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world summit for social development

migration, displacement and social integration

by nicholas van hear

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preface

The World Summit for Social Development, to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995, provides an important opportunity for the world community to focus attention on current social problems and to analyse the dimensions, roots and directions of social trends. In particular, the agenda of the Summit specifies three areas of concern: the reduction of poverty, the generation of productive employment and the enhancement of social integration. UNRISD work in preparation for the Summit focuses on the last of these: as countries confront the seemingly intractable problems of social conflict, institutional breakdown and mass alienation, the topic of **social integration** has assumed increasing importance in public debate.

The UNRISD Occasional Paper series brought out as part of the Social Summit preparatory process takes up a range of issues relating to social integration. This paper examines the impact of human migration and displacement on social integration within the context of globalization, and economic and political restructuring.

Three novel features of the post-Cold War era are adding to longer established pressures generating migration: first, technological change, which has radically altered global communications and made long-distance travel cheaper and easier; second, looser exit procedures in the countries of the former Eastern bloc and the consequent enlargement of the "pool" of potential migrants; and, third, the resurgence of ethnic, religious and nationalist aspirations and conflicts, generating instability within many nation states and resulting in the disintegration and reconstitution of several of them. While more and more potential migrants are emerging, many of the countries and regions that have accommodated migrants in the past are now proving unable or unwilling to welcome newcomers.

These pressures are bringing into play new arenas of international migration and transforming longer established ones. While both economic migration and refugee movements have become major issues of public concern in the developed world, movements to these countries are proportionately much smaller than those within the developing world. In addition to these spatial transformations, this paper also discusses the diversity and fluidity of migration: new forms of migration have emerged (e.g. family reunion, illegal entry) often in response to government attempts to halt, stem or curtail a particular form of migration (temporary labour migration, for example). Significant tendencies gathering momentum in recent years are more

permanent settlement (as opposed to temporary labour migration), the feminization of migration, burgeoning illegal entry and socio-economic differentiation among migrants.

In the second part of the paper, the implications of migration for social integration are examined by considering the social, political and economic dimensions of three sets of relationships: those between migrants and their "home" community; those between migrants and their "host" community; and those located within the "transnational" arena between the country of origin and the country of destination. Under the first set of relationships, migration seems to have both integrative and disintegrative dimensions: as old forms of integration become less important, new forms may be generated with potentially liberating implications for some household members (e.g. women) and the emergence of what has been termed "cultural capital" that can be passed on, contributing to shared values and social cohesion. As for the relationships between migrants and their host communities, immigration impacts on national integrity through the formation and transformation of rules of citizenship, the development and transformation of immigration policy, and the formation and transformation of national identity or self-image.

Three models of citizenship, immigration régime and national identity are considered. These consist of the "folk" or "ethnic" model represented by Germany; the republican model illustrated by France and the "multicultural" model represented by Australia and Canada. These models, however, are neither static nor exclusive to a particular country. Furthermore, the diversity of approaches has not prevented the emergence of a marginalized class of migrants in all industrialized and newly industrializing countries. Migrants, it is argued, are perhaps becoming the quintessential post-industrial workers, servicing the consumption requirements of the "contented" majority. Even though not all migrants are locked into the "underclass", the possibility of upward mobility for most of them into the ranks of the "contented" seems bleak.

The social, political and economic marginalization of migrants challenges one of the main principles upon which democracies are founded: that all members of civil society should belong to the political community. But it also challenges this principle in a more creative way. As growing numbers of migrants hold multiple identities, affiliation and membership or citizenship, such affiliation itself may change in the direction of some form of "transnational" citizenship (the third set of relationships noted above). Like national identity, collective transnational identity is imagined. In the context of world economic restructuring and of nation state disintegration and reconstitution, such persons may find themselves to be advantaged over those with a single affiliation.

The concluding part of the paper evokes some recent policy initiatives. In particular, it considers the mitigation of migratory pressures through aid and

the containment of refugee movements through the creation of safe zones, regions or countries.

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November 1994

Dharam Ghai
Director

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