

**Negotiating African Human Security Mechanisms: Mapping Out a Research Agenda on
Migrants' Cash-Flows and African Food Markets.**

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Abstract

Food markets have long been a topical issue at various levels. The popularity of the matter might stem from the fact that food is the very basic of human needs. Food insecurity translates to disparities at the social, economic and political levels. To conceptualise African human security mechanisms, first and foremost, one has to analyse how livelihood security is negotiated. The current paper proposal is a compilation of research issues with the aim of mapping out a research agenda for the analysis of contemporary African food markets financed through migrants' monies sent back 'home'. The argument I propound is that because food markets lie at the intersection of the reproductive (household economies) and the productive (market economies), they are a powerful analytic tool into understanding how migrants' cash-flow sent back 'home' translate from only financing household's basic needs into contributing significantly to not only the national economy but more so regional economies. In this manner, human security, broadly understood as security of livelihoods at different levels, is negotiated and realised. Moreover, when talking about food markets, one cannot afford to ignore the significant contributions that young African women make. In a Continent undergoing a generational shift, it is pertinent that the economic activities of this social group, that unfortunately are still rendered invisible and marginalised, be accorded concerted analysis. This is further with the aim of informing social-economic policy, so that these policies can proceed with such groups in mind. Towards this end, the objective of the presentation is to map out this research area by soliciting issues, counter themes and new directions for research.

Key words:

Migration, remittances, food markets, reproductive and productive economies, human security mechanisms, social-economic policy, young African women

THE BACKGROUND: OUTLINING THE RESEARCH ISSUES

De Haas (2007:3) posits that scholarly debates on migration have tended to move from one perspective to the other concomitant of the dominant development thinking and social theory of the time. Stating the analysis in the 1950s and 1960s, the author argues, debates hinged on what was known as the developmentalist optimism. Over the 1970s and the 1980s, the structuralist and neo-Marxist pessimism and scepticism took over. The 1990s saw more nuanced views influenced by the new economies of labour migration, livelihood approaches and the trans-national turn in migration studies. The author continues to argue that in the past few years, there has been a remarkable renaissance in interest in the issue of migration and development. This, the author remarks, has been triggered by a striking increase in remittance flows (De Haas 2007:7). Quoting from Kapur (2003), the author puts the figure of remittances sent back to developing countries as \$31.1 billion in 1990, \$76.8 billion in 2000 and \$167.0 billion in 2005. Given such an upsurge in remittances, De Haas argues, governments of migrant sending countries have put renewed hopes on trans-nationally oriented migrants and Diasporas as potential investors and actors of development (De Haas and Plug 2006). This renewed hope has been greeted with much enthusiasm but little exists to show that indeed remarkable changes have occurred. As Åkesson (2011), De Haas (2010) and Faist (2009) have demonstrated, the development effects of migration and remittances are heterogeneous and depend on the economic, political and social conditions of sending countries.

In Africa, migration studies have a long, varied and almost similar history to the analysis of migration in the North. In the 60s on to the 70s, analysis was concentrated on the relationship between colonial states and their colonies (Manuh 2005). Studies in the 70s, supported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and which were mainly policy oriented, paid more attention to the then increase in illegal migration to the West, mainly for sex work, manual (temporary) labour, trafficking of drugs and trading in expensive mineral-stones (<http://www.ILO.co.org>). The underlying agenda was sufficient data in support of / negation of assimilation policies in host countries. In turn, the 80s and 90s saw a reversal of the research interest as forced migration, due to the eruption of internal conflicts, mostly heralded by the then Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS), occurred. The concentration on refugee studies programmes (Harell-Bond and Verdirame 2005) and concomitant issues laid focus not only on refugee conditions in host countries but also on how refugees maintained cross cutting ties to their home countries through support of especially political programmes (Koser 1997, Deng and Cohen 1998). Migration (forced or voluntary) and how it could possibly contribute to the development, especially of sending countries, was given minimal attention if at all!

The turning point in migration studies, which occurred in 2000, can be attributed to the seminal work of Basch, Schiller and Szanton-Blanc (1994). Their treatise investigated the questions of migrant flows and the issue that had so far been neglected in migration studies both in the North and in the South, i.e. the flux in boundaries. The intellectual punch in these seminal case studies was the call to attention to identify certain pertinent issues. Not only was the question of trans-local migrant identities examined, but the issues of how *home here and home there* (Achieng' 2005a) or the permeability of boundaries was intricately analysed.

Studies on Diaspora communities marked yet another intellectual turning point in migration studies, concomitant of the turn of the 21st century. The conceptual work by Gilroy (1993) on the meaning of Diaspora, which was both criticized and enlarged upon by Zeleza (2005) not only argued that there were now distinct Diaspora communities that contributed both to the political agendas of the communities they were living in but also to the political and developmental agendas of their former 'home' societies. The latter author, for example, explores the issue of knowledge production in the Diaspora (Zeleza 2007). On the other hand, De Haas (2006) looks at how governments and development agencies can support Diaspora communities in their contribution to development.

The turn of the 21st century thus marked a renewed interest in the migration-development nexus, As De Haas (2010) and Faist (2007) rightly point out, there is a new enthusiasm around migration and development that hinges on a number of strong claims and concomitant queries around these. Two

provocative questions that Faist (2007:4) puts forth are: Currently, why is there a new enthusiasm on migration and development? The second question he posits is how this new enthusiasm connects to changing paradigms in development thinking (Faist 2007:6).

Indeed, the migration- development nexus continues to be a contentious issue not only among policy makers, especially development cooperation organizations, like the European Commission (2005), Global Commission on International Migration (2005), International Organisation on Migration (2005) but also among academics interested in migration and development, for example, Faist (2009), De Haas (2010), Åkesson (2011), those interested in theorizing on migration and development Lachenmann (2007). Glick-Schiller (2007), and research institutions interested in advising policy makers and researchers alike, for example, UNRISD (2005), Åkesson (2011) for Nordic Africa Institute .

Despite the above mentioned conceptual, policy novelties and interests, data in support of how migrant communities support developmental agendas of their home societies still remain dismal. Research and analysis on migrant remittances, which was greeted with much enthusiasm was promptly barricaded and relegated minimal attention as the assertions grew that statistically, remittances played an insignificant role in raising national gross domestic incomes. The thesis that was put forward and continues to be held in many research quarters concerned with migration and immigration studies is that whereas remittances play a significant part in raising household consumption levels, money received from migrants (be they labour migrants or communities in Diaspora) is hardly used as investment and in this manner does not translate to either alleviating poverty levels nor contributing to national economy. As Åkesson (2011:2) has argued, remittances can actually increase social inequality in the sense that poorer households, which are non-receivers of remittances, get even poorer. She continues to assert that immediately poorer households are able to send a member out and starts receiving remittances, inequalities are lessened.

I, on the other hand, argue that whereas sending out poorer members of society might alleviate household poverty levels, there is a non-translation of cash flows from consumption into investments. Because of this 'non-translation' of cash flows from consumption into investment, livelihood (human) security mechanisms and regional economic integration as developmental goals and how migration and migrants' cash flow could contribute to these continue to be elusive agendas.

Moreover, as Faist (2007:5) contends, concentration has rather been on the economic impact of migration and remittances on receiving countries, mostly from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states. There only exist pockets of analysis on the benefits accrued by sending

countries. Connected to this point, hardly any research is forthcoming on internal migration i.e. South-South migration. Conceptualisation on how such South-South migration do occur, both the intended and unintended consequences beyond the nation-state i.e. conceptualisation on regional integration, is an analytic caveat that is yet to be filled.

Indeed, Glick-Schiller (2007) has criticised the continued reification of the nation-state as the unit of analysis in migration studies citing the continued blindness in looking at processes from below or what Lachenmann (2007) adopting Scott's (1997) point of view, calls 'seeing like a state'. Certainly, the migration-development nexus has of necessity to start looking at dynamic processes that reconstitute how meanings are negotiated across social spaces i.e. an interface approach and in the process, the newness that comes with it i.e. structuration of society (Schutz 1973, Giddens 1979)

Notwithstanding, are the actors of this new type of South-South migration. The conceptual invisibility of such actors in the new study of trans-national actors of globalisation is glaring. Local processes that feed to local and regional developmental thinking and which in turn shape global discourses of development or are in turn influenced by these are a conceptual void that have not been entirely overcome. With the increased calls for Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to offer new directions in development thinking in terms of conceptualising how human security systems could proceed, local processes that interlink to global ones, shaping, challenging these and being shaped by and challenged in turn, become important units of analysis that can no longer be ignored. It is in questioning and bringing to fore these local processes and how they feed into global processes and how in turn the latter shapes the former that the social, economic and political conditions emergent of migrants' contexts can be better understood and transformation sought for.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

It is on this conceptual and analytic lacuna that the research seeks to build. The conceptual point of departure is that household economies and market economies interface in intricate ways. It is exactly at this intersection that analysis is to focus, i.e. how cash flows at the intersection of these two spheres and the different meanings it is given (See Barber 1995, Berry 1995, Guyer 1995, Mabogunje 1995 and Shipton 1995) for some preliminary thoughts in this direction). The main research question is: How is money in the form of remittances utilised in household budgets and also invested in market oriented activities, if at all. Food markets, which embody the intersection of these two spheres i.e. the reproductive (household economies) and the productive (market economies) sectors (Achieng' 2010) will form the operational category in understanding how cash flows translate from household economies into market oriented ones

and in turn how development in terms of national economies and regional integration is/can be negotiated i.e. the social, economic and political transformations occurring/need to occur.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Whereas literature on migrants' remittances and how these play a significant role in raising household consumption levels abound, dismayingly, studies have been silent on how cash flows from the household into market economies and how this in turn has/can be translated into societal developmental agendas at the level of the national and regional economies (Achieng' 2005b). This neglect has had a negative outcome not only to the policy making processes as downbeat migration policies continue to be made without sufficient grounded analysis, scholars have also not given concerted intellectual focus on the issue of cash flows and market expansion. The consequential danger that African human (livelihood) security mechanisms and regional integration strategies will be devoid of empirical research and grounded analysis leading to yet another failure of a noble idea looms large.

Consequently, the research proposes to undertake a comparative analysis of Kenyan and Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa. The analytic point is the utilisation of cash flows in market integrated activities. Food markets have been singled out for study as they form the intersection of the reproductive (household) and productive (market) economic sectors. An interesting feature of this market activity is that young women and men are engaged in it at various levels. Moreover, food markets cut across regions thus making this productive market sector economic activity one of the most lucrative ones on which to analyse not only how rural-urban economic and social linkages occurs but also *how* the development and conceptualisation of African human (livelihood) security mechanisms both at a national and at a regional level could proceed.

The Proposed Title of the Research Project

Of Trans-local Linkages and Food-Markets in negotiating African Human Security Mechanisms : A Comparative Analysis of the Utilisation of Kenyan and Zimbabwean Migrants Cash Flows

The Conceptual Framework

The continued developmental impasse has seen a call for robust analysis on the ardent issue of the conceptualisation of African human security mechanisms, which address the security of livelihoods as the social core (see livelihoods approach) and seek to integrate these with regional economic integration as the long term social 'glue' of this social core. In analysing African human security mechanisms, the issue of migration and especially how cash flows from migrants into households, markets and consequently the broader national economy cannot be ignored. One acknowledges that whereas the themes offered above

are topical in themselves, the analysis still missing is how migrant cash transfers translate into broader development oriented activities beyond the household and how these in turn interlink with other political-economic spheres to form part of the broader conceptualisation of African human security mechanisms. As the conceptual framework, the research thus adopts, on the one hand, the concept of trans-locality (Lachenmann 2007). On the other hand, the agency of actors at different levels in negotiating new meanings (Lachenmann 2007) is given prominence. How these two processes interlink to produce socio-economic transformation is the overall theoretical underpinning.

Food markets with its various interlinked spheres, both spatially (rural-urban or cross-border linkages) or socio-economically (from the hearth-hold, markets to service oriented and developmental programmes and projects) forms the case study. Food markets have been conspicuously singled out not only because the current world financial crisis directly affects this particular economic activity in several adverse ways but also because food markets have a direct linkage to capital, labour and market (Guyer 1987 and 1998 for some preliminary thoughts in this direction). Food markets also provide a parameter in understanding trans-local linkages evident if one wants to conceptualise on cash flows and how these translate from the level of household consumption to investment in market economies. Furthermore, food markets have witnessed a high level of informalization and elusiveness, meaning that it has its own internal logics of operation. This makes for a strong analytic category into understanding the informalisation of rural-urban economies and how these affect different segments of the population and the various responses and strategies to which it gives rise (accessing different forms of entitlements). It goes without further ado that food markets offer a good analytical prism in investigating how changing economic dynamics could impact on the larger social and political dynamics in specific contexts. Consequently, trans-local (urban-rural) linkages that depend on migrant cash flows in accessing different forms of entitlements is conceptualised as a major process in augmenting the understanding of the making of African human security mechanisms (the overall socio-economic transformation) and thus offering conceptual, methodological and policy break-through in poverty, inequality and regional integration research on the one hand and trans-nationalisation and migration studies on the other hand.

THE STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study has the objective of:

- a. Mapping out migrant cash flows and how these are utilised not only at the level of the household consumption but more so how cash flows are invested in market oriented activities. The analysis of food markets is privileged.

- b. On this basis, formulate further theses on the making of African livelihood security mechanisms, conceptualised here in as African Human Security Mechanisms.
- c. Contribute towards the nascent but fast building literature on socio-economic transformation at the regional level

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1. Provide academic evidence on the still lacking information on how cash flows in the form of South-South migrant remittances are utilised and translated into market oriented activities (investments) and how this in turn plays out in the larger processes of social-economic transformations.
2. Inform policy oriented research on the significance of migrants cash flow to the national economies and especially how these cash flows are being translated from household consumption budgets into investments especially in market oriented activities.
3. Contribute to the sparse literature on trans-local linkages in food markets and in turn contribute to the policy debate on the bases of how regional economic integration could occur.
4. Formulate issues around the making of African human security mechanisms (livelihood security mechanisms).

THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

a. Comparative approach

- i. Contextual comparison: Two contexts have been selected because of the unique contextual understanding they provide. These contexts are Kenya and Zimbabwe. Not only have these two countries similar developmental agendas, the political-economic trajectories, though marked by some level of historical dissimilarities, have remarkably trended parallel logical frameworks. The land tenure issue is a case in point. Both contexts have a plethora of grass-root social movements with different democratic developmental orientations. Both countries have witnessed political upheavals which have seen the migration of labour force into other countries, notably, South Africa. Furthermore, both contexts have a highly volatile economy marked by a highly informalized market mainly controlled by young people. Such that Kenya and Zimbabwe not only form good case studies into understanding informal market economies but more so how migrants cash flows are utilised both at the level of the household and invested in some of these productive activities. Methodologically, such a contextual comparison will further our knowledge of the different livelihood (human) security mechanisms as they occur in different contexts..

- ii. Methods – the proposal will basically adopt a qualitative interpretative method where the use of techniques such as the narrative interview method, communicative observation, and case studies will be privileged. Qualitative data analysis is found desirable as the research seeks to understand and interpret the meaning of economic and social action as generated by different groups. Concurrently, data generated through quantitative methods will be used comparatively as part of triangulation of data collection and analysis techniques. The emphasis is on the use of quantitative data not as a method per se but rather as a tool for interrogating the qualitative data, looking for similarities and differences. It is envisaged that through the use of the two methods in a comparative manner, the questions of why and how and accounting for the continuities and discontinuities will be enriched.
 - iii. Levels in society – The research will lay specific emphasis to the intergenerational question.
- b. **Trans-historical approach:** Contextualisation of the political, economic and social processes and the changes that have been brought about to a particular context through these processes
 - c. **The everyday life approach** – Because of the nature of the research problem in question, it is envisaged that grounded theory method with its emphasis on everyday life will form an entry point into understanding people’s social and economic actions and logics and the meanings they attach to money, social and economic activities they engage in..
 - d. **A gendered approach** – a strong emphasis will be laid on the gender dimension of the underlying issues. Society is structured with different amalgamation of gender groups negotiating access and entitlements to different common goods. The interest in giving the whole question a gender dimension is to bring to fore the process of societal re-structuration and how women and men interact and interrelate in negotiating access to different levels of entitlements and thus security of livelihoods in trans-local settings.

HOW THE PROPOSED STUDY IS TO PROCEED

A. Collaborative endeavours:

The researcher is in the process of approaching regional and international partners with similar interests with the aim of seeking collaboration at various points.

B. Archival Analysis

The next stage will be a thorough exploration of extant literature. Archived bibliographic data- especially development plans will be given priority. This is with the aim of bringing to the fore the different developmental issues formulated in the two contexts and their effect on migration flows. A background document (working paper) will be developed out of this analysis.

C. Literature Review

Following grounded theory method, the aim is not to start with an exhaustive analysis of extant literature on migration. The field will actually guide the researcher towards the kinds of literature that should be read in order to validate, negate further question the emerging codes from the field work analysis. The underlying assumption is that society is not static but ever changing (human agents confront structures and challenge these in their everyday interaction (the theory of structuration: Giddens 1979). How they are doing this in a particular time and space is important (research should bring out this dynamism, showing how human agents change structures, the structural constraints they encounter and how they overcome these). Literature will consequently be innovatively used, following the principles of qualitative research, in support of this dynamism.

C. Mobile Research

The nature of the research problem necessitates mobility. The researcher will work with two students (of Zimbabwean and Kenyan nationalities) as part of research capacity building and enhancement at the institutional level. These students will follow the trajectories of 10 purposively selected interviewees who are migrants and who live and work in South Africa and who regularly send money back to their 'home' countries. These 10 purposively selected interviewees should also have market oriented activities that are financed by the cash generated from working abroad. Through mobility and following trajectories of these 10 purposively selected interviewees, it is envisaged that snow-balling as a data collection method will be facilitated.

Since the research seeks to understand the economic logics and social actions of migrants, qualitative data collection methods will be privileged. This is for the reason that qualitative methods provide us with an insight on people's actions, logics and meanings and values they attach to social things. Towards this end, narrative interviews will be used. These will be collected among the 10 purposively selected interviewees. Questions not exhaustively answered in the interviews/new questions that emerge will consecutively lead the researchers to seek further interviews. Snowballing method in data collection will aid in this respect

Case studies that adequately offer concentrated information (explicate the different codes that emerge) will be used in the write up of the results of research.

D. Communicative observation

This is a new method that the researcher would like to explore. This method, which borrows significantly from participant observation, departs from it in several significant ways. The research will show how it departs from participant observation. The underlying hypothesis is that since African researchers partake of the realities they are observing, they need to take a step away from this reality in order to better understand it. Unlike participant observation (foreign researcher coming into an environment), communicative observation for African researchers actually questions the commonsensical assumptions that are taken for granted because we partake of the realities. In this way, it falls in line with the self-reflexivity (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994) exercise that researchers have to engage in.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis will follow the grounded theory qualitative data analysis method (Strauss 1987, 2001). Nonetheless, a triangulation of data analysis methods (mainly quantitative secondary data) will be resorted to at a later stage of data analysis mainly for the purpose of comparing results generated by the study. The main aim of engaging in the triangulation of data analysis method is to answer the question why certain discrepancies in data have occurred and what could account for these differences. Yet again, it is at this level that literature will be resorted to.

Setting the Ball-Rolling...

As stated in the introduction, this piece of work is research in process. Towards this end, the aim of presenting the research proposal to a wider audience at a conference is not only to open up a field of engagement at various levels, but to also solicit for ideas, especially research issues. Whereas it is desirable that the issues emerge from the specificities that this proposal has laid forth, the researcher welcomes lines of questioning and ideas that challenge the basic assumptions, seek to widen the frontier of the research or augment parts of it from context specific elaborations. For further contact email: rachieng2001@yahoo.com and roseline.achieng@monash.edu

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