic conferences/workshops, and public events (live and online) on migration, business, and society; organizing developmental seminars for scholars, especially junior faculty members; collaborating with migration centers at leading universities—to the best of our knowledge, our network initiative is the first of its kind that is based in a business school; disseminating interdisciplinary research on migration via our website; creating and collecting resources for teaching; and providing online space for sharing other relevant content.

¹⁰ The roots of more formalized active involvement can be traced back to at least 2006—the first High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development convened by the UN Secretary-General at the time, Kofi Annan, which resulted in the establishment of GFMD.