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Workshop insights on the interconnections between transnational migration and development

Marja Tiilikainen, Mika Raunio and Pirkko Pitkänen

During the second day of the Argumenta seminar, titled "Interconnections between Transnational Migration and Development" and organised at the University of Tampere on September 5–6, 2017, three workshops were arranged on the migration-development nexus. The topics for the workshops were remittances (financial, social, political), the international recruitment of skills (labour, students) and return migration (policies on return and reintegration). The aim of the workshops was to explore what kinds of research and policies are needed for each field in question. The topics were discussed in "knowledge cafes", where participants circulated among the three workshops and provided their views on the respective topics.

In the first workshop, led by Marja Tiilikainen, remittances were discussed from various viewpoints. It was noted that there were interconnections between social, financial and political remittances and that more research would be needed on political remittances in particular. In addition, the participants recognised the methodological challenges involved in unpacking "social remittances", and they felt a need to find alternative concepts and terms precisely because the word "remittance" is so closely linked to economic ideas. Furthermore, the participants discussed how social remittances could be translated into the Finnish language, and terms such as

"kotiinlähetykset" and "siirtovaikutukset" were suggested. Multi-sited research was seen as a good method for capturing the various meanings related to social remittances.

Remittances and their impacts should be analysed at the micro, meso (referring to organisations, networks) and macro levels. In addition to individual preferences and consumerism in general, markets and exchange rates, for example, have an impact on remittances. Likewise, the role of state policies should be studied with respect to the global flow of remittances. There is also a need for more case studies in order to better understand both the negative and positive impacts remittances may have on transnational migration and development. In addition, remittances may indirectly impact sustainable development, or certain diasporic groups may lobby and have political influence in the country of origin in non-desirable ways. In addition, the case of migrants sending money to relatives in the country of origin and its effect on integration should be studied in more depth. Attention should also be paid to reversed remittances related to different types of migration; for instance, incoming international students often receive money from their home countries, or pensioners increasingly receive pension money from across borders. Hence, Finland too is a receiver of financial, social and even political remittances.

In the second workshop, led by Mika Raunio, participants identified the following research needs.

A global approach is needed since the nation-state system is being challenged in particular by the international movement of capital and people. Immigration should also be more closely related to other socio-economic changes, including the rise of the current digitalised economy characterised by strong monopolising features that are significantly changing the division of labour and wealth. By remaining in a “vacuum” and mostly relating to refugees and labour controls, immigration studies as a field lost its full potential to explore and explain the strong relationship between societal changes and the movement of people.

Negative impacts in the sending countries as well as the access of asylum seekers to higher education institutions (HEIs) in receiving countries still need to be questioned and better understood. This issue is related to practices, where skills are “downgraded” as, e.g. nurses (or even medical doctors) are not able to find work in their field without complete retraining in the host country. The alignment of education is important at the transnational, and to some extent, global level. Educational discrimination is an important issue that needs to be explored in tandem with qualification requirements. Understanding the role of labour unions in this process and their capacity to co-operate globally is crucial. In addition, migrants returning to the developed countries and how they are integrated is a field that should be explored. Finally, bilateral models and best practices should be analysed in more depth as well.

From a policy standpoint, better and more functional definitions and practices for the recognising of skills and qualifications are needed (just as in research), since educational diplomas are clearly insufficient. The level of co-operation between countries should be improved and more efficiently organised in order to make this possible. The ethical aspect of recruitment should be clearly followed and more strongly monitored in general, but the previously mentioned aspects should also be included (e.g. access to HEIs or other types of study for asylum seekers, who may then benefit from their skills even if they later return to their countries of origin). Practices that have been developed to (partially) answer such questions thus far have frequently taken the form of projects and more long-term, institutionally embedded development processes, both of which still lack consistency in many respects. These developments should be more systematic.

International examples (e.g. Estonia) could be used more in policy design, and ideas for the new approaches could be sought from new sources (e.g. the “NHL model” rather than the “Mattheus effect”: countries that are in a worse situation should be able to hire the best talent – and those who are in a better position at the moment should aim to improve the capabilities and opportunities of individuals who are less advantaged).

In the third workshop, led by Pirkko Pitkänen, the focus was on return migration. The discussion mainly concerned voluntary return. It was noted that in most cases, the drivers and consequences of return migration have been discussed from the perspectives of traditional migrant sending countries, meaning that in countries like Finland or in other European countries, there are a lack of explicit policies pertaining to return migration or re-integration. As a consequence, returnees may have no employment opportunities and fail to (re-)integrate in their home country.

It was agreed that in all of the specific country cases, there is a need for further research on what kinds of value returnees bring in terms of skills, specialised knowledge and so forth. Additional information is also needed on whether the skills and experience obtained overseas is being used well in the local economy. A crucial question is how this information could be gathered and disseminated.

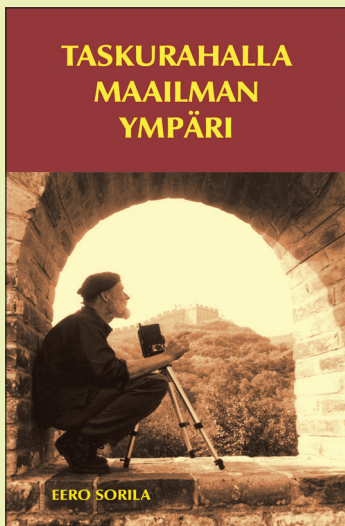
It was noted that not only are initiatives by the central government currently insufficient, but there is also a need to organise reintegration training at the local and/or municipal levels, especially for low-skilled and semi-skilled returnees. To enhance the employment opportunities of returnees, equivalence of degrees and the mutual recognition or accreditation frameworks of various countries need to be clarified. It might also be useful to create portals that provide information on the services provided to returnees, job availability, documents they will need and so forth. The portability of social security benefits within and outside the EU is also needed (to allow migrants to be included in other social security systems).

In the case of *Finland*, the participants agreed on the following points: Finnish returnees constitute a very heterogeneous group. Research is thus needed to obtain more information on e.g. their profiles, experiences and needs. What skills do they bring with them? How can these skills be utilised in the Finnish labour market? What are the different pathways for Finnish students after completing their studies abroad? Where are they and why?

First and foremost, there is a need for an explicit return policy in Finland. There is also

a need for additional resources for reintegration training. The policy measures should include tailor-made training for Finnish returnees. A crucial question is, who should organise and finance the reintegration training

(the state, companies, etc.)? The role of NGOs should be more evident as well as the peer support/mentoring available for Finnish returnees.



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Kansainvälisesti tunnettu maisemavalokuvaaja-kirjailija Eero Sorila kertoo matkaseikkailuistaan eripuolilla maapalloa 35 vuoden aikana juuri ilmestyneessä runsaasti kuvitetussa 326 sivuisessa kirjassaan: *Taskurahalla maailman ympäri*.

Elokuvaaja Heikki Jokiniemi on tuottanut Sorilasta dokumentin otsikolla *Täydellinen kuva*. Tämä pääasiassa Kanadan kalliovuorilla filmattu dokumenttielokuva voitti sarjassaan ensimmäisen palkinnon. Se on esitetty Ylen TV-kanavalta kaksi eri kertaa. Kanadan valtion CBC TV-kanava on tuottanut Sorilasta englannin ja ranskankielisen TV dokumentin.

Tämän maailmanmatkaajan käyttökieliä ovat suomi, englanti, ranska, italia, espanja ja japani. Ne ovat reissuilla tärkeitä työkaluja, jotka eivät täytä repputilaa. *Taskurahalla maailman ympäri* -kirja vie lukijan yli 30 maahan ja myös tavallisista poikkeaviin matkakohteisiin, kuten Pohjois-Koreaan, Kiribatille ja Etelämantereelle.

”Kun rahat ovat loppuneet jossain vieraassa maailmankolkassa, silloin olen todella tuntenut olevani yksin. Niissä tilanteissa olen joutunut täysin luottamaan ventovieraisiin ihmisiin ja maailmankaikkeuden Ylläpitäjään. Ensimmäinen seikkailuni oli karkaaminen yleisestä saunasta kahden vuoden ikäisenä. Poliisilaitokselle ilmoitettu katoaminen ei tuottanut tuloksia. Epätoivon keskellä uskovainen äitini rukoili. Se oli oikea ratkaisu pelon ja hädän keskellä. Äiti ja poika löysivät toisensa kaupungin sillalla. Tämän ensimmäisen seikkailuni jälkeen matkani ovat ylittäneet lähes kahteensataan maahan.”

Uunituoreessa laajennetussa painoksessa, *Taskurahalla maailman ympäri*, Sorila tuo esille sen, että matkustamisessa tahdonvoima on tärkeämpää kuin raha, ja matkanteko useasti antoisampaa kuin perille saapuminen. Sorilan mielestä suurin ongelma elämässä ei ole naapurissa eikä yhteiskunnassa, vaan sen löytää peiliin katsomalla. Hermann von Keyserling: ”Lyhyin tie omaan itseemme käy maailman ympäri”. Kirjan loppusanoissa Sorila myöntää: ”*Taskurahalla maailman ympäri* on yksi kirja muiden joukossa, mutta sen kautta avautuu tie uskomattomiin, ihmeellisiin ja yllättäviin tapahtumaketjuihin”. Eeva Ahtisaari: ”Ilman ulkomaan kokemuksia olisin paljon kapeampi ihminen”. ”Löytöretkeilijälle kaikki maailman maat tarjoavat kokemusrikkauksia, mutta olen ennen kaikkea kiinnostunut kehityksistä”, sanoo Mikko Kuustonen ja jatkaa: ”Kehityksmaiden kiertäminen on ehdottomasti yksi elämäni voimavaroja, vaikka se myös vie voimia, se auttaa suhteuttamaan omat ongelmat oikean kokoisiksi.”