Poverty, Migration and Development: Towards A Post-Crisis Research and Policy Agenda

LAUNCH OF NEW DSA STUDY GROUP
3rd November 2010, 2-5.30pm

City Centre Seminar Room,
Geography Building, Department of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London

Brenda Yeoh (National University of Singapore)
Singapore's Changing Demography, The Crisis Of Care And Transnational Migration Under Conditions Of Rapid Globalization

Uma Kothari (University of Manchester)
The Dynamics of Immobility

Ron Skeldon (DFID Professorial Fellow and University of Sussex)
Migration and Development: The Debate Continues

Richard Black (University of Sussex)
Migration and Poverty: Will the Debate Begin?

Ruth Grove-White (Migrants Rights Network)
The New Immigration Agenda: What Scope For A Rights-Based Migration Policy?

Nearest Tube Stations: Mile End and Stepney Green. Directions to the Geography Building and the Mile End campus map can be found at: http://www.qmul.ac.uk/about/howtofindus/mileend/

If you would like to attend please email Katie Wright to reserve a place as spaces are limited: K.E.Wright@uel.ac.uk

ABSTRACTS

Brenda Yeoh (National University of Singapore)

Scholars have argued that globalisation processes have significantly altered not just the productive but reproductive sphere. Reproduction is formulated to include both biological and social reproduction, and which at the individual level requires care throughout the life-cycle –that is, from cradle to grave – in sustaining the body in its corporeal and affective aspects. At the household level, the concept of global householding (Michael Douglass) emphasizes the view that the formation and sustenance of households today is increasingly reliant on the international movement of people and transactions among household members residing in more than one national territory. Applying these notions to the context of the city-state of Singapore where a developing crisis of care (resulting essentially from the changing demographic profile, the shortages of Singapore womens reproductive labour and rigidities in the gender household division of labour) accompanies rapid globalization, this paper examines strategies of care substitution which draw on the paid and unpaid labour of different groups of transnational subjects (mainly women from less developed parts of Asia participating in what has been called the feminisation of migration'as well as the feminisation of survival)–(a) transnational domestic workers, (b)transnational careworkers in institutionalized settings, and (c) foreign brides.The paper concludes with reflections on the interdependencies between transnational migration flows in Asia as well as the gender, class and citizenship implications of these flows for an understanding of migration and social change.

Uma Kothari (University of Manchester)

While there is a large and growing literature on the relationship between migration and poverty, immobility, or staying put, is under-researched and less well understood. Moving from one set of circumstances to another has for long been a significant livelihood strategy but while the poor are often the most vulnerable to socio-economic, political and environmental change they are, paradoxically, often those with the least social and economic capital to migrate. This paper examines the notion and experiences of immobility. The paper begins with a critique of the mobilities and migration literature that privileges movements across space and focuses on the kinds of social relations, connections and livelihoods that these produce. This apparent dynamism of movement is often perceived in contradistinction to those who do not migrate and who tend to be envisaged as sedentary, place-bound, unconnected and 'incarcerated'. Thus, the experiences of those amongst the poor who stay put in an environment characterised by migration is often marginalised and misunderstood. The second part of the paper focuses on the diverse experiences of those who do not migrate. While poor people may become increasingly vulnerable through the out-migration of others, they can also benefit by becoming geographically connected through flows of, for example, ideas and finance. This paper explores these circumstances and concludes by highlighting the need to develop understandings of immobility within discourses of migration and poverty.

Ron Skeldon (DFID Professorial Fellow and University of Sussex)

It is clear that migration and development are associated. However, whether migration can be "managed" in order to achieve particular developmental goals, is much less clear. This presentation will look at how migration and development emerged as an issue towards the top of the development agenda, whether it is likely to stay there and where it may go in the post crisis world. In pursuing this trajectory, this presentation will examine key elements in the debate such as linkages between migration and the Millennium Development Goals, the re-emergence of circular

migration and concerns about developmentally-induced migration as policy issues. All our interpretations on this issue, however, will depend upon the robustness of the evidence, which ultimately depends upon the quality of our migration-related data.

Richard Black (University of Sussex)

The resurgence of academic and policy discussion of migration and development has tended towards polarised opinions: on the one hand, a view that migrant remittances and diaspora action represent a major opportunity to achieve development; on the other, a position that critiques migration and development policies as, at best, optimistic about the role that migrants can play, and at worst, representing a form of 'privatisation' or substitution of development aid. Yet the reality is that even before the current global economic crisis, migration still barely registered as an issue in poverty reduction in developing countries, and when it did, it was still viewed overwhelmingly by governments and civil societies as negative. The global economic crisis has only served to harden such negativity, even if the impact on levels of migration has been lower than many expected. This presentation explores why debate about the relationship between migration and poverty have barely started, and what might be needed in a post-crisis world to stimulate such debate.

Ruth Grove-White (Migrants Rights Network)

Under new Labour, immigration policy in the UK was developed to fit a utilitarian agenda, within which pre-determined economic and increasingly social outcomes could be pursued via increased regulation and control of immigration. This approach had significant implications, not least as a result of the relatively narrow set of interests which it sought to accommodate. The current political agenda goes further - upcoming measures which seek to substantially reduce net immigration to the UK will increase the difficulty for many of entering the UK, whilst substantially worsening the vulnerability of many migrants in the UK. These developments are likely to constrain the possibilities for migrants to exercise autonomy, and through this their ability to optimize favourable outcomes from their migration. Yet it can be expected that migrants, acting as individuals or collectively, will push back against a new wave of restrictions in the expectation or hope of recovering the space they need. This presentation will argue that the case for a rights-based approach to immigration policy, which brings migrants into the development of policy as active partners with a valid set of concerns and interests in the UK, is likely to gather support as these dynamics develop.