



EMN Norway Occasional Papers

A Sustainable Migration Approach

Towards a Common Platform?

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The European Migration Network (EMN)

EMN is a network coordinated by the European Commission. The network consists of national contact points in most EU member states, and Norway. The Norwegian contact point – EMN Norway - consists of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration. Our status in the network is regulated by a working agreement between the European Commission and the Ministry. EMN's mission is to provide credible, comparable and up-to-date information on member states' policy developments, regulations and practices in the asylum and migration field. The aim is to support policy makers and enlighten the public debate in the EU and in the member states plus Norway. EMN finance and organise studies, conferences and roundtables and publishes reports, informs and other knowledge products on migration. Most of the information is available to everyone. For more information, see www.emnnorway.no.

EMN Norway Occasional papers

EMN Norway has committed itself to addressing the challenges and sustainability of today's asylum and migration system. By commissioning papers on the various aspects of sustainable migration from poor to rich countries and presenting and discussing these in conferences both in Oslo and in Brussels, we hope to deliver 'food for thought' on how to design sustainable migration policies which can serve the interests of parties involved. We also hope to contribute to designing a common platform for knowledge- and policy development related to migration- and development-policies.

The format of the papers is designed to facilitate easy and quick publication with clear and well-founded perspectives with a bold and innovative policy relevant content. EMN Norway Occasional Papers are addressed to a wide audience of policymakers, academics, media and interested public.

As regards the current paper, *Sustainable Migration – Possibly a Promising Approach for Prevailing Challenges*, I would like to thank my colleagues in EMN Norway, Stina Holth and Magne Holter for excellent cooperation and partnership in bringing the activities and products of EMN Norway's sustainable migration project forward and for contributing ideas and quality assurance in formulating this paper. I would also like to thank my former EMN colleague Eivind Hoffmann for carefully going through the draft and proposing many good improvements. However, the only responsible person for this paper is the author himself.

Other papers in this series:

The views and conclusions of the EMN Occasional Paper are those of the respective authors.

- [Temporary asylum and cessation of refugee status in Scandinavia – policies, practices, and dilemmas, Jan-Paul Brekke, Jens Vedsted-Hansen og Rebecca Thorburn Stern \(2020\)](#)
- [Human Rights and Migration. A critical analysis of the jurisprudence of the European court of Human Rights, Ole Gjems-Onstad, \(2020\)](#)
- [Automation/Robotisation – Demography – Immigration: Possibilities for low-skilled immigrants in the Norwegian labour market of tomorrow, Rolf Røtnes ET. AL. \(2019\)](#)
- [The significance of culture, Asle Toje \(2019\)](#)

- [Absorption capacity as means for assessing sustainable migration, Grete Brochmann and Anne Skevik Grødem \(2018\)](#)
- [Sustainable migration in Europe, Alexander Betts and Paul Collier \(2018\)](#)
- [Sustainable migration framework, Alexander Betts and Paul Collier \(2018\)](#)
- [Defining sustainable migration, Marta Bivand Erdal, Jørgen Carling, Cindy Horst and Cathrine Talleraas \(2018\)](#)

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1 Introduction

Asylum and migration are sensitive and contested political issues, not at least among Member States of the EU. The European Commission's attempt to 'bridge the gaps' by launching the New Pact on Migration and Asylum on 23 September 2020 has so far failed in reaching the desired consensus, despite substantial effort by the German Presidency of the Council during the final semester of 2020..

One challenge is communicative; i.e. the challenge to create narratives on asylum and migration that are commonly shared is:

“A common and unifying language through which to build political consensus is urgently needed. It must be unifying across countries and political parties. The basis must be guiding principles that can reconcile economic needs, human rights obligations, and maintain democratic backing. (B&C 2018b)

The underlying challenge, as seen by a substantial number of people in European countries, is the impact immigration might have on society, and many are challenging the current immigration and refugee policies. Will we be able to sustain the “Nordic Model” and our own welfare state in the future? Will we maintain trust and solidarity between different groups, and between the population and the government? And will we be able to generate jobs for the low skilled in an ever more digitalized world of tomorrow? Or will the low skilled have to depend on the welfare state?

Such worries escalated dramatically, in the second half of 2015, when many European countries experienced a ‘migration crisis’. The route from a “politics of welcome” to a “politics of closed borders” became short, not only for the European countries receiving the largest numbers of migrants. Many felt that the migration politics of the past was not sustainable. It led to “panic and regret” as B&C describe it in their paper *Sustainable Migration Framework* (2018).

Norway's main immigration challenges are the low skilled immigrants with limited education and language skills and with cultures and values different from our own. Many of them will have to try to enter the Schengen-area irregularly – no other legal route is open for them - and try to apply for asylum at national borders. Quite a few of the asylum seekers are *recognised as* refugees and will also give rise to family immigration.

Currently (2021) the number of arrivals of asylum seekers to Norway is low and the immediate challenges not so urgent. Norwegian integration policies also give reason to be somewhat optimistic, especially when looking at second-generation immigrants, who in both education and in the labour market often outperform their parents' generation..

However, technologies are changing and the future demand for workers to ‘elementary jobs’ are expected to decrease significantly, as one may read from our EMN Norway Occasional paper *Automation and Robotisation...* (2019). How many low skilled workers will the future labour market be able to absorb, and what will be the effects on job opportunities for different groups of workers?

A related and equally compelling question is the volume, composition and speed of future immigration flows. Population growth, forced displacement including climate-induced

migration¹, economic development generating rising aspirations and more capacity to emigrate are key drivers of emigration from poor countries.

The current asylum and refugee system in the EU/EFTA member countries is often said to favour the few who have sufficient strength and means to pay the smugglers to be able to enter the richer and preferable destinations. Left behind in regional havens are the remaining 85% of the refugees with minimal support compared to those who were lucky to get asylum in the richer countries. This picture becomes even more bleak and unjust if we trace back the migration chain from the regional haven to the country of origin, where we find the internally displaced and *the bottom billion* (the title of Collier's earlier book on poverty), who, in spite of aspirations, neither have capacity nor resources to migrate.

What will happen if a greater number of the bottom billion will be able to convert dreams to reality and start their own migration project towards the richer countries?

Finally, if we turn the perspective to the countries of origin, another key challenge with the current EU/EFTA migration and asylum system is the loss of valuable human resources needed for their post conflict recovery. According to B&C, 30-50% of the entire university educated Syrians have managed to reach European countries and have settled there. Will they ever go back to help rebuild Syria? Probably not. Likewise, in the broader brain drain perspective, *immigration* of educated, skilled migrants, with competences demanded by the labour market, is usually considered to be of great value for rich countries like Norway. In poor countries of origin, on the other end of the migration chain, *emigration* of skilled and educated workers may lead to an unsustainable and destructive "brain drain".

1.1 A promising approach?

"..... the concept of sustainable migrationhas the potential to reset the debate on criteria on which a new consensus can be forged. (B&C 2018)"

Sustainable Migration, as a concept as well as a goal for migration policies, is a promising platform on which to build political consensus in a language which is intelligible not only to political decision-makers, but also to the broader segment of public opinion. *Unsustainable* effects are destructive! Who would go for that?

Sustainable Migration is fairly hard to reject as a goal - a guiding 'star' - for migration policies. However, building consensus in the broader frame as indicated here, will take time as it did with regards to *Sustainable Development* towards the end of the 1990'.

Sustainable development demands political governance of the market according to policy regulations defined by what is held as sustainable levels for environment and nature. This was a kind of political regulation of the market which neo-liberals in the 80' and 90' criticized eagerly. Today, knowledge based policy governance of the market will be seen as a matter of course by the majority of the electorate.

Sustainable migration also demands political governance of migration flows by policy regulations defined by the sustainable volume, composition and speed of out or ingoing

¹ The *World Risk Report* estimates that climate change may trigger population movements of up to 200 million people, which means that the migration challenges of tomorrow *may* be formidable.

migration flows. This is a political governance of the migration flows which may meet with critique from more ‘migration liberalist’ angels and from ‘over-dynamic’ rights thinkers (see paper on Migration and human rights below) –still a power factor in social science and in public discourse.

With *Sustainable migration* as the Government’s goal formulation for immigration policies, a sustainable migration approach should influence Norwegian decision makers and thus in a little way help secure a more ‘*Safe, orderly and regular migration*’ (United Nations General Assembly 2016), but also with a clear, knowledge based political governance of migration flows regulated by what is found to be sustainable levels of volume, composition and speed of migration, and in accordance with a *migration realistic* and *Convention ‘fundamentalistic’* understanding of human rights.

Sustainable migration, as a policy goal, is migration *realism* representing the middle path of policies seeking to establish a more ‘whole of government approach’ to migration and development-humanitarian policies. These are different policy areas, but in many cases targeting the same populations in poor and vulnerable developing countries.

An idea could be to further develop, theoretically and methodologically, and test out a Sustainable migration project to see if such an approach could produce an outcome which proves successful in relation to the challenges above. While this is indeed the final goal, the more specific objective of this paper is the following:

The objective of the remaining part of this paper is to outline thoughts and ideas on how to define and operationalize ‘sustainable migration’ - a basic concept in Norwegian Government documents and the current and earlier Governments’ goal formulation for immigration policies (*Sustainable immigration*). We also find the term well introduced in several EU documents.

The way forward towards this aim will be to draw out key messages from papers and conferences, as well as from the independent thinking and innovation produced by EMN Norway and others over the last five years. They all deal with sustainable migration, more specifically sustainable migration from poor to rich countries which is usually seen as the most demanding flow of immigration to rich welfare states like the Scandinavian ones.

Reminders: A sustainable migration approach deals in principle with all sectors of the migration chain from poor countries of origin via transit countries and regional havens to integration in rich countries of destination. This is also how we should understand the concept of migration as signifying both the national and international aspects of the movement. Still, the current paper as well as the *Sustainable Migration Approach* have an immigration bias as this is probably the key interest of most readers and also the most educational way to grasp the subject matter.

Hoping to be relevant in a European context, there is also a Norway-Nordic bias in this paper: partly because the Scandinavian welfare states often offer the most clearcut examples highlighting the points made.

Let it be noted that ‘migration’, as a general term, is used to refer to all aspects of the migration process from *emigration* to *immigration*- *integration*- *assimilation*. This wide connotation of the term is used quite freely when the points made are understood to be more or less equally relevant for all sectors of the migration chain. When need be, we use amore precise term, e.g. *immigration* etc.

Finally, ‘ a sustainable migration approach’ and ‘*The Sustainable Migration Approach*’ are used throughout this paper. The capital version refers more specifically to what is this paper’s proposals and the first to other possible sustainable migration approaches in general.

2 Theoretical roots

2.1 The concept

A Google search for “sustainable migration” in 2017 gave few hits.² Today (06.01.2) the figure will be around 191 millions. The term has indeed been met with some interest!

‘Sustainable migration’ is a *normative* concept, and like ‘sustainable development’, also a goal that gives direction to policy making. In Norway, ‘sustainable migration’ entered Government documents as a goal formulation in the State Budget Bill for 2018 (Prp1s 2017-2018), and it has later been used in Government documents concerned with issues like immigration, integration, return etc. The goal formulation for the immigration field of the current Norwegian Government is ‘sustainable immigration’. The EU has also published its *Road Map to Sustainable Migration* in 2017. However, the term is still an undefined honorific in all the above documents.

A commonly accepted and used definition of the concept ‘sustainable migration’ does not yet exist, and no *empirical* studies on sustainable migration have so far been carried out. There is no consensus on what we should mean with the term and no ‘general theory’ or methodology on how to do empirical research on the topic. What exactly ‘sustainable migration’ should mean and imply in the broader context of migration management is thus an important question for migration policies with ambitions of being sustainable and knowledge based.

2.2 Two pillars

Collier’s book *Exodus* (2013) and B&Cs’ *Refuge* (2017), do not use the term ‘sustainable migration’. Indeed, as mentioned above, nobody used that term when these books were published. Still, these books serve as the point of departure for a *Sustainable Migration Approach* providing important building blocks and information pillars to be brought forward to the common platform in the last chapter.

Exodus sets the stage and brings forward ‘the whole of route approach’ by presenting migration as a systemic whole and linking emigration from the country of origin to immigration processes in the countries of destination.

Exodus also makes the provocative, but highly relevant point, : « *‘Is migration good or bad?’ .. is the wrong question ...as sensible as it would be to ask, ‘Is eating good or bad?’ In both cases the pertinent question is not good or bad, but how much...and what kind of composition ... is better.*» (*Exodus* p. 26 and p. 260).

² Hits were among others *Sustainable migration in the context of development*, which referred to a high level meeting in Brussels organized by the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU 29th November 2016 and ii) The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation’s report *Towards Sustainable Migration – Interventions in countries of origin* 2017. The first reference seems to be more follow ups of the Global Compact mostly focusing on the role of migration for development and the 2nd focusing on interventions in countries of origin. Both references seemed to use ‘sustainable migration’ as an undefined un-researched honorific. Bivand, Carling et. al. in their paper on *Defining Sustainable Migration* (2018 – see link) confirms 400 hits early 2018.

Exodus does not, in principle, advocate for a migration restrictive or migration sceptic attitude, as some migration researchers seem to argue.³ Whether migration should be restricted or not, is an empirical question. Migration deals with people on the move, not commodities and optimal resource allocation governed by the market. Migration must be *politically governed* according to parameters like volume, composition and speed of migration. Empirical investigation is required to disclose the costs and benefits of migration for the parties involved.

Another ‘take away’ from *Exodus* is related to ‘tipping points’: If migration accelerates, what then? Marginal growth can suddenly lead to a qualitative jump – to a situation of «regrets and panic» which demands policy change. Thus, a key concern in *Exodus* from 2013 was the possible future acceleration of migration and the marginal changes that could lead to ‘system crises’ – something which actually happened two years later when the European migrant/refugee crises broke out 2015.⁴

Refuge: *The Economist’s* review of *Refuge* April 2017 is worth quoting:

«“*Refuge*” is the first comprehensive attempt in years to rethink from first principles a system hidebound by old thinking and hand-wringing. Its ideas demand a hearing.»

Refuge presents promising proposals for rethinking and redesigning the refugee and asylum system. Furthermore, the *Regional solution model* proposed in *Refuge* is a major component of *The Sustainable Migration Approach* and therefore presented more fully in this section.

The ‘traditional’ asylum and refugee system is not seen to provide any answer to compelling questions like «... ‘who to protect; how to protect; and where to protect’.” B&C suggest a significant broadening of whom to protect as *bona fide* refugees by changing the individual ‘persecution’ criterium in the 1951 Convention to a «..force majeure» criterium – «the absence of a reasonable choice but to leave.. » (p. 43-44).

Refuge do not argue for any removal of the 1951 convention, but they do maintain that legal interpretation is influenced by the «trade off between numbers and rights» (p. 204) and the legal framework given too much weight at the expense of policy (p. 42, 208). Nor do they argue that resettlement or the right to seek asylum when spontaneously appearing at national borders, should be abolished (p. 136). However, *Refuge* is a solid argument for ‘regional solutions’, helping refugees where they are, which is a key fundamental in a sustainable migration approach.

2.3 The ‘Regional solution model’

1. Assistance to rescue to reestablish normality and autonomy.

Rescue is the ‘categorical imperative’ of the asylum and refugee system (p. 99) implying ‘to save someone who has escaped from danger in another country to a secure environment free of fear’. (p. 101).

³ Carling, Jørgen, and Cathrine Talleraas. 2016. *Root causes and drivers of migration. Implications for humanitarian efforts and development cooperation*. In PRIO Paper. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo. See also the section on Bivand, Carling et. al. 2018 below as well as the link to this paper at the end.

⁴ For more general info on ‘tipping points’ and ‘Catastrophe theory’, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catastrophe_theory

Normality indicates the standard and aim of required assistance to refugees: «..be restored as closely as possible to pre-refugee conditions (p. 107).»

Autonomy through work and self-reliance (p. 156, 153) is a right which is well established in the Refugee convention. However, this right has not been implemented in many host countries since the 1980's when camps and «*care and maintenance*» became the dominant solution (p. 156) for refugee management.

B&C also highlights a 2nd interpretation of 'rescue': *Rescue* from emergency, poverty and conflict – the development imperative for poor and vulnerable societies in need of humanitarian and development assistance. The key target here are 'societies' and not the 'individuals' of the Refugee Convention. Thus, 'rescue' combine migration/asylum and development policies under a common categorical imperative. They are also policy areas often dealing with the same countries and regions and indeed often having the same goals.

2. *The best place to get rescue and to reestablish normality and autonomy are safe havens in neighbouring countries – the regional solution.*

Regional havens, in an environment probably more similar to home country standards and culture, is the best answer to the fundamental question «*where to protect*». One expected outcome of the 'regional solution model' is reduced secondary migration to European countries. Another more repatriation to build own country when conditions there are sufficiently improved. For refugees who get asylum in rich host countries, repatriation to home country is rare

B&C inform in *Refuge* (p. 129) that for every USD spent on a refugee in safe havens where 88% of the refugees are stationed, 135 USD are spent in rich host countries. One may ask if this is a fair, morally sound and an efficient humanitarian strategy? Is it a sustainable solution for the future? Not so if we follow the arguments for regional solutions in *Refuge*.

Burden-sharing: B&C concludes that 'regional solutions' give the international community a clear moral responsibility for «*burden-sharing*» with the safe haven host countries. Burden sharing should be based on the responsible parties' «*comparative advantage*». The comparative advantage of the regional host countries is often, but not always, closeness to home country in distance, culture, language and living standard etc. Then this is where the chances to reestablish *normality* and for repatriation to home country is best. The comparative advantages of the rich countries are better capacities to finance the costs and investments required as well as providing expertise and trading opportunities. Rich countries are often «...far less well-placed geographically and culturally, but much better placed to provide the finance:...” (p. 104).

3. *A reformed refugee regime in regional havens should to a much greater extent be designed according to the development paradigm.*

The rescue/emergency phase will often require emergency operations and a reformed humanitarian strategy (p. 157), to be handled mainly by NGOs and less by UNHCR: «*A reformed UNHCR should do more by doing less. Its key functions should be political facilitation and expert authority ...pro-actively setting the agenda ...*» (p. 221, 220 instead of mainly “*care and maintenance*”.

The development phase: A reformed refugee system in regional havens must be based on a development political paradigm, targeting both refugees, vulnerable migrants and, not least, local populations and the host countries. This is required to avoid conflict and resistance as well as for creating a win-win situation which can benefit all parties involved. UN's

development organisations, the World Bank and national aid agencies etc. should cooperate closely with a reformed and updated UNHCR.

An example is «*The Jordan Compact*» (B&C, 2018b p. 6). The goal is job creation for refugees and local population and incubating post conflict recovery. Syrian refugees who get jobs in special economic zones where the Jordan compact is implemented, are assumed to better maintain skills, competence and ambitions, may be savings and thus be more prepared for repatriation to build own country.

3 EMN Norway Occasional Papers

Since 2017 EMN Norway has commissioned academics and researchers to develop papers on the various aspects of sustainable migration from poor to rich countries, and to present and discuss these in conferences both in Oslo and Brussels as well as in a closing webinar in December 2020. Our aim was to further develop a model for a sustainable migration approach with required information pillars and building blocks for a broader understanding.

What follows is a selection of key points from the *EMN Norway Occasional papers* produced so far. This selection has been made according to relevance and importance. Text pieces from the eight papers produced have been imported and liberally revised (without reference) to bring these information pillars and building blocks forward to an attempted synthesis in the last chapter of this paper.

3.1 Defining ‘sustainable migration’ (Bivand, Carling et. al. 2018)

Bivand, Carling et. al. note that ‘sustainable migration’ has similarities with other, more established concepts that describe what can be called ‘migration with desirable characteristics’. Examples are the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 10.7 (United Nations General Assembly 2015) ‘*Orderly, safe, and responsible migration*’ as well as the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) with the wording ‘*Safe, orderly and regular migration*’ (United Nations General Assembly 2016).

The similarities between the concepts are, according to Bivand, Carling et. al., that: i) migration involves a diversity of stakeholders; ii) migration can have positive and negative consequences for the various stakeholders; iii) migration have dispersed impacts across the migration trajectory (migration ‘chain’) from societies of origin via societies of transit/regional havens to societies of destination, and finally, iv) the concepts have a potential for sound management. With the right policies in place, the positive aspects of migration can be maximized while the negative ones are minimized.

Bivand, Carling et. al. argue that sustainable migration is not just about migration being safe or orderly *today* (c.f. SDG 10.7 and GCM), but also about its longer term repercussions. Migration entails both ‘costs and benefits’ to individuals and societies, now and in the future - ‘costs’ and ‘benefits’ here understood as shorthand terms for diverse positive and negative impacts, not limited to economic ones, but rather including political, social or cultural impacts.

It is also, following Bivand, Carling et. al., important to note how different stakeholders perceive the various impacts of migration differently, depending on, for example, where they are located in the migration chain. Furthermore, the ways in which migration brings both costs and benefits depends on the context, as for example labour market needs, political

climate, demographic trends, culture etc. The question ‘what is sustainable’ is also dependent on what type of sustainability is discussed. Even if immigration yields clear economic benefits in a country, it may foster social unrest or political distress.

A definition: Bivand, Carling et. al. define ‘sustainable migration’ as follows: “*Migration that ensures a well-balanced distribution of costs and benefits (widely interpreted) for the individuals, societies and states affected, today and in the future.*”

‘Well-balanced’ is, as Bivand, Carling et. al. further argue, open to different interpretations and indeed to political dilemmas of balancing different concerns. There is no unbiased solution to such dilemmas, and choices have to be made about which stakeholders’ perspectives are to be dominant, which perspectives are potentially excluded, and how the costs and benefits of migration are gauged, in order to achieve well-balanced outcomes.

Following Bivand, Carling et. al.’s definition, migration is sustainable if the costs and benefits are shared among the involved parties in a balanced manner. ‘Sustainable’ is understood in relation to a balanced distribution of costs and benefits and *not* in relation to issues like volume, composition and speed of migration flows. This is a crucial distinction we revert to in the B&C section below.

Is ‘sustainable migration’ a fruitful concept? Bivand, Carling et. al. are doubtful:

‘Sustainable migration’ can, according to them, serve a narrowly restrictionist function and carries the potential for dog-whistle politics: it might seem harmless to the public at large but can be taken as an expression of support by those who feel that current levels of immigration are intolerable and endanger ‘our’ way of life. On the one hand, ‘sustainable’ has liberal and progressive connotations, underpinned by the concept of ‘sustainable development’. On the other, it appeals to those who hold restrictive views on immigration, because the word itself serves as a warning about ‘excessive immigration’.

Bivand, Carling et. al. still conclude: With these caveats in mind, ‘sustainable migration’ should be anchored in a definition that emphasizes the holistic perspective on costs and benefits to different stakeholders. And if a rigorous and transparent approach is adopted, in which normative dimensions are acknowledged and scrutinized, the concept of sustainable migration may offer opportunities for genuinely holistic analysis of international migration and its short-term and long-term effects. Such analysis can provide foundations for future policy making.

3.2 B&C’s papers: Sustainable Migration Framework (2018a) and Sustainable Migration in Europe (2018b)

These papers are closely related and are key products informing the Sustainable Migration Approach. The B&C papers develop what they call a «*Sustainable Migration Framework*» - a framework for thinking holistically and ethically about migration in order to debate and inform policy development. This is not an empirical investigation into what *is*, but a framework for knowledge- and policy development from which proposals and ideas and what *ought* to be, can be deduced.

The point of departure for B&C’s framework is their definition of ‘sustainable migration’ (2018a) consisting of three components:

i) “*Migration that has the democratic support of the receiving society*”, relates on the one hand to volume, composition and speed of migration from or to a country and to the economic, social, cultural and political context of that country. We assume that democratic support is related to

the balance between migration and the context in which it takes place. More about this in the final chapter.

ii) “migration that meets the long-term interests of the receiving state, sending society, and migrants themselves, ...” To which extent migration meets the interests of the parties involved and thus proves sustainable according to this criterion, will materialize in due course when the parties involved conclude «*regrets or no regrets*» with the migration chapter concerned.

iii) The third component of B&C’s definition «*fulfils basic ethical obligations*» refers to the earlier mentioned moral imperative «*rescue*» operationalized in two ways: a) ‘Rescue’ as ‘saved’ from danger caused by persecution, war, natural disaster etc. – what we may call a broad refugee policy portfolio, and b) «*rescue*» as aid to help lift poor and vulnerable societies out of poverty and insecurity – i.e. a humanitarian and development policy portfolio.

Is ‘sustainable migration’ a fruitful concept? According to B&C, the answer is clearly yes: “..... the concept of sustainable migrationhas the potential to reset the debate on criteria on which a new consensus can be forged...Our goal is to avoid the destabilising politics of panic. ...we offer a framework for sustainable migration based on a securely defensible ethics that can help guide and inform governments and elected politicians around the world. (2018a)”

Labour migration: While international protection is based on a humanitarian logic of ‘gift giving’ with no expectation of any return to the host country, labour migration is based on a transactional logic of reciprocity as the host country is expecting a return of equal or higher value than the benefits for the migrant workers.

The Framework paper makes a clear distinction between highly qualified and low skilled workers. Talents and highly qualified workers are in high demand in rich countries. The sustainability issue here is the possible ‘brain drain’ from the countries of origin, with serious consequences for those left behind.

B&C’s paper ‘Sustainable Migration in Europe’ states as follows (2018b p. 7): “Every year 10-12 million young Africans enter the labour market, yet only 1-2 million new jobs are created.Africa needs jobs, but it also needs a transformed narrative, one that no longer identifies Europe as the default outlet for youthful aspirations.” Related to this, is the idea of moving jobs to people rather than people to jobs. Africa is short of firms and lacks knowledge on how to run them. International firms can establish branches and train staff in African countries. Incentives as well as projects under the development cooperation umbrella could support such initiatives.

For low skilled workers, the sustainability challenge is the limited labour market possibilities in rich destination countries, related to increasing automatisisation and robotisation and a decreasing number of elementary jobs, something which B&C describe as a coming ‘*game changer*’ for migration to rich countries. What will be the possibilities for low skilled workers on, for example, the Norwegian labour market 2040 – see the Occasional paper on this issue (link above). A related issue is the extent to which immigrant workers replace locals and/or their impact upon wages for those competing with the ‘guest workers’?

Context matters for sustainability assessments: One way to meet this game changer could for example be to deconstruct the Scandinavian welfare state’s equality ideal and emphasis on universal rights. An example: A society based on ‘upstairs’ and ‘downstairs’ with huge differences in salaries, like for example the Emirate Dubai with 85% immigrants among its residents, is able to absorb many more ‘low skilled’ immigrants than rich, egalitarian welfare states. Most of the workers in elementary jobs in Dubai are from Asian and African countries where poverty and inequality are the order of the day. These immigrants will only come if

they expect to gain a surplus to send back home under a situation which is livable as per their standards. Sustainable migration in Dubai is a quite different thing than sustainable migration in welfare states like the Scandinavian countries.

Circular migration, rather than long-term migration, could be a ‘triple win’ for country of origin, migrant as well as host country, and help to share the benefits of migration to more people. B&C argue for this temporary and circular model through which migrant workers can gain more competence and save some capital to bring back home to the country of origin. Circular migration is already being practiced for many years for example with seasonal workers arrangements and with good results for parties involved. Circular migration could be more systematically implemented as a development policy initiative for poor and vulnerable countries which are also countries of origin for Scandinavia and Europe. But again, to which extent will there be any demand for low skilled workers – will there be jobs for them in the future or will the robots do even the tomato picking?

Asylum in Europe: Europe has seven percent of the world’s population, roughly a quarter of the world economy, spends some fifty per cent of the global welfare expenditures and received some eighty per cent of all the asylum applications in the world. Asylum is, in other words, a distinctly European way of permitting immigration from countries outside the members of EU/EFTA.

A significant proportion of the people coming to Europe from Africa and Asian countries are not refugees but economic migrants searching for a better life (See, for example, UNDP 2019: *Scaling fences*). Many of those crossing the Mediterranean, to take that example, are young men, often driven by an idealized narrative of Europe and trying to enter under the asylum umbrella as this, in most cases, is the only legal channel open for them to Europe. To cope with the asylum challenges in Europe, B&C propose that EU Asylum Policy needs to address five main questions. (2018b:7-9):

First, ‘harmonization of asylum criteria’: EU policy for distinguishing between refugees and economic migrants must be consistent across time and space. The ambitions of the *Common European Asylum System* (CEAS), namely the harmonization of asylum criteria in the different member states, has to be achieved.

Second, where should asylum decisions be made? The bulk of decisions should be made outside of Europe, thereby reducing the need for people to embark on dangerous journeys.

Third, how should responsibility be shared? Histories and cultures are diverse also within the EU/EFTA. Thus a solution to this difficult question is only possible if distribution criteria respect citizens’ preferences and receive a democratic mandate in the respective host countries. Refugees who do not have a permanent residence, should stay in the country to which they have been assigned. They should not be entitled to free mobility.

Fourth, how should Europe deal with boats? The EU members must be committed to the saving of lives at sea and they must agree on clear procedures for disembarkation, mostly through agreements with countries outside the Schengen area, where the merits of an application for protection in EU/EFTA-member country could preferably be considered. Disembarkation points should be financially compensated and they will need assurances that unsuccessful claimants will be returned to an alternative safe haven country.

Fifth, how can it make returns work? Europe needs an effective and humane mechanism for returning unsuccessful asylum claimants, either to a regional haven country or to the country of origin. For difficult cases, sustainable migration relies upon creating bargains that are beneficial for all stakeholders involved in the migration enterprise.

3.3 Temporary protection – the Scandinavian experiences (Brekke, Vedsted-Hansen and Stern 2020)

Brekke, Vedsted-Hansen and Stern in their EMN Norway Occasional Paper *Temporary asylum and cessation of refugee status in Scandinavia – Policies, practices and dilemmas* (2020 – see the link above) have delivered an interesting and important perspective on the renewed use of temporary protection in the Scandinavian countries. They note that the Scandinavian countries are currently testing different types of temporary protection statuses, thus moving in the direction that the EU Commission suggested in 2016 and, indeed, in full correspondence with the 1951 Convention.

The authors of the paper hold that temporary asylum permits do not seem to raise any issue under international law. However, restrictions on family reunification have been challenged in both Sweden and Denmark, and a complaint against Denmark of the violation of ECHR Articles 8 and 14 is currently (January 2021) pending before the European Court of Human Rights.

As observed by the authors, the current policy change after the 2015 crises is not the first time the Scandinavian governments have made use of temporary protection. In the 1990s, Bosnian refugees were provided different versions of temporary protection in the three Scandinavian countries. However, they received protection on a collective basis, not as individuals, making this earlier use of temporary protection different from the reintroduced versions we see today, where individuals are recognized as refugees but lose their status when conditions in their home countries improve.

Let it also be noted that Norwegian authorities in a key green paper from 2006, argued against reintroducing the use of the cessation clause criteria because: (1) Only a limited number of cases are likely to fall under the cessation clause's reference to "changed conditions in the home country;" (2) It would appear non-expedient to withdraw permits from persons who may already have integrated well; And (3) the amount of resources needed to administer the practice and secure forced returns would not be proportionate compared to the potential benefits. The committee also provided further arguments, including the high probability of refugees being transferred to new permits, securing the best interest of the child, and dragged-out court cases (Ot. Prp. 75 (2006–2007):102).

The new move towards granting temporary protection was, according to the authors, an outcome of political decisions made as immediate responses to the 2015 crisis in Norway and Denmark which Sweden followed up in 2016. The policies seem to have developed differently in the Scandinavian countries. Sweden applies a balancing standard in revocation cases, while the Danish "paradigm change" has introduced a mandatory revocation rule under which only very few exceptions on human rights grounds are expected. In Norway, the *Directorate of Immigration* shall not only consider whether cessation of the residence permit is a reasonable measure, but also consider whether the person qualifies for other residence permits taking into consideration individual humanitarian reasons, the right to family unity and the best interest of the child.

Due to time constraints and pressing needs in 2015, it was left for later to sort out the detailed legal and practical consequences of the changes introduced, at least in Norway. Temporary permits were issued so to say *post hoc*, without having signaled at the outset of the asylum process that the permits were temporary for as long as protection would be needed. Permanent residency was still the default expectation for everyone involved when the practice was to be changed. This left all parties unprepared, possibly explaining the reactions and resistance when the temporary principle was re-introduced. The unintended consequences of this policy

change, as for example stalled integration, drawn-out case processing, and challenging return procedures, were just starting to appear when the paper was written.

Temporary protection for refugees is, as argued by the authors, a policy instrument that carries with it a set of potential advantages and a list of challenges. Temporary protection may seem to be the emerging new standard of asylum policies in Scandinavia, most systematically by the Danish “paradigm change,” as observed above, according to which all asylum permits since 2019 are being issued with the stated purpose of temporary residence until the situation in the country of origin has improved sufficiently for safe homecoming.

Brekke et al. conclude their paper with the following recommendations to governments that would like to implement or proceed with an asylum policy based on temporary asylum permits. Such a policy should include (1) clear communication to the refugee or asylum seeker upon arrival and when temporary residence permit is approved, of the temporary premise; (2) clear communication of this premise also to all local and national government bodies, NGOs, and the general public; (3) designing reception systems, activities, and settlement practices that allow for integration while remaining open for return; (4) effective assisted and forced return practices with the full cooperation of home country authorities; (5) stable political support for the policy throughout the period of temporary residency and political backing of forced return; and (6) international acceptance of the practice, including by other European countries, the UNHCR, and international courts.

Comments: Brekke et. al.’s paper is a good and indeed useful comparative analysis of the temporary asylum policies implemented in the Scandinavian countries after the 2015 crises. What is highlighted in Brekke et. al.’s paper is that the temporary protection was reactivated *because of the 2015 crises in order to reduce the inflow of migrants and refugees, inter alia the triggering causes*. But the more *formal* causes linked to the 1951 Convention principles and to the ‘uniqueness’ of the asylum institute, i.e. its essence determination to use a more philosophical term, is not discussed.

What is missing is an assessment of, ‘temporality’ as a fundamental principle of the Refugee Convention 1951, indeed of the asylum institute. Why these basic principles have been mostly ‘sleeping’ since 1951 is an important question which asylum and migration experts, as well as social scientists rarely ask. Is the asylum institute sustainable, will it survive in the future if asylum and refugee protection continue to function as an ‘immigration channel’? Such questions are not addressed in Brekke et al’s paper.

The *Sustainable Migration Approach* upholds ‘temporality’ as a fundamental principle for asylum and refugee protection. Protection for as long as protection is needed.

3.4 Human Rights and Migration. A critical analysis of the jurisprudence of the European court of Human Rights (ECtHR)” (Gjems-Onstad 2020)

The Convention is seventy years old. For it to continue to be relevant, judges follow *the doctrine of dynamic interpretation*. At times, ECtHR’s interpretations of the convention are *so dynamic* that the appointed judiciary may be seen to act more like an elected legislature than a judge assessing a case under existing law. When the Court in this way, so to speak, creates new law, it is still not expected to consider the economic and political consequences of this “new legislation”. Some examples:

Recently, the ECtHR has decided some cases that may be categorised under the heading “health immigration”. Thus far these decisions have not received the attention they deserve. The Paposhvili case concerned an asylum seeker with a long criminal record and in need of

very expensive medication. The ECtHR Grand Chamber concluded that deportation could not take place, because Georgia – Paposhvili’s home country – might be unable or unwilling to offer the same treatment as the one available in the host country, costing hundreds of thousands euros. As the prohibition against inhuman and degrading treatment is absolute even if ‘the life’ of the host nation is at risk, the host state cannot muster economic or budgetary arguments or any principle of proportionality in its defense for reducing very expensive medication and the decision to deport a heavy criminal asylum seeker.

Decisions by the ECtHR concerning prison conditions have also proved to prevent deportations of criminals in ways that may be considered controversial. A non-citizen responsible for serious crimes may not be deported to any country where he may be subject to what the Court regard as inhuman or degrading treatment. This result *may* be seen as controversial, given the wide definitions the Court has applied to the terms ‘inhuman’ and ‘degrading’.

The judgement that may have had the strongest impact on European migration policies and the fate of many migrants, is the Hirsi Jamaa case from 2012. Hirsi Jamaa – a migrant from Somalia and 200 other migrants - were saved from drowning by the Italian Coastguard and returned to the harbour of departure in Libya. The case was brought forward for the ECtHR and an unanimous Grand Chamber ruled that the extraterritorial exercise of jurisdiction shall also encompass a vessel belonging to the coastguard of a state operating in international waters. The judgement of the ECtHR was that all the migrants involved should be brought to Italy for individual asylum processes there. They also received 15 000 Euro each in reparation. This judgement *may* have contributed to the practice where smugglers use dangerous and condemnable boats and migrants risk their lives to get close to European coasts and European coast guards?

“Rights” are often used to trump other interests. If an interest is defined as a legal right, and even more so as a human right, it will be exempt by the ECtHR from a balancing of competing interests. The legal paradigm or model for human rights, ‘the individual vs the state’, is formally and judicially correct, but not really reflecting a complete picture. In addition to ‘the individual versus the state’, ‘the individual vs other individuals’ is also a reality. For the state to pay out, someone must pay in. As a slogan or headline, one might say that ‘behind every human right there is a taxpayer’.

The author concludes: Moderate and wise judgements are required to secure human rights and the Strasbourg Court for the future. The Court must strive to be in tune with the sense of justice in European countries. The Court needs to consider the implications of its judgements for costs and policy consequences.

3.5 Robotisation and the possibilities for low skilled immigrants on the Norwegian labour market of tomorrow (Economics Norway 2019)

Studies published by Statistics Norway indicate that the participation rate as well as the employment rate of low skilled third world immigrants are already significantly lower than those of the majority populations. This difference is expected to increase in the years to come:

“The demand for low-skilled workers will...be significantly lower...Our projections imply that almost 50 per cent of the low skilled immigrant population will be dependent on... welfare benefits in 2040.” (Economics Norway 2019 p.: 4)

There are important differences in labour market participation and employment rates between immigrants from different country groups. Immigrants from countries in Africa and Asia have particularly low participation rates – 58% for Asians and 51% for Africans in 2018 q4 according to *Statistics Norway*. For all refugees, on average, the labour market participation rate was 48,5% in 2017 (op.cit).

Some political circles have been convinced that migration would be the solution to the problems associated with “ageing Europe”, not least in the health sector. But, robotisation and automatisisation are already changing the health sector and elderly care in Norway with notable speed, which will influence the demand for workers in the health and care sectors. In Norway we are still far behind e.g. Japan in this respect. The positive employment effects of the “ageing Europe” argument for low and medium skilled immigrants may not materialise in the years to come?

Finally, another challenge in the years to come which could be mentioned here, is the possibility that investments in production capacity have little or no impact on job generation. On the contrary, jobs will get lost to robots and automatisisation, also in the developing countries with the lowest salaries (World Development Report 2016). The net effects of increased investments are hard to estimate.

3.6 What is the significance of culture in analysing sustainable migration? (Toje 2019)

Toje, in his Occasional paper *The significance of culture for sustainable migration* (2019) states that migration to Europe from developing countries in the 2000s has three key traits in common: It is largely supply-driven and largely consisting of low skilled migrants. Thirdly, and most important here, European host countries have persistently underestimated the scale of the influx, the cultural distance between immigrants and natives and the impact these immigration flows have on European countries.

The turning point was the 2015 migration crises when the historically unique combination of large scale low-skilled immigration from distant cultures into European welfare states led to a backlash against multi-cultural ideologies, migration liberalism and ‘over-dynamic’ rights thinking – in short among what we may term the ‘migration romantics’ recruited, most possibly, from the ‘Brahmin left’ (Piketty 2020:869) and ‘The humanitarian-political complex’ (Tvedt 2017) - political forces that had so far dominated the agenda.

It would, as Toje adds, be a mistake to think that the backlash against liberal multiculturalism is solely caused by ‘populist’ rhetoric or policies. The liberal consensus was mainly an outcome of elite perceptions supported by social science scholarship failing to make any principled discussion on what degree of cohesion a nation state requires, as well as failing to take majority culture into account when discussing the effects of large scale migration flows from third world countries. Such failures can create political turbulence, as witnessed in many European countries, not least after 2015.

Toje claims that *nation building* is the answer to the cultural challenges stemming from influx of immigrants from developing countries and distant cultures. The goal must be that new citizens/residents embrace the basic ‘constitutional values’, acquire the general trust the majority populations has in state and government authorities, learn the same cultural reference points and understand that the welfare state is, at its core, a collective insurance scheme, not ‘free money’.

Toje concludes as follows: “*Put simply, a workable definition of culturally sustainable migration might be ‘migration that has the democratic support of the receiving society’, as illustrated in polls taken up at regular intervals.*” Such polls could use questions like: “*In your opinion, should we allow more (culturally distant/low skilled) immigrants from countries outside Schengen to move to our country, fewer immigrants, or about the same as now.*” If public opinion is negative, this can be taken as a sign that current policies are unsustainable.

3.7 Is there a limit to the absorption capacity of host societies, and if so, how can it be determined? (Brochmann and Grødem, 2019)

Brochmann and Grødem’s paper *Absorption capacity as means for assessing sustainable migration* (2019 – see link up front) is an innovative attempt to operationalize ‘sustainable immigration:

“Rate, volume and composition of immigration do influence absorption capacity, economically, socially, culturally.” (op.cit.:6). The *kind* of immigrants that dominate the influx is of importance and their qualifications are central. Typically, refugees will have a different impact on the host country’s system than (skilled) labour immigrants. Impact will again depend on the rights and welfare benefits granted to refugees and asylum sdeekers as well as the broader immigration regime of the host country. This, we remember, reflects the need to analyse and understand sustainability in context.

The labour markets in Scandinavia have typically been hard to enter for some immigrants, because of high productivity and skill requirements, a compressed wage structure which has given high relative wages for low skilled jobs. High wages for such jobs is a driving force for automatisisation. This leads, as we have seen from the earlier paper by Economics Norway (listed above), to the erosion of jobs that are available for low skilled workers.

Unemployed immigrants, often with significant health and social security needs, do drain public budgets disproportionately and generate increased inequality and low wage competition – in other words, challenge the absorption capacity of the welfare state. If, however, immigrants are productively absorbed in the labor market, and are blending in culturally speaking, the challenging issues will most likely not be addressed.

The limits of absorption capacity vary considerably across host countries depending on socio-economic factors, welfare regimes in place as well as the country’s culture and traditions. All of these factors have an impact on a host society’s absorption capacity. The Nordic welfare model is vulnerable to large inflows of persons with qualifications not matching the labour market demand and with cultural backgrounds different than the natives’. The costs to public budgets of such immigrants will be higher in Scandinavia than in countries with less ambitious welfare models. Natives competing with such immigrants in some labour markets pay the major price. Low skilled immigration also increases social inequality.

However, the Nordic model is also a resource for promoting long-term integration. Limited economic inequality and solid educational institutions, mostly free, contribute to long-term integration of immigrants and their descendants. This is reflected by the fact that many descendants of immigrants are successful in education as well as in important areas of society.

Following Brochmann and Grødem, the limits to absorption capacity can in general terms be formulated as follows:

“The inflow must not exceed a rate and a volume that the nation-state system can manage to include in ways that do not drain public budgets disproportionately and which do not generate

substantially increased inequality. Besides, the composition of migrants must be balanced in ways that are perceived as politically legitimate....” (op.cit.: 7).

Brochmann and Grødem ask: If Europe becomes more like the US in terms of diversity, will it also become more “American” in terms of welfare spending (op.cit.:19)? Political debates are ongoing on how governments’ costs, and hence services and benefits, should be limited or even cut. Should benefits be reduced for all, or just for some? The results from an opinion survey done by the *European Social Survey* indicate that only 16 per cent of respondents held that immigrants should have immediate and unconditional access to welfare services and support. 7 per cent said immigrants should never get such access while the remaining held that immigrants should get such access after working and paying taxes for at least one year or when they become naturalized citizens. The idea that newcomers should contribute through working and paying taxes and demonstrate their belonging before they gain access to welfare benefits, was thus seemingly popular, but probably more so on the continent than in Scandinavia where the Brahmin left (Piketty 2020) and The Political-Humanitarian Complex (Tvedt 2017) have had stronger impact.

4 Towards a common platform - a Sustainable Migration Approach

As stated in the introduction, a *Sustainable Migration Approach* can prove to be a promising platform on which to build political consensus in a language which is also intelligible both to political decision-makers and the broader segment of public opinion. *Sustainable Migration* may also prove to be a promising approach for knowledge- and policy development to help deal with the prevailing migration challenges of European countries and the EU?

Based on the theoretical roots and papers above as well as independent thinking, I propose the following leads to a common platform: A *Sustainable Migration Approach* with a set of principles and perspectives informing knowledgebased policy development as well as discourse on migration in a certain direction. Investigations to identify what is a sustainable *level* of migration from or to a specific country will require empirical research and *sustainability analysis* according to these principles and perspectives.

What is presented here is a platform in the making and certainly not any confirmed ‘general theory’. Nor has there been any empirical research to quantify what could be sustainable levels at the different sectors of the migration chain. Comments and suggestions to the draft model presented are highly appreciated.

4.1 Principles

Distinguish between the refugee and labour migration systems: These systems have different logics and serve different purposes. Of course, refugees cross international borders, but their primary need is safety and a return to normality, not international migration *per se*. Rescue and refuge are matters of compassion without expecting anything back – a ‘categorical imperative’ in Kantian terms. Labour migration on the other hand, is a matter of reciprocity, exchange/transactions of equal values and thus something which should be mutually beneficial for the parties involved.

Migration can offer significant benefits. But these benefits are not equally distributed. Often the costs of migration fall on those who are already socio-economically disadvantaged. High-skilled movement from poor to rich countries is usually economically beneficial to receiving

states as well as the migrants, even if not always perceived as politically or culturally beneficial in the host country. High-skilled emigration may also harm sending societies if they lose needed human capital. It is important to find ways to manage such movements in a way that addresses sources of political and cultural concern, and also ensures that sending societies benefit from such movements.

Political governance: Migration cannot be left to ‘the ruling of the market’. On the contrary, sustainable migration demands political governance of the migration flows, indeed *migration realism* implemented with a regulatory regime which is justified, clear, fair and well managed.

Recognise the underlying purpose of refuge: First rescue: When people flee danger or face persecution, they must be given access to safety, and to the satisfaction of basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The duties of rescue must be fulfilled. Second, autonomy must be ensured. In order to enable refugees to live dignified lives, contribute to host communities, and be equipped to ultimately return home, they need to be able to access jobs and education. Thirdly, a route out of limbo. Refugees must eventually either move back home or be permanently integrated somewhere else. Support and help to refugees in regional havens as well as resettlement or asylum in third countries should continue for as long as such assistance is required. After that, if repatriation is not possible, permanent settlement in a host country should be offered.

‘Rescue’ has a second meaning according to B&C’s Framework paper, as it also refers to humanitarian and development aid/cooperation with poor and vulnerable states and regions. The dual meaning of the categorical imperative ‘Rescue’ is a key fundamental in the Sustainable Migration Approach. This imperative provides the ethical fundament for a platform interlinking migration- and development policies.

Regional solutions: Refugees should be assisted where they are first given protection. In most cases, this is in regional havens close to their country of origin. Regional havens are mostly, but not always, similar in culture and socio-economic standards with country of origin. Therefore, host countries of regional havens have a comparative advantage for ‘housing’ the refugees for as long as needed. Geographical closeness also add to the chances for repatriation to build own country when the conditions there allow safe homecoming. Regional solutions are ‘effective altruism’ in comparison with humanitarian migration from distant countries and cultures to rich welfare states.

Regional havens should primarily be supported and managed by development agencies operating according to the development policy paradigm. The targets of support should be host nations and local populations living in the areas of the regional havens, as well as the refugees and vulnerable migrants who have been rescued and assisted there. The international community should assist with needed finances and competencies to enable, for example, business development and the creation of jobs (cf. the ‘Jordan compact’), and eventually follow up with import and custom advantages. In this manner, the host region is supported in a comprehensive way, based on the comparative advantages of parties involved.

Providing refuge is a collective responsibility, and all states should contribute. However, not all states can or should contribute in identical ways. Expecting Japan to admit 200,000 refugees onto its territory within a short period would not work, but equally unrealistic would be to expect Kenya to donate a billion dollars to UNHCR. We must recognise that different states face different capacities and political trade-offs, and a degree of specialisation and implicit exchange may lead to a greater and more sustainable level of provision.

The ‘regional solution principle’ is certainly equally – if not more - valid if the refugee flows are coming in from our neighbouring countries. This is important to keep in mind as the world situation can change quite rapidly, new refugee producing countries enter and others go etc.

As we may understand from the text above, migration and refugees are not ‘Home Affairs’ issues alone. Better coherence across many policy fields is urgently needed.

Resettlement is an important tool for refugee management, but the main criteria of selection should be the need for protection and the possibilities/capacities for integration:

The expectation is that well managed regional solutions with good international support, will reduce secondary migration flows. For refugees who have no prospects for a solution, resettlement in a third country is a possible option. Criteria of selection should be the need for protection and prospects for integration.

Temporary asylum and cessation of refugee status: As mentioned above, ‘temporary asylum’ has its constitutional basis in the 1951 *Refugee Convention* and, yes, the Sustainable Migration Approach takes a ‘fundamentalist’ view in this regard and includes ‘temporary asylum’ as a necessary principle. If this institute shall be able to survive in the future with the support and respect of future generations, it is difficult to see asylum continue as an ‘immigration channel’.

Develop and support circular migration, from poor countries: Circular migration can have substantial reciprocal benefits. This is especially the case when it is based on careful matching between sending and receiving societies’ needs, not just at national levels, but also on the local levels. Circular migration from poor developing countries may be a promising scheme for development cooperation working in tandem with migration authorities.

4.2 Perspectives

The ‘part system’ perspective: Sustainability must be analyzed from economic, social, cultural and political perspectives. The economic perspective is obvious and exemplified by the two Brochmann Government reports (2011, 2017) and research along that line. Currently (early 2021) the social perspective has been less developed, but will probably have to focus on phenomena such as ‘parallel societies’, social cohesion, the question of trust etc. The cultural perspective is also less developed, but Toje’s paper on the significance of culture for sustainable migration, has argued for the role of culture for a sustainable migration approach. The cultural perspective will focus on values, concepts and ideas as well as culturally defined behavior, for example the roles of honor and clan culture which are frequently discussed in public discourse in the host countries. Finally, the political perspective is particularly highlighted by B&C in their Framework paper. Policies must have a democratic mandate.

The perspective of the ‘whole of route approach’: Sustainability must in principle be assessed in relation to the whole migration chain, *inter alia* in relation to the following sectors: i) countries of origin = *emigration*, ii) regional havens/transit countries – **secondary** migration and repatriation; iii) host/destination countries = *immigration-integration-absorption*; iv) sustainable return and v) sustainable circular migration. Thus, the *Sustainable Migration Approach* deals with all the sectors of the migration chain and endeavors to see these in context when valuable for the migration phenomena in focus. One example in this regard could be how changing rules of immigration in countries of destination, may impact on *emigration* from countries of origin with, for example with negative brain drain results. Focus, interest and political relevance decide when to assess something in relation to the greater whole.

The national and the local: Sustainability may, for example, mean quite different things for a nation as a whole than for a specific local community, e.g. for a city or village. A sustainable migration approach could use ‘a strategy of scale’ to better think and act to ensure sustainability for the different levels and units from nationstate to municipalities and from one city to another, indeed within bigger cities from one district to another. With a strategy of scale, one could better deal with the specific needs and challenges of the locality in focus.

For example, a typical challenge for many communities in the peripheries of the nation state – at least in Norway – is depopulation and the need for immigrants to move in and settle to fill up the empty slots. For certain districts in bigger cities like Oslo, the challenges are quite the opposite. Namely localised diasporas growing into parallel societies reaching the tipping points of volume and density too fast and thus the critical mass to reproduce traditional culture instead of positive integration. The challenges could be much the same in countries of origin where, for example, villages can lose most of their important members due to migration.

Today parallel societies are definitely an unwanted phenomenon in Norwegian migration politics. When multiculturalism prevailed as the dominant ideology, as in Norway 20-40 years ago, then ‘parallel societies’ were seen by many as a desired goal of migration policies.

4.3 Sustainability analysis

Sustainable migration is, as claimed in this paper, a question about the volume, composition and speed of migration. These are ‘brute’ facts which are advised as a set of governing parameters for a sustainable migration approach in addition to settlement pattern.

Governing parameters’ should here be understood as quantifiable facts which describe the more objective side of the migration situation. Governing parameters do not, in principle, inform anything about how the migration situation is experienced, assessed and handled by the country or locality in focus.

To investigate this ‘other side of the picture’, we have to look at the context - the economic, social, cultural and political realities - of a country or locality. This context impacts upon how people experience, assess and handle migration and migrants and gives rise to the ‘softer’, more qualitative, ‘subjective facts’ of the migration situation - the opinions and understanding of the various segments of the population. And these differ profoundly as we very well know from the current and recent years debate and discourse on migration.

Sustainability analysis will obviously have to deal with both sides of the migration situation in the country or locality in focus. Sustainability analysis also have to take into consideration ‘the whole of route approach’ in order to properly define the sustainable levels of migration.

Let me first define the governing parameters I advice for a sustainable migration approach. Our focus will be the immigration-integration sector and the case Norway:

- *Volume:* How many arrives (flows) during a defined period? How many are present (stocks) on a particular date? In the country as well as in relevant municipalities/localities.
- *Composition:* Who arrives/resides here, as described by country of origin, educational attainment, skills, willingness and capacity to integrate/assimilate.
- *Distribution/settlement pattern:* How are different immigrant groups settled and distributed in relation to need, district political goals, degree of ‘critical mass’ with

special attention to creation of parallel societies, social cohesion, trust etc.

- *Speed*: The speed of immigration – the speed of change - (flows and stocks) relative to the capacity to integrate new arrivals, is an important governing parameter with reference to the risk of getting parallel societies, lost of trust and social cohesion, as well as ‘political backlash’ and systemic tipping points.

As we have repeatedly stressed: Context matters. These governing parameters may have very different impacts depending on the economic-social-cultural and, not least, political context of the country in focus.

How to proceed?

With B&Cs’ definition of ‘sustainable migration’. The three elements of this definition can serve as indicators for deciding whether the current migration flows are assessed as sustainable by the majority of the population. This holds for analysis of both *emigration* from countries of origin and *immigration* to countries of destination.

The three elements of the definition are discussed in the B&C section of chapter 3. Here we note the following:

i) «*Democratic support*» relates on the one hand to volume, composition and speed of migration and on the other to the needs and absorption capacity of the country in focus, what we in other words could term the economic, social, cultural and political context. If these elements are imbalanced, the situation will probably not be perceived as legitimate and we may expect less democratic support. A dramatic example here is the earlier noted European migrant/refugee crises in 2015.

ii) «*Meets the long term «enlightened» interests...*». To which extent migration meets the interests of the parties involved and thus proves sustainable according to this criterion, will materialize in due course when the parties involved conclude «*regrets or no regrets*» with the migration chapter concerned. If the majority of the population in the host country experience the immigration as too large, too complicated and too fast – if they have such regrets – then the immigration policy that led to this result is perceived as non-sustainable. The same kind of ‘regret-no-regret’ logic is also valid with regard to the migrant himself and to ‘those left behind’ in country of origin. If the migrant is having regrets with his migration venture, then it was not a sustainable project for him. And if those left behind in the country of origin do not receive remittances and assistance as expected and home country needs the skills of those who left, then that *emigration* case was non-sustainable.

iii) The third component of B&C’s definition «*fulfils basic ethical obligations*» has to be investigated as a part of the overall sustainability analysis performed. Are all responsible parties involved operating according to the two interpretations of the moral imperative «*rescue*»: a)«*Rescue*» as ‘saved’ from danger caused by persecution, war, natural disaster, and b)«*rescue*» as aid to help lift poor and vulnerable societies out of poverty and insecurity? For example, rich countries should, according to their ethical obligations and comparative advantage, contribute with finances, development cooperation, direct investments and custom preferences. Thus, ‘mutual benefit’ could be achieved: Host/transit nations and their local populations could receive better and more development aid. Refugees/vulnerable migrants could get better protection and support for normalisation, autonomy and incubation for repatriation. Rich destination countries may receive less secondary migration.

If this would be the outcome – time will have to show - released funds in destination countries due to less costly immigration as well as more humanitarian and development funding due to better and more secure political governance of migration – may become available to target a much larger number of refugees, vulnerable migrants, local populations and host societies in regional havens.

Sustainable migration, as a policy goal, is migration *realism* representing the middle path of current policies seeking to establish a more ‘whole of government approach’ to migration and development-humanitarian policies – different policy areas, but in many cases working in the same poor and vulnerable developing countries, targetting the same populations and facing many of the same challenges.