

‘Migration and Society: A new interdisciplinary journal – inaugural editorial,’ by Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Mette Louise Berg (UCL)

## **Migration and Society**

### **A new interdisciplinary journal – inaugural editorial**

*By* Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Mette Louise Berg

Throughout history, migration has been at the heart of the transformation of societies and communities. At the same time, changing dynamics across social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental realms have influenced processes of migration and (im)mobility around the world in different ways, including by facilitating, forcing, preventing, normalizing, criminalizing and securitizing the movement of diverse people and objects. As academic, political, policy, and popular interest in migration has increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, so too has the need to remain attentive to the long histories, wide-ranging geographies, and multiple directionalities of different forms of migration. Indeed, the growing interest in migration makes it important to continue to interrogate how, why, and with what effect different people and institutions ‘study’, ‘teach’, and ‘respond’ to migration. This includes posing questions such as: how do we, and could we, conceptualise and resist particular ways of framing migration; whose vantage points are centralized and whose are erased from view and ignored in migration studies and policies; and to what extent and how can a focus on migration stimulate more nuanced and engaged ways of being in and responding to the world around us?

It is against the backdrop of this dual recognition of the multifaceted significance of, and the increasing interest in migration, that we have founded *Migration and Society*. This peer-reviewed journal aims to situate migration, in all its complexity, in a wider historical and societal context, in a way that is committed to critical and interdisciplinary reflection and dialogue. Our vision is for *Migration and Society* to act as a forum of exchange between scholars, practitioners, and activists in and across the global North and the global South, and between the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts.

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Acknowledging and working through the importance of historical and geographical resonances, relationalities, continuities, and discontinuities in processes of migration is particularly important as a means of providing a counterpoint to the tendency in the current historical juncture for migration to be framed through a lens of historical and geographical exceptionalism and a narrative of ‘crisis’. Taken together, these work to preclude understanding, two recent examples being the so-called ‘European refugee crisis’ and the increased securitization of the US-Mexico border in response to the ‘migrant caravan’.

In this sense, we view a commitment to exploring the temporalities, spatialities, and materialities of migration and the diverse encounters that arise in, from, and through migration and (im)mobility, as being intimately related to our interest in publishing articles that are grounded in critical theoretical approaches, and attentive to the inequalities, intersecting power structures, and diverse structural barriers that so often prevent people from living meaningful lives around the world. This attentiveness, in turn, is linked with a commitment, moving forward, to working with and through diverse critical theoretical, methodological and conceptual frameworks. This may entail more actively engaging with theorists from across the global South whose work speaks to key debates related to migration (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Daley, 2018). Equally it may entail examining migration and migration encounters through concepts derived from a wide range of social, cultural, and geographical contexts, such as tracing the Arabic etymology and Qur’anic roots of a term such as ‘neighbour’ (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh, 2018; and Berg and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh’s Introduction to this issue). Engaging with such theorists and concepts may variously complement or push against the largely European and North American roots – in disciplinary, theoretical, and to a large extent empirical sense – of thinkers and concepts which have tended to underpin studies of migration. Whether through active engagement with empirical materials from spaces and places across the global South, through providing a space to listen to the voices, and bear witness to the perceptions and conceptualisations, of diversely positioned migrants and refugees, and/or through working with and through Southern, decolonial, feminist and queer theories, our vision for Migration and Society is to purposefully advance research that resists dehumanizing representations, policies, and institutions.

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Interdisciplinary approaches to research and teaching are, in turn, essential for pursuing a research agenda that grounds migration historically, socially, and geographically. As a central and defining issue of our time, we start from the premise that no singular disciplinary approach is able to fully capture, understand, and explain migration in all its complexity. Indeed, migration and mobility challenge established concepts, categories, and boundaries within and across the social sciences, grounded as they are in ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2003) and a ‘sedentarist bias’ (Malkki 1995). *Migration and Society* will act as a space to host and foster inter-, cross-, and trans-disciplinary dialogue and reflection on migration and (im)mobility in all its forms and manifestations with the aim of building bridges between the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts; and between those working on migration, diasporas, and mobilities, and those examining processes of settlement, ‘integration’, and diversity.

In line with the above, we invite submissions to *Migration and Society* that are empirically and theoretically grounded, and take a critical approach to understanding migration. It is our hope that readers will enjoy the theoretically and empirically rich research articles included in this inaugural issue themed on ‘Hospitality and hostility towards migrants: global perspectives’. The journal also includes four additional regular sections: People and Places; Reflections; Creative Encounters (edited by Yousif M. Qasmiyeh); and Book Reviews (edited by Agnieszka Kubal and Gunvor Jónsson). These sections provide a space for shorter pieces that reflect on the complexities of studying and teaching migration, as well as focusing on the relationship between scholarship and the policies, politics, and poetics of migration. As of issue 2, the editorial group also includes Johanna Waters; we are delighted that she has joined. We also gratefully acknowledge the support of our distinguished Editorial Board, which comprises eminent scholars and activists from around the world, reflecting the aims and vision of the journal.

Moving forward, each journal issue will include articles of general interest in addition to themed sections. The second issue of *Migration and Society*, to be published in 2019, will feature a themed section guest edited by Annika Lems and Jelena Tošić on ‘African-European trajectories of im/mobility: Exploring entanglements of experiences, legacies and regimes of contemporary migration’, examining the long-standing and unequal interconnectedness of these two ‘neighboring’ continents. Our third issue, to be published in 2020, addresses the theme of

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‘Recentring the South in studies of migration,’ and we welcome contributions on this theme for all of the journal’s sections (deadline 1 March 2019).

We hope that *Migration and Society* readers will consider joining our community by contributing to the journal as authors, artists, practitioners, reviewers, and guest editors, to enable us to collectively publish work that pays attention to experiences, representations, and conceptualizations of migration and its social, historical, cultural, and legal embeddedness. We will continue to especially welcome critical theoretical perspectives on migration, which carefully engage with power dynamics, identity politics, and structural inequalities, including perspectives that are truly global in scope.

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