A Framework for Linking and Comparing the Development Impacts of Internal and International Migration in Research and Policy

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The chapters in this volume contribute to current rethinking of migration and development by considering the relationship between both internal and international migration and the livelihoods and economic circumstances of individuals, families, communities, and nations. Although researchers and policymakers have recently focused on the developmental benefits of international migration, internal migration merits attention as well. In many countries, particularly those undergoing a shift from rural to urban-based economies, the implications of internal migration for economic development are equally or more significant. There are also good reasons for considering both types of migration together. Internal and international migrations are frequently intertwined, with families moving and sharing resources within and across national borders. Internal and international migrants also sometimes converge in the same labor markets, creating competition and opportunities for employment for one another. As responses to common stimuli, such as economic change, processes of internal and international migration are in many ways similar, and comparison of their origins and outcomes can be mutually informative.

In considering how internal and international migration affect development, this volume goes beyond a strictly economic preoccupation with growth to adopt a multidisciplinary perspective. Some papers explore the influence that social, cultural, and political as well as economic factors have on consumption and investment, and others focus on a variety of aspects of development such as poverty, inequality, or family security. The authors consider the significance of family and social networks, ethnic and religious identities, communal solidarity and national identities, cultural and religious norms, legal and political statuses, and other aspects of migrants’ lives that impinge upon and redefine developmental goals and outcomes. This approach broadens the meaning of development and suggests additional
goals and issues for policymakers to consider in seeking to enhance the contributions of migration to development.

In his essay on the connections between internal and international labor migration flows, Ronald Skeldon calls for the creation of a “single mobility framework” to orient future research and synthetic analyses. Yet despite the authors’ shared focus on migrant workers and remittances, the diversity in their theoretical, empirical, geographical, and practical perspectives makes synthesizing their research and findings a challenge. In the following pages, we point out useful linkages that can be found between the issues and perspectives raised in the individual chapters, and begin to outline an analytical framework that takes into account similarities and differences in migration and development processes, levels or scales of social organization, and geographies of origin and destination.

Our discussion begins with the papers that explore connections between internal and international migration and how they affect development in sending and receiving locations. Then we compare how internal and international migration affect development by examining these processes as they are presented by articles focused within the same national contexts. To draw out the implications that connections and comparisons between internal and international migration have for development, we link case studies focused on similar levels of social organization: migrant households, rural communities, urban centers, and nations. This same framework is then used to examine conceptual and methodological innovations that have resulted from the authors’ linking internal and international migration and to identify the different types of recommendations that the authors offer policymakers to enhance development. By distinguishing between different types of migration and development, areas of origin and reception, and levels of social organization, this framework facilitates a systematic reading of the volume’s essays that highlights insights and questions to guide future research agendas and to refine the design of policies to enhance migrants’ contributions to development.

1. Linkages between Internal and International Migration

In his broad overview of the connections between internal and international migration, Ronald Skeldon argues that both types of movement influence one another in various ways, but most notably in creating job openings that attract new migration. Primarily citing examples from east and south Asia, he points out that movement within a country, from the countryside to cities, or from inland to coastal areas can enable migrants to gain access
to jobs, savings, and networks that facilitate subsequent migration abroad. In turn, like a siphon, these internal-to-international flows leave behind an employment vacuum that draws in replacement workers to fill the jobs that migrants leave behind. Such an effect can continue in countries of reception as the secondary migration of international migrants away from ports of entry creates openings for additional migrants from abroad. Further, the funds that overseas migrants send home to invest in businesses or to support family consumption can directly or indirectly increase demand for employment and stimulate further movement of workers. If labor within a country becomes scarce, local employers may recruit outside workers, with the result that a former migrant-sending country becomes a receiving one, as in the case of Taiwan and, more recently, South Korea.

Internal and international migration are also connected through ties between family members who migrate to different locations but continue to support one another. Defining development from the perspective of migrant actors whose goal is to promote joint family livelihoods, Norman Long describes how, over two and three generations, Peruvian families have adopted multi-sited and translocal strategies that connect their members between their original communities, urban centers within their home country, and cities abroad. In examining migrant networks between rural and urban Ghana and Amsterdam, Valentina Mazzucato and her research team discovered how much the security of network members depends on the exchange of resources between migrants based in multiple local and international sites. From the perspective of families and their extended networks, it matters less whether migration is internal or international than whether they can gain access to needed earnings and resources, and are able to share them in a timely and complementary manner so as secure their mutual welfare and generational reproduction.

Internal and international migrations are also linked through their combined, if somewhat different, effects on the development of migrants’ home communities. Edward Taylor, Jorge Mora, Richard Adams, and Alejandro López-Feldman found, from a national household survey in Mexico, that 13 percent of rural per capita income is derived from remittances of internal and international migrants. Because U.S. employment is more highly remunerated, international migrants provided their households with remittances worth more than six times as much as those of internal migrants. While internal and international remittances both helped to alleviate poverty, the authors conclude that, because international remittances were based on a higher rate of pay, they also increased income inequality between international and internal migrant households.
Despite the monetary advantages of international migration, a greater percentage of rural household members migrated to work inside Mexico than internationally. One reason for this preference may be the initial unfamiliarity, cost, and difficulty that workers face in migrating to find a job in the United States, particularly if they had to do so illegally. Another consideration might be that local and international employment serve somewhat different but complementary family needs, including access to different types of resources as well as ease and frequency of contact between household members. Norman Long’s ethnographic study of internal and international migrant Peruvian families found that internal remittances involve reciprocal exchanges of goods and money that are embedded in “complex interlocking livelihood arrangements” between dispersed family members. In one case, migrants in Lima met about half their subsistence requirements with food staples sent from the countryside, in exchange for which rural family members were sent processed foods, fertilizer, medicines, and other essentials. While international remittances may be of greater monetary value, the variety and density of local reciprocity may meet other important family needs and reinforce solidarity essential for security and reproduction.

Regardless, in Mexico Taylor and his co-researchers infer from regional variations in household data that the establishment of cross-border networks by a village’s first international migrants can provide assistance and lower the cost of subsequent international travel by members of households with more limited resources. As participation in international migration has spread between households within a community, the income of relatively poorer families began to catch up with that of wealthier families, thus in the long term contributing to the reduction of both poverty and income inequality. But what impact the reduced cost and greater earnings potential of international migration has on internal migration is not clear. Is internal migration diminished by rural workers deciding to seek work in the United States, or are the two forms of migration different enough in their purposes and functions that both flows might expand at the same time? Whether internal and international flows complement or, over time, substitute for one another is an issue that would benefit from both comparative and interactive research on migrant households and sending communities.

Shifting the context from locations of origin to those of reception, the paper by Susan Carter and Richard Sutch offers another perspective on the relations between internal and international migration. Examining U.S. industrial labor markets at the beginning of the twentieth century, they found that both international and internal migrants were attracted to the relatively high-paying jobs offered in cities where large-scale industries
were expanding. That “flooding” of the labor market did not result in international migrants “crowding out” native-born workers, they suggest, may reflect not only an expanding labor market led by the introduction of more productive technologies and economies of scale, but also the consumer demand created by the addition of migrant workers to the local labor force. In this case, internal and international migration might be said to complement rather than displace one another. We will return to this case and the issue of complementarity when we consider comparisons between migrant receiving areas.

Finally, the political and legal criteria that distinguish migrants who cross national borders from those who do not may also obscure a basic similarity between them – that they are, as Skeldon puts it, only “different spatial responses” to the same processes. This is not to argue that there is a simple connection between economic development, social transformation, and migration. Rather, as individual migrants, their families, and communities exchange ideas, practices, and resources between sites of origin and destination, they influence and shape one another’s aspirations as well as their abilities to realize them. However differently they may manifest themselves and be linked in different times and places, internal and international migration, social transformation, and economic development seem to be interactive processes, and it is for this reason that Skeldon calls for them to be approached within “a single mobility framework.” Such a framework can facilitate understanding how the two forms of migration are linked and also provide the basis for insightful comparisons.

2. The Economic Impacts of Internal and International Migration

Although internal and international migration may be linked or affect one another, for the most part researchers seeking to assess the impact of migration on development have studied them separately. Despite this separation, which is reflected in most of the essays in this volume, there is much to be gained from considering how the perspectives and insights of studying one type of migration can be applied to research and understandings about the other. Here we draw together the perspectives and findings of researchers who have investigated the economic impacts of either internal or international labor migration on sending and receiving areas. With regard to sending areas, we focus on what studies of internal and international migration suggest about the economic contributions of remittances to rural families and communities. In receiving areas, we focus on what studies of internal and international migration can contribute to understanding urban industrial expansion. To highlight the ways in which research on internal and international migration can inform each other, we
frame this discussion by examining research that is similarly focused on the level of families, communities, and regions. While the research and analyses presented in this volume’s different essays were not designed for the purpose of such comparisons, identifying mutually relevant perspectives suggests the kinds of issues and insights that might be pursued through intentionally comparative research in the future.

3.1 Impacts on Sending Locations

Although researchers investigating the impact of internal and international labor migration on development have focused on similar issues regarding the economic impacts of remittances sent home by workers, they have rarely drawn from one another’s perspectives. Common issues include the impact of remittances used for purposes of consumption and investment, and the contexts within which one or the other can promote development. To consider different perspectives that research on internal and international migration can offer, we first examine what pairs of essays on internal and international migration in India and China suggest about the use of remittances by rural families and communities. We then turn to what a national-level study of remittances in Latin America and the Caribbean suggests regarding the market contexts that enable remittances to spur enterprise creation and growth.

What can researchers of internal and international migration contribute to one another’s interpretations of the role of remittances in sustaining the consumption and livelihoods of rural families and communities? The chapters of Priya Deshingkar and Prema Kurien approach the issue of remittance-based consumption through research focused respectively on Indian internal and international migration. Both researchers examine migration that is short term or circular in that the migrants return home when their employment terminates – e.g., at the end of a season or an overseas contract – rather than settling permanently in the place of destination. Deshingkar focuses on rural workers who migrate in search of jobs in other rural and urban areas as a means of supplementing their agricultural livelihoods. She argues that circular migration, while not uniformly positive in outcome, enables a low estimate of thirty million poor people, particularly members of lower castes and scheduled tribes, to obtain earnings sufficient to escape poverty or at least somewhat improve their circumstances. Faced with high population density, a scarcity of cultivable land, inequitable land distribution, low agricultural productivity, frequent droughts, declining commodity prices linked to liberalized trade, and other problems, marginalized and landless farmers leave their villages for temporary employment in rural or urban jobs. These earnings enable
rural families to repay debts, satisfy consumption needs, and pay for festivals, marriages, and other ceremonies. Studies in different regions have found that migrant earnings can account for between 23 to 48 percent of household income. Migrants’ earnings also enable household members to spend more on food than non-migrant households, sustain agricultural production, and sometimes to enlarge their assets, though meeting consumption needs seems to take priority over increasing productive capacity. Thus, in the absence of opportunities to diversify their incomes locally, Deshingkar argues that rural Indians are increasingly using circular migration to protect and sustain an increasingly difficult agricultural way of life.

To what extent does the beneficial impact of remittances in sustaining rural livelihoods depend on how they are shared and spent? Although Deshingkar’s essay does not address this issue, Prema Kurien’s essay on international migrants from Kerala State, who take short-term contracts or informal employment in the Persian Gulf, offers a helpful view regarding the importance of ethnicity. To understand the contributions of consumption based on remittances, Kurien examines how ethnic identities, norms, and relations lead families of different religions and occupations to adopt different patterns in distributing and spending remittances. Her research found that relatively poor and low-skilled Muslims, who had engaged in informal-sector employment overseas, supported religious activities and distributed their earnings widely throughout their entire village in a manner consistent with Islamic charity and communal solidarity. Hindus from a second village, who had been employed overseas as technicians, spent large sums on life-cycle rituals and entertainment within narrower extended family networks and with an eye toward improving familial status. Finally, Christians from a third village, who worked in semiprofessional positions overseas, tended to focus still more narrowly on the nuclear family and to invest their earnings for their children’s future advancement – to finance dowries for daughters and professional education for sons. That ethnicity and occupation affect the extent to which international remittances are disbursed across a community, shared between extended family members, or kept within a nuclear family would seem equally relevant in determining the impact of the remittances of internal migrants in sustaining agricultural ways of life for the rural families and communities examined by Deshingkar. Kurien’s broader argument, that understanding migration’s impact on development requires taking into account socio-cultural as well as economic factors, also seems equally valid for internal as well as international migration. While the benefits of such an interdisciplinary perspective may seem evident in principal, Kurien points out that it is not always utilized in economic development research and policy making.
To promote rural development, must remittances be used for investment as well as consumption? Much of the research literature on remittances’ contributions to development laments that remittances, whether from international or internal migration, are used more for consumption than investment. Why that seems to be so is not certain. Kurien suggests that families tend to view international earnings, because they are earned outside the context of the home society and at a relatively higher rate of pay, as “easy money” and, as a result, they are more likely to spend them on conspicuous consumption and lavish generosity than investment. This raises the question of whether remittances from internal migration may be treated similarly, when internal migrants are paid more than they would receive at home and their work takes place in a social context that seems removed from village life.

A different view, that remittances are likely to be used for productive investment after a family’s basic consumption needs have been met, is to be found in Huang Ping and Zhan Shaohua’s study of internal migration in China. The authors emphasize that rural–urban migration is taking place in China on a massive scale, the implication being that if the large amounts of remittances flowing to rural areas were used for investment they could make a significant impact on rural development. In the twenty-five years between 1978 and 2004, the share of China’s population in cities rose from 17.9 percent to 41.8 percent. The number of rural laborers working outside their villages for more than three months each year reached at least 126 million in 2004. In the future, approximately twelve–thirteen million additional rural residents are expected to transfer permanently to urban areas annually.

The earnings that migrant workers return to their communities already play a significant role in reducing rural poverty. The number of impoverished rural residents plummeted from 250 million to 30 million between 1978 and 2000, though the incomes of 60 million rural residents are just above official poverty line. One study cited by the authors estimated that remittances of temporary and permanent migrant laborers totaled US$40 billion in 2003 and contributed 18 percent of total rural income, a level of support somewhat greater than that reported by Taylor et al. for Mexican rural households, but proportionally less than that reported for Indian communities in studies cited by Deshingkar.

Because most internal remittances are used for consumption rather than investment in productive enterprises, Huang and Zhan are concerned that they have not been put to “effective and rational use in promoting rural development.” There are no national data on how remittances are used,
but case studies, including that of one of the authors, indicate that most remittances are used to pay for daily living expenses, housing, compulsory educational fees, health care, and festivals. Despite indications that some portion of remittances is invested in agriculture, husbandry, fishing, and forestry, researchers and policymakers hoping that migrants would develop businesses on the basis of new ideas, skills, and savings derived from urban employment have been disappointed. A major reason that remittances go largely to consumption, the authors contend, is that the costs of rural education, health, and government administration have risen since the beginning of rural reforms in 1978, when central government subsidies for these services were cut off. As a result, increases in rural incomes from remittances have had to be spent on basic expenses, and the accumulation of surplus savings necessary for investment has not been feasible for low-income rural families.

The issue is complicated by the difficulty of distinguishing the nature and impacts of consumption from investment. In analyzing the uses and impacts of international remittances sent home to forty villages in Fujian Province near the city of Fuzhou, Zai Liang and Hideki Morooka provide a different view, suggesting that consumption and investment are not easily separable and that both contribute to development, depending on linkages between the local and regional economy. The authors found that over 80 percent of migrants sent remittances to pay for the family’s daily living expenses, including the care of children and the elderly, the maintenance of ancestral graves, and the construction of new houses. Less than 3 percent of emigrants sent remittances for business purposes. However, they also found that just over 10 percent of migrants donated funds to support public projects that enhanced educational institutions, trained the future workforce, and created physical infrastructure, all of which contribute to economic development. Perhaps as a reflection of strong communal solidarity, migrants from remote agricultural villages seemed most likely to increase their support for public projects once they had paid off large debts incurred in being smuggled illegally into the United States. A small minority of international migrants joined together to invest in businesses outside of their local communities. These enterprises included office and residential buildings, steel mills, brick factories, and real estate, which contributed to, and benefited from, the coastal industrialization that has been leading much of China’s overall economic growth. Although remittances entered the regional markets through different types and proportions of consumption and investment, the authors suggest that they all produced multiplier effects and contributed to development as they spread through local and regional markets. However, the integration of local and regional markets in the Fuzhou area is related to the central government’s overall
development strategy of long-term infrastructural investment in coastal industrialization, and such linkages are not generally found in the rural areas to which migrants send remittances.

While these studies of internal and international migration in India and China concentrate on the effects of migrants’ earnings on families, communities, and surrounding regions, Manuel Orozco focuses on the economic contributions of remittances within a broader national context. Orozco argues that, whether used for consumption or investment, expenditures of remittances increase spending and financial flows, generate multiplier effects in local and national markets, and contribute to economic expansion. Further, he finds that international remittance flows tend to be counter-cyclical in that, during global economic downturns, migrants have continued to send or even increased the amount of remittances, thus contributing to both their families’ and their home countries’ economic stability.

In taking a national perspective, Orozco views remittances as just one of a number of economic activities related to international migration that affect economic growth. These additional activities, which he calls “the five Ts,” include transfers, telecommunications, transportation, tourism and trade. As remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean grew from $3 billion in 1980 to $45 billion in 2004, so too did the fees that transfer agencies and governments charged for sending migrants’ money home and converting it into local currencies. In 2004, transfer fees ranged from under 5 percent to more than 15 percent of the amount being sent and exchange commissions ranged from less than 1 percent to almost 40 percent. While both fees reduced the remittances to recipients in rural areas, they did contribute in varying degrees to the balance of payments and financial capital within different national economies. Similarly, the telephone calls and return visits that migrants make back to their homeland have contributed substantial revenues to the growth of telephone and airline companies, some of which are based in the sending countries. Overseas migrants also comprise a growing portion of the tourists who visit Latin American and Caribbean countries, and their expenditures support hotels, entertainment, restaurants, and other local businesses. Finally, the demand of migrants overseas for “nostalgic” consumption of traditional foods, clothes, and other cultural goods has stimulated the production and export of goods produced back home. In other words, remittances account for only part of the economic activities and growth generated by international migration. While internal migration may not foster the same five Ts to an equal extent, it would seem that research to determine the economic impacts of internal migration
would do well to examine how various economic activities related to internal migration complement the contributions of remittances.

2.2 Impacts on Receiving Locations

Two articles in this volume examine the impact that migrants have on the economies of the urban centers where they settle. Cai Fang and Wang Dewen focus on internal rural–urban migration in contemporary China while Susan Carter and Richard Sutch focus on the entry of international migrants into industrial labor markets of the United States in the early twentieth century. Both essays deal with urban labor markets during periods of urbanization and industrialization. While both argue that labor migration contributes to economic growth, this process is taking place in China during a shift from a command to a market economy, while in the United States the existing market economy was facilitating the growth of large-scale industries, many of which sought to establish market monopolies.

Cai Fang and Wang Dewen have calculated that internal migration and urbanization are the source of as much as 20.2 percent of China’s industrialization and rapid economic expansion since 1978, and they argue that the transfer of rural workers to urban areas should continue in order to assure future economic development. Migration provides the necessary labor force and urbanization facilitates the aggregation of resources and economies of scale that enable industrial enterprises to increase productivity and per capita GDP. Although 41.8 percent of the nation’s population has already become urban, Cai and Wang conclude from the experiences of other middle-income countries that a 67 percent level of urbanization may be necessary for China to reach its production goal of $3,000 per capita GDP by 2020.

Major obstacles to China’s economic growth, they contend, are restrictions on internal migration and on migrant workers’ access to jobs in state-owned enterprises, both aspects of China’s earlier planned development policy of promoting industrialization on the basis of agricultural surpluses. The hukou system controlled where workers could reside and obtain access to food rations and public services. Although in switching to a market economy national reforms have eliminated some hukou restrictions, particularly in small cities, they tend to remain in force in larger cities where state enterprises remain important employers of local residents. As a result, although rural workers can now migrate to all cities, many face a segregated labor market in which they have severely limited access to well-paid or secure employment. Instead they compete for low-paying jobs in
the informal sector – particularly manufacturing, services, and construction – where work is dangerous, dirty, and low paid. In addition, rural migrants are generally still not eligible for workplace and state-sponsored social security protections, including membership in labor organizations, old-age pensions, health care insurance, and public education. In other words, Cai and Wang claim, “There is severe discrimination against rural workers in urban labor markets.”

Neoclassical economic theory predicts that increased labor mobility and rural-urban migration should narrow regional and rural-urban disparities, but in China the reverse has happened, with both rural-urban and regional income inequality growing over the last two decades. Cai and Wang argue that this is because hukou reforms remain incomplete. But they also recognize that reform may expose urban workers in protected state enterprises to labor market competition and that this prospect discourages urban governments, who put priority on maintaining low unemployment and social stability, from pursuing reform. Cai and Wang do not explain by what mechanisms they expect further hukou reforms will reduce income disparities between rural migrants and urban workers. Their economic model predicts that the growth of efficient private-sector industries will increase per capita productivity and permit wage increases for rural workers, but it also suggests that eliminating public-sector job protections of urban workers could increase competition in the private sector that, without unions or state controls, could reduce the wages of urban workers to levels comparable to those of rural migrant workers. The general equilibrium model that they cite does not make clear how or when wages are likely to rise or fall.

Further insight into these dynamics might be drawn from Susan Carter and Richard Sutch’s study of migration to industrial labor markets in the United States, though their data permits them only to consider employment rather than wages. To determine what impact migration had on U.S. urban labor markets at the beginning of the twentieth century, they refine the “textbook” model to take into account the effects of migrant laborers, consumption demands, increased industrial productivity, and interactive effects between markets. They conclude that immigration can contribute to economic expansion and to increases in employment and, by implication, wages as well. The historical American case may be particularly relevant to that of contemporary China because both involve periods of great industrial expansion, high rates of urbanization, and potential competition between migrant workers and urban workers already living and employed in the cities of migrant destination.
Carter and Sutch challenge the argument advanced by restrictionists in contemporary U.S. immigration debates that immigrants compete with native-born workers, drive down wages, cause unemployment, and “crowd out” native workers who then flee to other labor markets. The labor market model on which such arguments are based, they point out, assumes that labor markets are “static.” It assumes, for example, that market demand for industrial products, and thus for increased production and additional labor, is not augmented by the demand for consumption created by immigrant employment; that expansion in production in one urban center will not stimulate trade and demand, and demand for workers in others; and that the availability of immigrant labor will not stimulate new investments in industrial expansion or in the adoption of more productive technologies. In contrast, Carter and Sutch’s empirical analysis of U.S. county-level census data between 1900 and 1910 found that the urban centers in which international migrants were most concentrated in proportion to native-born workers were also those to which native-born workers migrated as well. That is, both immigrant and native workers poured into the same high-wage regions where the classic labor market model would predict that immigrants would have the most adverse effect on native employment.

These historical findings lead Carter and Sutch to modify the classic labor market model to reflect the dynamic relation between migrant labor and industrial growth within an open economy. In so doing, they conclude that, when immigrants are attracted to high-wage areas of industrial expansion, their arrival may indeed lessen the rate of growth in both the demand for workers and in wage increases, but that this tendency is counteracted by the effect of growing consumption by newly employed immigrant workers on demand for goods and increased employment. Further, they argue that, to the extent that immigration allows employers to exploit new economies of scale and adopt more productive technologies, the result can be increased wages for all workers.

Might the open and dynamic labor market model from the historical U.S. case be useful in identifying how, with continuing reforms, rural migrants will affect contemporary China’s urban workers and industrial expansion? One of the most important positive impacts of immigrant workers in the United States was that their arrival increased the demand for industrial goods. But does the relocation of rural workers to urban centers have the same effect? While rural–urban migrants increase the demand for food, housing, education, and other services in urban centers, their departure from rural areas would seem to reduce demand for similar goods and services in the countryside, perhaps with little net effect on demand. To
the extent that rural migrants send remittances back to the countryside and increase consumption there, Huang and Zhan point out, they reduce their own consumption in cities, sometimes to poverty levels, which would then decrease urban demand. In contrast, international migration adds to demand within a national economy without the reallocation between rural and urban areas associated with internal migration. If so, then the contribution of internal migration in China to economic growth would take place more through migrants, employment in productive work than through growing consumer demand, in contrast to industrial expansion that took place in the United States, which was based on international as well as internal migration.

A related question is whether urbanization in China will facilitate economies of scale and increase productivity so as to enable both rural migrants and urban workers to increase their earnings. Cai and Wang contend that hukou restrictions and monopolistic public enterprises create labor market segmentation and severe discrimination, which keep rural migrants from access to the same jobs, wages, and standard of living as urban workers. Although Carter and Sutch do not discuss labor-market segmentation and discrimination in U.S. industries, the history of the U.S. labor and civil rights movements suggests that, even with the dismantling of legal institutional discrimination, minority populations continue to be excluded from jobs by socially driven discrimination. The U.S. case suggests that assuring that rural migrants have access to the same jobs and incomes of urban workers could require political and social interventions against employment discrimination that go beyond the legal elimination of hukou and job restrictions.

To the extent that the essays in this volume may reflect the wider research literatures on the economic impacts of internal and international migration, it seems that differences in analytic perspectives are less the result of inherent differences between internal and international migration than of a separation between the two sub-fields of research. Comparing research on internal and international migration on the level of families, communities, regions, and nations has helped to identify ways in which the two literatures can inform one another.

3. Concepts and Methods of Research and Analysis

Bringing together the study of internal and international migration can lead not only to the sharing of different perspectives but also to the creation of new analytical concepts and research methods. While the essays of Norman Long and Valentina Mazzucato both focus on the ways in which family
networks combine internal and international migrants, Long explores the conceptual implications of doing so while Mazzucato examines the implications for conducting research. The chapters of Edward Taylor, Jorge Mora, Richard Adams, and Alejandro López-Feldman and of Carter and Sutch introduce an approach to comparative historical analyses based on similar developmental stages, rather than on chronological simultaneity, in the evolving relationship between migration and development.

Adopting an “actor-oriented perspective” leads Norman Long to doubt the utility of categorical distinctions between internal and international or permanent and temporary migration. Through multi-generational ethnographic research Long found that the primary goal of migration by migrant family members is to secure and advance their interconnected livelihoods by gaining access to resources in their original rural highland communities, coastal cities, or urban centers abroad. Categorizing such movements as distinct, despite their common goal, tends to “segment and obscure the kinds of cross-generational relations that link different family branches and individuals engaged in migratory experiences at different stages of their lives.” From the perspective of migrant family members, he says, “There is no great ontological divide between those living ‘at home’, or in some ‘distant city’ or ‘transnational world.’ Indeed their life courses intersect through the translocal dynamics of familial reproduction and change.” Instead, he concludes, “we might do better to explore migration flows and patterns of geographic mobility from the standpoint of how they relate to the reproduction or transformation of family and community livelihood strategies and the kinds of social identities or ‘belongingness’ they generate.” Long calls for the elaboration of a vocabulary and research methods that can capture the interconnected lives of people who both stay at home and are “on-the-move” within a globalizing world.

To capture relations between the far-flung members of internal and international migrant networks, Valentian Mazzucato designed a “simultaneous matched sample” research method. By posting researchers simultaneously in rural Ghana, the capital of Accra, and the Netherlands, she and her team were able to record exchanges of information and resources that created and sustained “mutual insurance contracts,” which helped to secure their livelihoods. That is to say, when network members at any of these locations encountered unexpected adversity or costs beyond their means, they could depend on one another for financial, material, social, and emotional support. Contrary to the emphasis that current research places on the one-way flow of remittances from migrants back to those at home, this research revealed that mutual assistance flowed back and forth between the rural, urban, and overseas locations. By examining engagements between
network members across different sites simultaneously, she contends, researchers can determine not only what causes “linkages between dispersed people to tighten, new livelihood opportunities to emerge, social institutions to change, and hybrid identities to develop” but also how these dynamics “have led to qualitative differences in how migrants, the cities in which they live, and their home communities are impacted by migration.”

Connecting migration and development has also led to innovative analytic strategies that employ historical comparisons to assess the effects of migration on income, employment, and economic growth. Exploring how the process of migration begins and expands over time, Taylor, Mora, Adams, and López-Feldman interpret differences in the contemporary levels of migration found in villages and regions of rural Mexico in 2003 as a “proxy for migration histories.” Susan Carter and Richard Sutch examine migration data from the beginning of the twentieth century in order to refine a model of labor markets central to contemporary debates over the impact of immigration on the employment of native-born workers at the beginning of the twenty-first century. And Cai and Wang use contemporary levels of urbanization in the world’s most productive economies as a standard with which to orient China’s migration and urbanization policies to maximize productivity and economic growth in the future.

While Mazzucato’s “simultaneous matched sample” is designed to capture ongoing relations between international and local members of social networks, the cross-temporal comparisons employed by Taylor et al., Carter and Sutch, and Cai and Wang seem to share the assumption that linkages between internal and international migration flows that take place in different places or time periods – within villages and regions, between rural and urban areas, and across local and international boundaries – are similar enough in their origins and stages of progression to warrant comparisons based on processual similarities. If so, then researchers might employ comparisons to address not only how relations between migration and development begin and evolve but also about how they come to an end. Do past histories indicate at what stage of development contemporary migration from rural sending areas into urban areas, internally or internationally, will cease or even reverse? Are economies in different parts of the world and at different levels of development likely to go through the same stages of emigration, industrialization, and immigration as many nineteenth to twentieth century European countries? Is this development path altered for sending and receiving countries whose economies and industrialization are today linked by international migration in the context of globalized markets?
4. Policy Implications

What implications does the bringing together of internal and international migration have for development policies? In justifying the elaboration of a “single mobility framework,” Ronald Skeldon points to the penetration of outside forces of economic modernization or of development itself as a source of common motive for both types of migration. From this perspective, internal and international migration represent “different spatial responses” to the same forces. This is not to argue that there are no significant differences between internal and international migration, but rather that such differences may largely be the result of migrants’ moving into different political spaces where differences in governance affect their legal statuses and access to economic opportunities. Designing policies to promote the developmental contributions of migration should then take into account political regimes that determine access to citizenship and other rights, legislation to control the flows of migrants, and administrative regulations by which population management is implemented. Also relevant are the interventions and regulations of intergovernmental bodies and international nongovernmental organizations ranging from the recently created Global Forum on Migration and Development to migrant workers’ hometown associations. In considering the impact of such institutional policy efforts to manage migration and development, we need to take into account not only how different policies intended to manage migration can affect development but also how different development policies can affect migration flows.

While adopting such a broad scope might be useful in framing a comprehensive review of migration and development policymaking, we restrict the discussion here to the policy issues raised by the authors on the basis of their research on labor migration and remittances. A reading of the policy implications and recommendations discussed in the essays suggests that there are some general policy principles that can be applied to both internal and international migration. But the research cited also suggests that specific policy refinements ought to distinguish between sending and receiving locations and between the levels of family, community, region, and nation, whose interests may not be congruent and at times even conflict. In addressing such issues, the authors connect their research to policymaking in different ways: descriptively by assessing the impact of existing policies, analytically by explaining what factors guide policy formation, and prescriptively by giving advice about how to attain certain development goals. In discussing the authors’ thoughts about the policy implications of their research, we will take these different dimensions of geography, social scale, and goals into account, considering first policies toward sending locations and then receiving locations.
4.1 Policies for Development in Sending Locations

Whether the common motivation of internal and international migrants implies that there are also some principles that can guide policies to enhance the contribution of remittances to the development of sending locations is a question most explicitly addressed by Taylor, Mora, Adams, and López-Feldman, who focus on the alleviation of poverty and income disparities between households, communities, and regions of rural Mexico. They find that the effects of remittances from both internal and international migrants, especially the latter, increase over time as rural “economies become more integrated with migrant labor markets.” From this finding, they conclude generally that “policies that restrict migration increase poverty.” Conversely, they say, policies that “promote remittances or enhance remittance multipliers” can reduce poverty and inequality, especially in regions with the highest levels of migration.

These authors do not specify what policy measures they might have in mind but others make recommendations aimed at regulating internal and international migration and promoting development on community and national levels. In considering policies to promote the developmental impacts of internal migration, Priya Deshingkar’s research on circular rural migration in India and Huang Ping and Zhan Shaohua’s research on short- and long-term rural migrants in China make clear that the earnings that migrants send or bring back home can comprise a significant portion of rural household incomes and can reduce or eliminate poverty by paying for living expenses. But because the researchers are working in quite different policy contexts, the development goals and policies that they advocate are somewhat different.

According to Deshingkar, current policies to reduce poverty in rural India focus on creating rural employment. In her view, this strategy reflects faulty data and urban and middle-class bias against illiterate, poor, and lower-caste people. Its mistaken goal, she argues, is to keep rural people from seeking employment in urban areas. Alternatively, she proposes that migration out of villages for temporary agricultural or urban employment should be recognized and supported for its contribution in reducing rural poverty and in developing marginal areas of low agricultural productivity. Rather than discourage temporary urban employment, she proposes that “the government urgently needs to take steps to make it a more remunerative and less painful process for the poor.” Local city governments should reverse their hostile policies toward migrant labor and increase their protection of migrant workers from abusive conditions, particularly of women and children, who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. The national
government should improve migrant workers’ access to “pro-poor” social programs including grain distribution, hospital care, and education. She adds that the government should improve postal services to address the risks, delays, and costs that migrants face in sending money home. While Deshingkar recognizes the importance and difficulties of increasing agricultural productivity, the main purpose of short-term migration policies is to sustain rural incomes and consumption. By permitting urban employment, protecting workers, and reducing migrants’ costs, Deshingkar says the government would enable rural populations to “keep options open in their villages.”

In contrast to India, China’s national government has embraced rural–urban migration as a means of promoting urbanization and economic growth. Huang and Zhan advocate for policies that will enable this process to promote rural as well as urban development and to reduce the income gap between rural and urban sectors. While they recognize that migrant workers’ remittances increase consumption and improve the standard of living of rural households, they question whether remittances are “put to effective and rational use in promoting rural development.” To “liberate” remittances from consumption and channel them more effectively into rural development, they argue that the national government should increase its subsidies for education, health care, and local government administration, the costs of which currently absorb much of the remittances received by rural families. To enable rural families to invest the resulting savings in agricultural or non-agricultural enterprises, the authors draw attention to the need for reform of bank loan policies, which currently accept rural deposits but offer loans only in urban areas. To improve the lot of urban migrant workers who are forced into impoverishment and squalor as a result of sending remittances back home, the authors call for an expansion of recently initiated government training programs that can help migrants find better-paying jobs and adjust to urban living. They also call for government support of independently organized programs that bolster workers’ self-help efforts to strengthen rural–urban networks and integrated rural–urban development projects. Whereas in India Deshingkar’s policy recommendations to the India government are aimed at increasing consumption to sustain rural livelihoods, Huang and Zhan’s recommendations for subsidizing rural services and credit, and supporting self-help efforts in China, are aimed at encouraging the investment of migrants’ earnings in productive enterprises.

The authors who examine the development contributions of international remittances to sending areas similarly focus on the use of remittances for consumption or investment, their impact on both rural and urban
development, and the role of government development policies. In examining the effect of international remittances on three Kerala villages, Prema Kurien offers two cautionary ethnographic insights to policymakers who have expected international earnings would take Kerala on “an unconventional path to development.” First, in contrast to locally earned wages, earnings obtained in relatively well-paying jobs overseas are more likely to be seen as a “windfall income” and thus more likely to be spent on “conspicuous consumption and lavish generosity” than in productive investment. Second, “there is no generic migrant.” Instead, migrant families spend remittances in various ways for different purposes depending on their distinctive ethnic and community contexts. Policymakers may prefer that migrant families channel remittances into investment rather than consumption, but Kurien stresses that socio-cultural context will affect the ways in which migrant families actually choose to spend their money.

In assessing the role of international remittances in the development of sending communities of Fujian Province, Zai Liang and Hideki Morooka found that families who receive remittances allocate by far the largest portion to consumption and a smaller, but not insignificant, amount to investment in village projects and infrastructure. However, they challenge the assumption that consumption makes less of a contribution to development than productive investments and point to the indirect impact of local expenditures, particularly for housing construction, that have a multiplier effect. Given the large amount and positive impact of international remittances coming to the region, their policy recommendations are for national and local governments to enhance public infrastructure, assure the availability of finance to entrepreneurs, and then, basically, to get out of the way and let the flow of remittances have their effect. They expect that the combination of government infrastructure and private remittances will perpetuate a development process that began in the nineteenth century emigration and was advanced twenty-five years ago by the government policies to attract foreign investment for Fujian’s industrialization.

Manuel Orozco points to the importance that national economic context can also have in determining whether remittances can promote development. In comparing Latin America and the Caribbean countries where remittances appear to have strong, medium, or low impacts on development, Orozco suggests that debates over whether remittances should used for consumption or investment may obscure the more fundamental issue of the extent to which a local economy can provide substantive opportunities for investment or respond to increased demands for commodities and financial services. Without prescribing particular policies, he argues, the
challenge for development practitioners is to design measures that will alleviate weaknesses in a local economy and facilitate the absorption of remittances so that their expenditure or investment can play a transformative developmental role.

4.2. Policies for Development in Receiving Areas

The papers by Cai Fang and Wang Dewen on China and by Susan Carter and Richard Sutch on the United States are written to inform debates over policies that restrict the entry of internal and international migrant workers into urban labor markets. In the context of China’s industrialization and transition from a planned to a market economy, Cai and Wang advocate for the abolition of both migration restrictions imposed by the hukou system and state monopolies, which give discriminatory protection to the employment of urban workers. While Carter and Sutch’s research focuses on the entry of migrant workers into U.S. urban labor markets, also during a historical period of industrial expansion, their analysis is intended to inform contemporary debates about immigration restrictions that are partly based on the belief that immigrant employment adversely affects native workers. Both analyses contend that measures to restrict the entry of migrant workers into urban and industrial labor markets are either unnecessary or counterproductive. Rather than adversely affecting urban employment, they contend, migrant workers contribute to urbanization and facilitate technological innovation and economies of scale in production, contributing to an increase in consumer demands and economic expansion that will increase employment and raise wages.

However mutually informative one might find the economic models or empirical examples of contemporary China and early twentieth century United States, both papers leave somewhat uncertain the relationship of migration to industrial development during different phases of economic cycles. Both case studies find that that migration provides labor power that furthers industrial growth. But does labor migration always make a positive contribution? The period of rapid U.S. industrial expansion considered by Carter and Sutch ended with the economic depression and massive unemployment of the 1930s. It seems unlikely that increased immigration, which was in fact cut off by the 1924 Immigration Act, would have had a positive impact on employment and growth during this period of decline. This raises the question of the point in an economic cycle at which tightening or loosening restrictions on immigration might precipitate labor shortages or surpluses. Of course, even if such market timing were possible, the decision to intervene would reflect a political choice rather than an insight drawn from research and analysis.
5. Conclusion

Framing the research findings of this volume’s essays within different levels of social organization and different spheres of social and political geography has clarified some relations between labor migration, remittances, and development, and raised questions about others for future research. We summarize below some of the insights gained in relation to sending and receiving areas, point toward potential contributions this approach can make in linking research to policy, and consider the prospects for using a similar framework to explore relations between other types of migration and development.

The essays in this volume make clear that the livelihoods of many rural families and communities depend on both internal and international migration. Although both types of migration seem to provide access to work that can raise incomes and reduce poverty, international migration seems to offer considerably higher levels of remuneration. Why is it then that most migrants move internally? One explanation, suggested by the analysis of Taylor et al., is that local migration is easier and that pioneers must establish networks and access to employment that can reduce risks and costs before others will cross international borders. This interpretation is consistent with Skeldon’s observation that emigration from rural sending areas to local and then international cities and on to locations of secondary settlement is a chain process, that generates a series of employment opportunities for further waves of internal and international migrants.

Does this mean that the relative economic advantages of international migration will eventually displace internal migration? Norman Long’s and Valentina Mazzucato’s research offers another consideration: that the engagement of extended family networks in both internal and international migration can provide access to different opportunities and resources, and thus spread and balance the risks and costs of migration. A diversity of employment niches enables each network member to fulfill complementary functions in relation to household security and reproduction, suggesting that international migration may complement rather than displace internal migration. In addition, Prema Kurien reminds us that ethnicity imposes communal norms and obligations that can shape the migratory goals and behavior of individuals and their families. But it is not clear how relationships between internal and international migration might evolve as succeeding generations of migrant families become separated from their agricultural origins and more fully integrated into commercial labor markets and societies where nuclear family structure predominates. Future research on the evolution of local and transnational networks that link family and
community members could help to clarify the dynamics of interrelations between internal and international migration.

All the essays in this volume report that recipients of remittances use them primarily for consumption. While remittances can help rural families and communities to raise their standard of living and reduce inequality, there is uncertainty about whether and how remittances might promote rural development that would close the gap of inequality between rural and urban areas. Must remittances be invested in productive enterprise to have such an impact? Zai and Hideki’s discussion of China, and Orozco’s of Latin America and the Caribbean, contend that the multiplier effect of consumption spending can increase local sales, contribute to employment, create opportunities for savings, and foster investment. However, local inflation resulting from increases in remittance spending might offset some of these gains in income. The greatest positive impacts resulting from this chain of expenditures may also be realized in urban areas to which workers migrate, where consumer goods are produced and distributed, rather than in the rural areas to which migrant workers send remittances.

One of the structural conditions underlying the sequence of connections between rural-to-urban-to-international migration is that each step in this sequence is to a destination that offers to greater economic advantages, particularly higher wage rates, than the areas left behind. This structural imbalance motivates migrants and enables them to transfer home greater earnings than could be obtained at home. But migration also transfers resources and contributes to economic development in receiving areas. Not only do family members left at home sometimes send support to migrants who are away, as Long and Mazzucato describe, but also, as Carter and Sutch point out, migrant workers bring with them the embodied costs of their upbringing and education that prepare them for employment at no cost to the receiving society.

But to what extent do migrant workers contribute to as well as benefit from industrial expansion in places of reception? The two cases provided in this volume, of internal and international migration to urban centers within China and to the United States, each take place during periods of industrial expansion and increasing demand for workers. Susan Carter and Richard Sutch argue that the presence of immigrant workers can stimulate investors to create or upgrade productive enterprises, and that their consumption of goods subsequent to employment can increase demands that will promote a further expansion in production. Research that compares the impact of international migrant workers during times of economic contraction as well as expansion might be helpful to immigration policymakers who seek to
regulate their impact on native-born workers. But at the same time, attention should be given to the impact that regulating international migration has on employment and economic growth in international migrants’ home countries. But, regardless of whether immigration restrictions can be fine-tuned to complement short-term economic cycles, there does seem to be a long-term self-regulating relationship between migration and development. At some point, the demand for workers in countries of emigration seems to exceed the available labor supply and eventually results in a reverse net flow of return migration or immigration from other countries. While none of the papers in this volume examine such transitions, their impact on migration and development in the context of increasingly integrated global markets of labor and production seem an important topic for future research and policy.

Although we have framed the research presented in this volume in relation to the authors’ focus on familial, communal, regional, and national and international levels, tracking the bi-directional flows of migrants, money, and other supports makes clear that they cut across and connect these different levels of social organization. Broadening understandings of the relation between migration and development will require research and analysis that focuses on the dynamics of those interconnections and the economic and social transformations that result. That family livelihood strategies, the expansion and contraction of rural communities, urbanization and industrialization, and the international flows of migrants and remittances all significantly affect one seems clear enough from existing research, but we lack understandings of these dynamics that are adequate to guide policymakers in promoting their positive effects on development. Significant questions include: Does the attachment of internal and international migrants to sustaining their families’ and communities’ rural livelihoods benefit from or conflict with the processes of urbanization and industrial growth? Do the migration of labor and transfer of remittances back home have a significant role in promoting economic development, or do they only help to mitigate the hardships and inequities of developmental processes beyond migrants’ influence?

Our focus on the relation between internal and international migration with development has been somewhat narrowly limited to migrant workers and remittances. A more comprehensive understanding of migration and development would require consideration of additional types of migrants (e.g., technicians, professionals, and entrepreneurs, or tourists, refugees, and the military) and the developmental implications of additional types of tangible and intangible resource transfers (e.g., skills, technology, social norms, political beliefs, economic institutions, and goals for development
itself). While research and analysis of the connections between internal and international remittances seems important for understanding how labor migration affects development, whether understandings of other forms of migration and resource transfers can equally benefit from being framed within the same geographic spheres and levels of social organization is not entirely obvious. The combined findings of the chapters in this volume suggest that exploring these possibilities could be of benefit to policymakers in promoting development.

Development is often referred to in terms of “hard” economic measures such as income growth and increases in GNP, but a broader understanding of development that goes beyond growth rates is needed to get at other important issues, including how migration can contribute to poverty alleviation, the stability of poor families, or the sustainability of vulnerable communities. In fact, the implications of increases in income for economic inequality and growth can be quite different, depending on whether they are viewed within communities, across rural–urban regions, or within a national aggregate. Such issues require consideration not only of the aspects of well-being that can be measured in monetary terms, but also in terms of access to goods and services ranging from bank credit to healthcare and education or to opportunities for employment.

In the end, one might argue, changes in the nature of production and the engagement of labor almost always involve some kind of movement of people, and the scope of our definitions of both migration and development, and our interpretation of the relationship between them, must depend on the particular problem to be investigated and the boundaries and borders that become meaningful in that context. Nonetheless, the essays in this volume have confirmed, in different ways, that bridging the division typically made in research and policymaking between internal and international migration can be helpful in revealing the links and commonalities between the two types of migration and their implications for development.