

SOUTH-SOUTH MIGRATION WHAT KINDS OF SHIFTING TRENDS?

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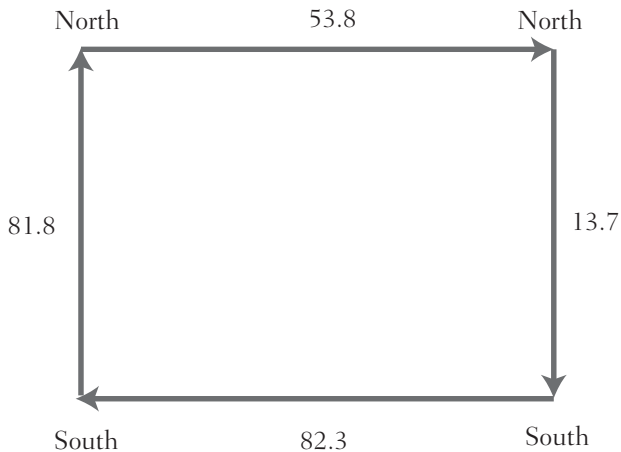
World migrations have become increasingly complex. Today, multi-polarity seems to replace the traditional dichotomic picture of global South-North flows (Wihtol de Wenden, 2010). Due to shifting wealth, new attractive magnets may have transformed the patterns of human mobility (OECD, 2010). This view has gained credibility since the beginning of the twenty-first century, with expanding evidence that changes were indeed occurring. However, the magnitude, components, and direction of these changes still have to be analyzed. Are they casual or meaningful for current globalization processes? What are the qualitative characteristics of such movements? How do they shape new and original dimensions of international relations? These three questions will be addressed successively here, referring first to historical evolution, then to certain social features of the current situation, and finally offering an interpretation of the description provided.

South-south migrations have become dominant among overall flows, according to global statistics gathered by the UN (figure 1). However, the proportions have only slightly evolved since the mid-2000s, when the number of migrants from the South to the North still exceeded those from South to South by a few thousand (OECD, 2005; Meyer, 2010; Ratha and Shaw, 2007).

Not only are the changes recent and limited, but they are also a repetition of prior trends (figure 2). As opposed to conventional views, south to south migration flows used to be larger than all others in the past and were matched by south to north flows only in the early 2000s, before taking the lead again from the early 2010s onwards.

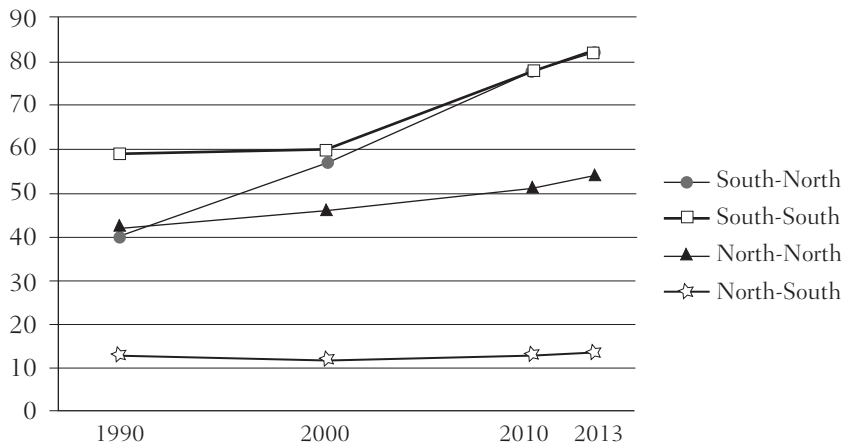
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FIGURE 1
MIGRATION FLOWS BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH (2013)
Millions



SOURCE: OECD (2015b).

FIGURE 2
EVOLUTION OF WORLD MIGRANT FLOWS
DURING THE LAST TWO DECADES

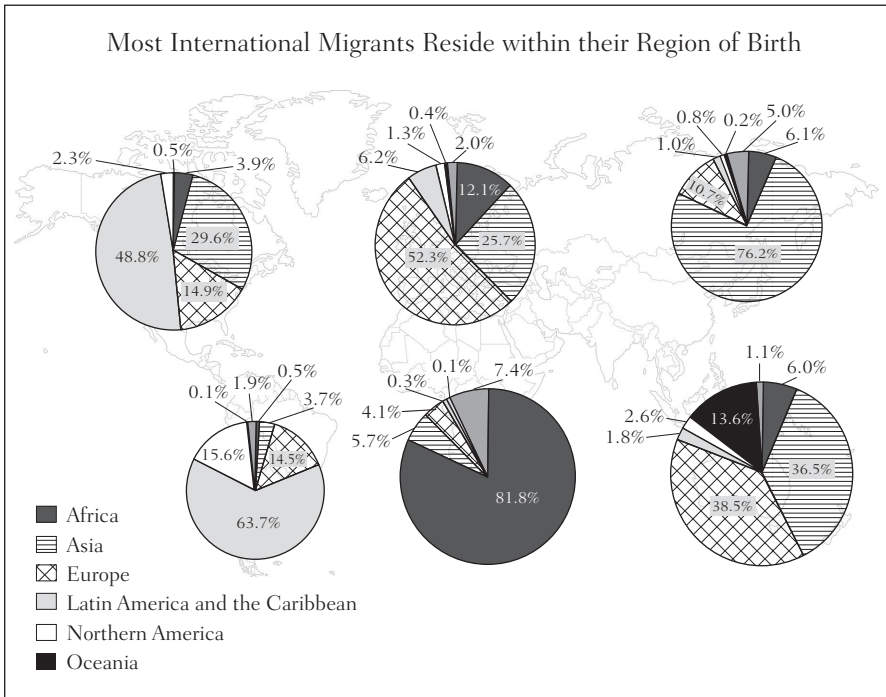


SOURCE: Bela Hovy, 2015; OECD (2015c).

It is also well known that such statistics only partially cover actual flows and cannot describe all the dimensions of the phenomenon (in particular with irregular migration). In any case, such figures do reflect changes in world distribution, though not massive or radical ones. Apart from relatively slow historical inflexions, this is obviously also due to the inertia of the big numbers involved in migration stocks.

When talking of south-south migration, do we refer to regional or to global flows? Here again, the evidence offers a complex picture. Apparently, regionalization is still the dominant feature in the migration landscape (figure 3). The same UN figures tend to show that average migration distance is quite stable over time. In short, today’s migrants would not travel further than they did 20 years ago.

FIGURE 3
CURRENT DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANTS ACCORDING TO ORIGIN AND HOST REGIONS IN THE WORLD



SOURCE: Bela Hovy, 2015.

In fact, qualitative or specific detailed data tend to show the opposite or sometimes subtle nuances of this relative immobility. Latin American evidence shows that, indeed, migrants with a traditionally limited scope of action (like Bolivians who go to Argentina or Brazil, for instance) are not afraid to expand their networks to Spain or other European countries today (Meyer, 2010). Others (Bredeloup, 2014; Campus France, 2013) reveal similar trends for Africans *vis-a-vis* Asia (in particular China). This redeployment of flows also happens on a regional scale: migrants from the Andes as well as from the Southern Cone are spreading within Latin America and Europe, while those traditionally originating from Caribbean and Central American countries and going to North America is diminishing (OECD, 2015; Sicremi, 2015). Of interest are also some findings about skills intensity in relation to the distance from the place of origin. If unskilled migrants seem prone to stay rather close to the region they come from (for various reasons, income- or personal-network-related), some of them increasingly look for opportunities in more far-flung places. At the same time, skills circulation now includes poles in the Global South and not exclusively in the traditional North. The evolution to multidimensional diversification is confirmed even though major general trends may remain a reference in terms of statistical relevance.

The empirical evidence, therefore, is not unequivocal. In any case, it shows the importance of local magnets at a regional or global scale for migrant flows. The big emerging economies (especially, but not exclusively, the BRICS) have obviously had an impact on these moves, and this is reported extensively in anecdotal or systematic surveys. The recent crisis of some of them and the general economic slowdown of these types of countries have cast doubt over their ability to continue to attract labor migrants. However, due to the same inertia that prevails in traditional host countries, immigration in new ones is likely to remain at significant levels. Migrant networks have created irreversibility to some extent, and that goes beyond the overall strictly economic situation. Institutions have also been put in place that make moves continue to be normal.

Nowhere is this as visible as in the area of student mobility. Even though the five major receivers of foreign students (the United States, the UK, France, Australia, and Germany) have remained the same for almost three decades, their overall portion is slowly but surely eroding (Eyebiyi and Mazzella, 2014; Meyer, 2016). They struggle to expand their quota and they do manage to

expand their admission figures, but they are losing part of the whole to newcomers like Korea, South Africa, Malaysia, China, Brazil, Morocco, etc. The main OECD powers continue to be central, but peripheral dynamics interfere with their hegemony. Is this working in favor of a more balanced distribution of human resources worldwide? That is not that clear.

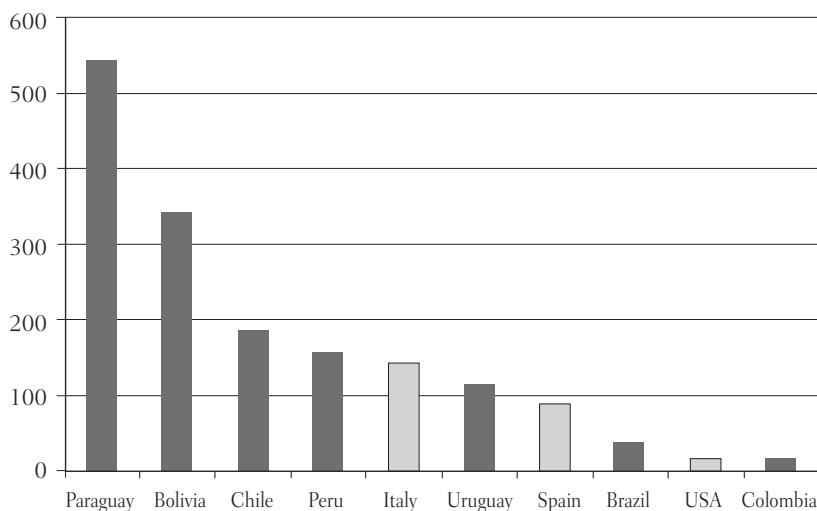
When looking at Africa, some recent partial statistical studies on Burkina Faso, Kenya, Cameroon, Mauritius, Seychelles, and South Africa tend to illustrate these new trends between 2000 and 2010 (OECD, 2016). While low, unskilled migration seems to have increased toward low-income countries at the same time that high-skilled inflows were dropping, the opposite is true for countries with higher income levels on the continent. Some distinctive corridors could thus be highlighted as linking privileged territories (Gauteng, the Western Cape, the Dakar pole, Northwestern Morocco, etc.). This is an enlarged circulation of skills indeed, including new and promising places, though reproducing asymmetrical developmental conditions and relations between disparate areas with different potential resources.

In Africa, the outstanding figures for skilled female migration deserve notice. At 18 percent, the rate of expatriation is twice and three times that of Latin America and Asia, respectively (OECD, 2016). Another striking piece of evidence is the expanding proportion of misused expatriate skills in the OECD receiving countries (people unemployed or overqualified for their jobs). In 2010, employment conditions had degraded for more educated migrants compared to 2000 (OECD, 2015a). These social components of human resource flows from the Global South today show the complexity of the situation: not every region has the same characteristics, and the effectiveness of mobility in the allocation of these resources is not fulfilled in the North, posing a great challenge for the South.

In a special issue of the journal *Hommes et Migration* on African skilled migration, various cases reported show the inevitable fate of highly educated migrants from Mali and Senegal (Dia, 2014). Regardless of where they have been trained and where they try to remain, to go, or to come back, their employability remains low after completing their degrees. This issue of brain waste is a huge concern for the years ahead. The challenge is to address it without any naïve belief in widespread success stories, which abound on the African continent today, but with a committed involvement in quality upgrade of skills use everywhere.

Finally, when looking at the heterogeneous dynamics of South-South migration and the debate between local or global determinants of these flows, an explanation or a demonstrative description may help interpret present outcomes. From Latin American evidence, two patterns of immigration may be distinguished. Argentina, with a traditional regional pool of migrants, remains the major immigrant country, while Brazil is gradually catching up through very different, diversified and globalized channels (figures 4 and 5, in dark: countries of the Latin American region).

FIGURE 4
ARGENTINA'S IMMIGRANTS' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN 2010
Thousands

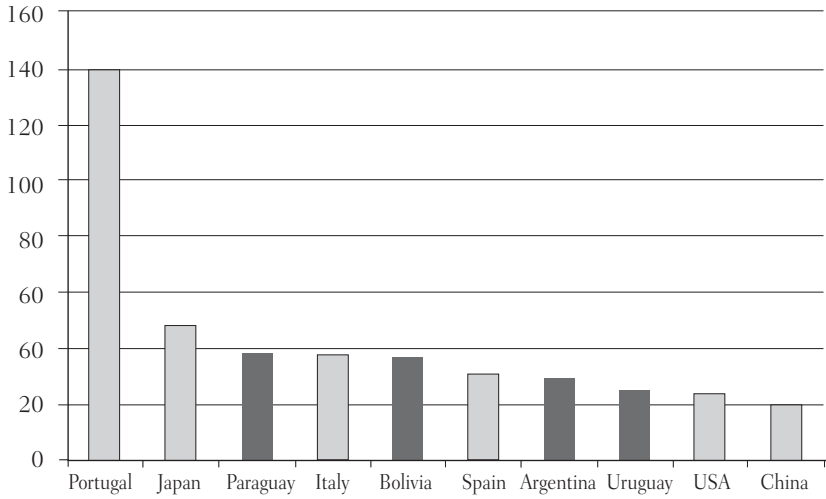


SOURCE: OECD.

Brazil draws more on long-distance OECD human resources, while Argentina relies more on developing South American countries. But the two patterns have also similarities: both attract people from close neighbors or historical European partners.

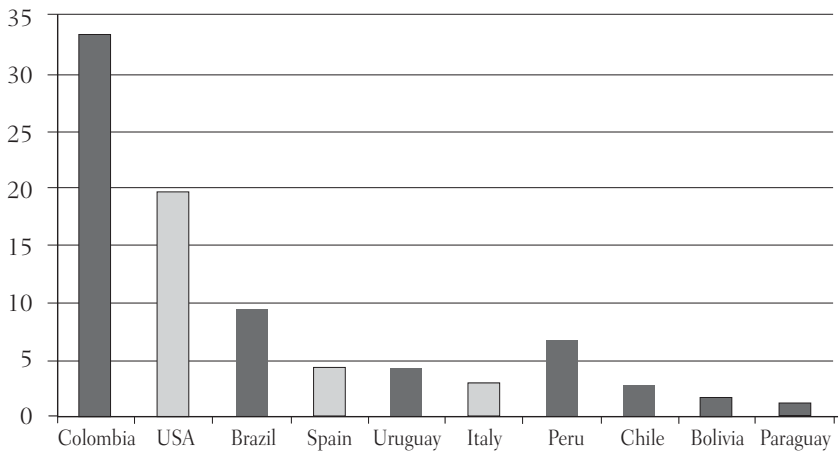
Interestingly enough, a closer look at the components of this immigration does not deeply modify the patterns (figures 6 and 7).

FIGURE 5
BRAZIL'S IMMIGRANTS' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN
Thousands



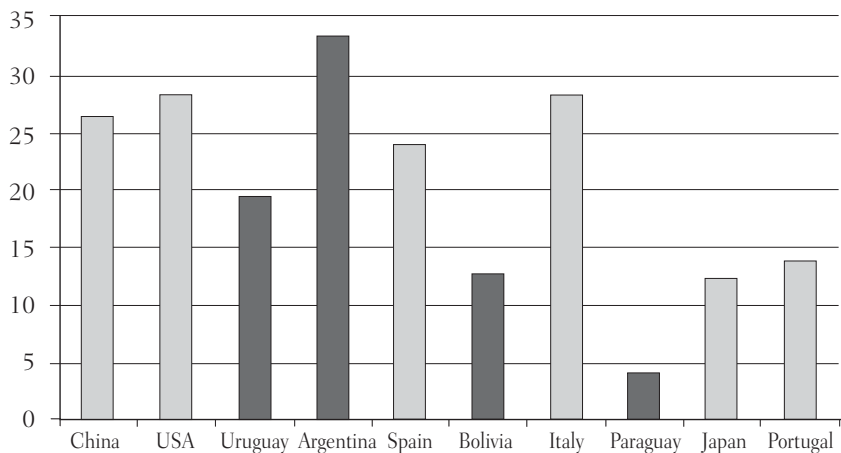
SOURCE: OECD.

FIGURE 6
ARGENTINA'S HIGHLY-SKILLED MIGRANTS' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN
Thousands



SOURCE: OECD.

FIGURE 7
BRAZIL'S HIGHLY-SKILLED MIGRANTS' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN
Thousands



SOURCE: OECD.

While Argentina drives resources from geographical proxies to its skilled labor market, Brazil is integrating lots of different citizens with diverse educational backgrounds.

The cases of Brazil and Argentina, with different immigration patterns, highlights the diverse types of possible South-South migration. It leaves room to strategies and also demonstrates the importance of historical links as well as geographical determinants.

Then, what shifting trends in South-South migration are we dealing with finally? First, the shift may not be that much the fact that South-South flows exist, but rather the patterns that they follow. Moreover, diversity seems important and no exclusive option prevails. Local and regional dimensions coexist with long-distance global trends. The asymmetrical relationships between countries remain determinant even among partners from the same region or hemisphere.

The appropriate use of global human resources is at stake with contemporary multi-polar mobility. Multilateral policy and governance are more crucial than ever today. The more widely distributed attraction that exists nowadays is an opportunity to think collectively in a better way about their design and implementation.

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