

*Notes from workshop*

***“Towards a General Theory of Migration”  
based on Paul Collier’s book Exodus***

Ministry of Justice and Public Security  
Thursday 19 January 2017 11.30 - 16.00  
Gullhaug torg 4a, VIP room

**Introduction**

The agenda, a presentation of speakers, a list of participants and the *concept note* for this workshop are attached to these notes.

The organizer, Dr. Øyvind Jaer, welcomed the participants and presented a short overview of the many comments Exodus received following its publication in 2013. Jaer informed that Exodus does advocate controlled migration management, but not necessarily more restrictive immigration policies than those currently in place. Jaer continued to present the author’s objectives with his book Exodus as well as the objectives of the workshop. As to the latter, discussing migration as a systemic whole interlinking countries of origin via the migrant with host country was one aim while drawing out possible policy implications was another. See Jaer’s introduction in a separate attachment.

**Exodus as a platform for a General Theory of Migration**

***Paul Collier’s introductory remarks***

PC started by saying that the book and its reflections on emigration, immigration and integration had emerged from his main area of interest: the poorest of the developing countries (“the bottom billion”). At the time of writing he had assumed that migration issues and policies could be discussed dispassionately and objectively. That assumption proved to be wrong. In this policy area there is a tendency to selling advocacy as ‘hard knowledge’. This creates public anxiety and strident opposition to whatever policies are being advocated. A review in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* did stress, correctly, that the important effects of immigration on host populations are the long term social consequences, not the short term economic consequences.

PC stressed that displacement is a random phenomenon for those affected, whereas migration is a highly selective and wilful process. This means that even though the dividing lines may be somewhat blurred in practice, it is useful to recognize that while those displaced because of e.g. terror and civil wars and seeking international protection in a neighbouring country (haven) may be representative of the affected populations, those who move on from the haven are a selective group of international migrants. One indication of this is that the top ten host

countries of refugees, because they are proximate to countries of conflict, are themselves countries of origin for emigration.

He further stressed that refugees do not want hand-outs but jobs, and to restore normality to their life. Restoring normality should be the aim of programmes to help regional havens with large numbers of refugees from their neighbourhoods. This help should create jobs for the refugees as well as the locals, as a moral duty and as the most sensible policy from an economic perspective. It would benefit the regional havens, the 'rich' countries hosting refugees, and those who are moving on from the havens. As an example he referred to cooperation between the *Jordanian Government*, UNHCR and the *World Bank* to establish industrial zones employing Syrian refugees and Jordanian citizens to produce goods for exports, with the aim that the established capacities and market contacts could be moved to Syria once reconstruction is on the move. A large proportion of the Syrian refugees are from highly skilled workforce of educated young men, who are needed for the post-conflict reconstruction. He further stressed that the international community's duty of rescue according to the *Refugee Convention* is not a duty to give the refugees a right to immigrate permanently. The moral duty to rescue from hopelessness is a duty to promote development once the cause of the displacement is no longer present.

The absolute lifetime expected income gap is the main driver for non-displacement emigration. Emigration from poor to richer countries is a risky and costly enterprise. The poorest are not able to finance the move. Thus, emigration from poor countries to richer is likely to increase as the poor in poor countries get somewhat richer. Like international capital movements, such emigration may be a sensible private strategy for the individual, but the effects on the origin societies may be both positive and detrimental. Among the benefits are the remittances, but taking into account the costs of migration they may be smaller than the benefit that might have resulted from the emigrants' remaining in and working in their country of origin. An important detrimental effect of emigration, especially for small countries, is the 'brain drain' of skilled persons, even though the expectation of getting an opportunity to emigrate, and to earn an income which is an order of magnitude higher than in the home country, may be an incentive to obtain higher qualification through education. The best solutions for poor origin societies are for its citizens to have jobs or education opportunities in rich host countries for a limited period of time and then return, with savings, education and experience – in short circular migration.

PC made the point that faster relative income growth in poor country may not reduce significantly the income gap to rich countries. This means that incentives for migration will remain in the short and medium term.

PC went on to discuss the effects of migration on the host country. An important argument in *Exodus* in this regard is the resulting diversity and "diaspora dynamics". For host countries an immigration equilibrium can be said to exist when the diversity is at a sustainable level, i.e., at least in principle, when the rate of absorption of immigrants into the host society of the various relevant diaspora groups is equal to the rate of immigration. From a policy perspective it is a challenge that immigration can be controlled directly and is fairly easy to measure, while absorption cannot be easily controlled, nor can the rate of absorption be easily measured.

While immigration rates may increase by lower travel and communication costs if unhindered by immigration regulations, absorption may be slowed by easy contact with home country

such as new communication technologies and (lower) costs of travel. Too low levels of diversity are easier to correct than too high, because the former can be influenced by migration policies, whereas the latter requires effective integration policies. PC suggested that the different approaches to integration of immigrants used in European countries may help identify strategies that are more effective than others.

PC suggested the following as a challenge to Norway: How to maintain in the general population a willingness to maintain the high level of welfare transfers from high income inhabitants to low (or no) income groups when immigrants are numerous among the latter. Research results made available after the publication of *Exodus* on the willingness to pay taxes indicate a reduced willingness to pay taxes if many of those benefiting are immigrants.

### Questions and comments

**Q:** One consequence of the 2015 surge in irregular migrants and asylum seekers in Europe has been larger numbers of immigrants that may be difficult to integrate. What are reasons for the (seemingly) more effective integration in (parts of) the U.S. than in EU/EFTA member countries? Is it an impact of freer (internal) movements and/or different welfare systems?

**A:** As we can assume that refugees did not really want to emigrate and come in (large) groups, they may be less inclined for integration than migrants who deliberately emigrate in order to build a future somewhere else. Traditional (rich) immigration countries (e.g. Australia, Canada and USA) are not easily comparable to the European case because their immigrants to a much larger extent are admitted through an aggressive points system, which heavily reward qualifications and language skills. This means that the immigrants benefit the receiving/host countries much more, if at all, the countries of origin. Canada, USA etc. also ‘pick the best’ refugees for resettlement in their countries.

In Europe the German and Swedish reactions to the 2015 surge may serve as a confirmation of the *Exodus*’ (dis)equilibrium thesis. For Norway, the free movements between Schengen member states may generate similar challenges if this results in increased immigration from Southern and South-East European countries.

**Q:** What about transit countries? Why are they not discussed in *Exodus*?

**A:** Their situation, including that of haven countries, is being discussed in a new book (*Refuge*) that I have written together with my Oxford colleague Alexander Bettes, soon to be published. It argues that it has been a mistake to leave the neighbouring haven countries to cope with the displaced Syrian population. It also points out that the North African countries are ‘fragile states’, partly because of the wrong policies of Western countries. A priority is to re-establish/build stronger States with monopoly of “violence” and better governance.

**Q:** How does PC regard the forthcoming negotiations of a *Global Compact on Migration*?

**A:** There are reasons to be pessimistic about the outcome, because e.g. African countries are embarrassed by the current emigration desires of a large proportion of their (educated) young ones, and the immigration countries are mostly reluctant to accept the youngsters from third countries as immigrants. Furthermore, the African countries do not have a narrative that encourages the return of failed migrants, nor a narrative that fosters confidence in a future back home.

**Q:** Is there a need to re-construct the *Refugee Convention (RC)*, which emerged from the WWII experience with mass displacements, mainly in Europe?

**A:** The need is to re-think how the RC is implemented. The camps in haven countries as well as the reception centres in the European countries are infantilising those who live there by just providing basic food, shelter and health care, but no opportunities for work and earning an income, cf. the above reference to the UNHCR/WB/Jordanian initiative for a mutually beneficial alternative.

## **Host country perspective: the migration – integration nexus**

### **Jan-Paul Brekke's presentation**

JPB started out by reviewing similarities and differences in responses to immigration in Denmark, Norway and Sweden . He pointed to a common history with regard to the composition of immigration, stretching from labor immigration in the 1960s and 1970s, continuing asylum arrivals from the 1980s onwards, reaching a peak in the 2015 refugee management crisis. JPB stressed that asylum policies had dominated national discussions on migration, even in periods where numerically, other types of immigration were more prominent. The three countries developed rather different policies and rhetoric in response to these developments, with Denmark as the most and Sweden the least restrictive, and with Norway somewhere in-between. Political sentiments and groups that are negative to immigrants and asylum seekers, without necessarily distinguishing between them, have developed in all three countries, but seemingly stronger in Denmark and Sweden than in Norway.

Recent opinion polls in Norway indicated that a clear majority of respondents had a positive or neutral attitude to immigration, with clear differences based on voting intentions. However, only a small majority had a positive or neutral opinion about how integration in Norway is going, and a clear majority was worried about an increase in xenophobia.

JPB then outlined that integration can be understood as :

- systems integration (i.e. in labour markets, housing markets, taxation and social security, identity recognition)
- social integration (e.g. through participation in the local community, friends and family, mental well-being)
- value integration (i.e. shared values, the questions remains which values are, or should be shared in Norway?).

Is there a 'Project Norway', where shared values constitute a common platform? If so, would a mini-platform point to core 'Norwegian values' such as 'human rights' (both individual and collective), democracy and (gender) equality.

JPB pointed out the important differences between the logics of 'voluntary' migration and 'forced' migration. The first being dominated by a balance between freedom to move and

costs/benefits (economic and social) for the host society. Forced migration posing a challenge for governments by demanding a balance between the right to protection combined with the population's willingness to help, versus the need for control and national self-interest.

### *Comments*

- The questions asked in an opinion poll on attitudes towards immigration does not make any distinction between labour migration from neighbouring countries and refugee/asylum immigration from countries distant in culture and ways of living from those of our own country. Exodus is a book on migration from poor to rich countries and the concept of “cultural distance” is important to understand key messages of the book. If the questions in opinion polls distinguished between different groups of immigrants, then the results for Norway might have been quite different from those presented.
- Integration policies may need to recognize that different immigrant groups may have very different starting situations, without creating discrimination, and that rapid volume changes may make value integration difficult.
- The forms and conditions for family formation is important for the speed of integration or absorption of immigrants: e.g. importing the spouse from the country of origin may hinder integration for the first generation.
- **Mutual regard** between immigrant groups and the indigenous population is important, and more important than mere **mutual respect**.
- The degree to which members of the second generation of immigrants is better integrated than the members of the immigrants themselves differs both between host countries and between immigrant groups.
  - Unfortunately, there was no time left for Jan-Paul Brekke to reply to these comments.

## Countries of origin perspective: the migration—development nexus

### **Jørgen Carling's presentation**

JC started by reviewing how a ‘balance sheet’ of attitudes to emigration from the countries of origin has fluctuated between the 1960s and 2010s, being mainly positive (in the 1960s and after 1990) and being mainly negative in the 1970s and ‘80s, with a tendency to less positive views currently. He referred to relevant reports/studies from these periods, and pointed to the fact that *Exodus* has a much more pessimistic subtitle in its German edition than in the earlier English language original.

JC further outlined how the experience of life's conditions and prospects together with their aspirations influence people's desire for change hereunder also migration aspirations. These aspirations will impact upon who will actually venture into the 'migration lottery' – given the ability to finance the enterprise and an enabling migration infrastructure (e.g. receiving countries' regulations and enforcement capacities) as well as enabling diaspora and smuggling networks.

Using two world maps JC showed how the aspiration to emigrate to 'rich' countries, as expressed in world-wide polls, almost exactly coincide with those countries for which the 'rich' countries have erected the highest obstacles to legal immigration. Pointing to the challenges created by voters (in rich countries) wanting tough restrictions on immigration and voters also rallying around individual migrants with whom they sympathize, he said that to overcome the 'toxic context of high emotion and little knowledge' – a theme in Exodus - it would be necessary to:

- Analyse the role of emotions in migration policy making
- Be explicit about the emotions (values) that inform our analysis"
- Identify dilemmas that require emotionally informed judgements

JC concluded by saying that to understand the impact of migration on the countries of origin it is necessary to understand the effects on those who fail in their attempt to migrate in addition to the consequences for all those who remain behind.

### **Final comments by Paul Collier on policy implications**

Restrictive immigration policies have contaminated the duty to rescue from danger and despair. Allowing for *temporary* migration has a better chance of having a positive effect on the countries of origin than permanent, long term migration. The challenge is to design (immigration) policies that encourage temporary migration rather than permanent migration. It is important to find a combination of carrot and sticks that may achieve such 'circular migration'. Allowing for re-immigration seems to be an effective encouragement for return to the country of origin, but may also serve as a 'pull' factor.

It is not clear how the 'good' and 'poor' integration experiences of different immigrant groups into the host countries can be linked to specific policies and features of the host society. Different local host communities have different integration experience with the same immigrant groups.

The longer term evaluation of a group's degree of integration may prove to be quite different from a short term judgement, especially when the second generation's experience and behaviour is taken into account. It seems clear, however, that an early opportunity for work and education is important, in particular for immigrant women and their children.

**PC** concluded by saying that it has been a massive misallocation of European countries' funds to spend much more on asylum seekers than on refugees in haven countries. It seems likely

that if more had been spent in the neighbouring haven countries, fewer would have taken “the migration lottery” chance of crossing the seas to Europe. New global policies are needed to enable better regional solutions: The refugee system needs to be reformed, and to be linked to development policies.

## Annex

### Workshop agenda

*11:15-11:30: Arrival - snacks and coffee*

*11:30-11:50: Introduction and quick presentation of participants (Øyvind Jaer)*

*11:50-13:20: Discussing Exodus as a platform for a General Theory of Migration*

- a) An “updated” outline of key points and perspectives in **Exodus** (Paul Collier 1 hour)
- b) Questions, answers, discussion - **with light lunch** (30 minutes)

*13:20:14:05: Host country perspective; The migration – integration nexus*

- a) How do the perspectives of **Exodus** fit the current situation in Scandinavian countries with regards to migration management, integration and the role of the diaspora? (Jan-Paul Brekke 25 min.)
- b) Questions, answers, discussion (20 min.)

*14:05:14:50: Countries of origin perspective: The migration—development nexus*

- a) The causes and consequences of emigration from the Global South: who are the losers and winners? (Jørgen Carling 25 min.)
- b) Questions, answers, discussion (20 min.)

*14:50:15:00: Coffee and stretch*

*15:00:16:00: “Making migration policies fit for purpose” – preferably with reference to Northern Europe*

- a) Policy implication and policy advice. An “updated” version of the **Exodus** position/a version more adapted to Northern Europe. (Paul Collier 30 min.)
- b) Questions, answers, discussion (30 minutes)

### Workshop organisation

#### *Organiser*

- The workshop is organised by the *Norwegian National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (NO EMN NCP)*, consisting of the *Ministry of Justice and Public Security* and the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)*.

### *Workshop speakers*

- **Paul Collier** is Co-Director of the *Centre for the Study of African Economies* at Oxford University, Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government, and Professorial Fellow of St Antony's College, University of Oxford. His research has covered the causes and consequences of civil war, the effects of aid and the problems of democracy in low-income and natural resources rich societies, urbanization in low-income countries, and private investment in African infrastructure, among other topics. His book *Exodus: How migration is changing our world* (Oxford University Press, 2013) examines migration from the perspectives of migrants, countries of origin, and countries of destination.
- **Jørgen Carling** is Research Professor of Migration and Transnationalism Studies at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). His research interests include migration theory, migration management, human smuggling, transnational families, and migrant remittances. He holds a PhD in human geography but takes a broad interdisciplinary approach, and has published in anthropology and economics journals as well as in all the leading journals specializing on international migration. He has held visiting fellowships at the University of Oxford, the National University of Singapore and the United Nations University in Maastricht.
- **Jan-Paul Brekke** is a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Social Research in Oslo. His fields of expertise include migration and asylum policies, integration and inclusion, harmonization of European migration regulation, migration destination patterns and motivations, and how migrants experience migration legislation and practices. His latest publication (in *Migration Studies*) analyses the connection between asylum regulations and flows. Brekke is frequently used as expert commentator in Norwegian media.

### *Workshop organiser and moderator*

- **Øyvind Jaer**, National EMN Coordinator, Department of Migration, Ministry of Justice and Public Security

### *Adviser*

- **Magne Holter**, Assistant Director General, Department of Migration, Ministry of Justice and Public Security

### *Rapporteur*

- **Eivind Hoffmann**, Senior Adviser, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration



## Workshop participants

### Academia/Research

- **Paul Collier**, Co-Director, Centre for the Study of African Economies, Oxford University  
Professor of Economics and Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government
- **Jørgen Carling**, Research Professor, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)
- **Jan-Paul Brekke**, Senior Researcher, Institute for Social Research Oslo (ISF)
- **Grete Brochmann**, Professor, University of Oslo
- **Lillian Baltzrud**, Senior Adviser, Research Council of Norway

### NGO

- **Pål Nesse**, Senior Adviser, Norwegian Refugee Council

### Ministry of Finance

- **Lars Wahl**, Deputy Director General, Economic Policy Department

### Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- **Aud Kolberg** Deputy Secretary General
- **Svein Dale**, Policy Director, Section for International Development Policy
- **Veslemøy Lothe Salvesen**, Senior Adviser, Section for Horn of Africa and West Africa
- **Tove Skarstein**, Director, Section for Migration

### Ministry of Justice and Public Security

- **Sylvi Listhaug**, Minister for immigration and Integration  
*Department of Integration*
- **Barbro A. Bakken**, Director General
- **Hege Hovland Malterud**, Deputy Director General
- **Pia Buhl Girolami**, Specialist Director
- **Espen Thorud**, Senior Adviser  
*Department of Immigration*
- **Terje Sjeggstad**, Director General
- **Snorre Sæther**, Deputy Director General
- **Siw Lexau**, Deputy Director General
- **Magne Holter**, Assistant Director General
- **Karoline Gamre**, Senior Adviser
- **Stine Münter**, Senior Adviser
- **Sindre Wennesland**, Senior Adviser
- **Ine Bjørndal**, Senior Adviser
- **Øyvind Jaer**, Senior Adviser

### Norwegian Directorate of Immigration

- **Tone Loge Tvetter**, Deputy Director, The Asylum Department,
- **Eivind Hoffmann**, Senior Adviser, EMN Norway

## Concept Note

Paul Collier's **Exodus** (2013) is, in his own words, an attempt to:

- "...generate a unified analysis of ....specialist research, across social science and moral philosophy" (p.6)
- "...provide the building blocks for an overall evaluation of migration." (p.24).
- based on the evidence and arguments presented in the book, **Exodus** is also an attempt to "...open popular discussion of migration policy beyond views which are theatrically polarized..." (p.7).

Collier succeeds well:

**Exodus** attempts to conceive migration as an interlinked whole!

**Exodus** covers and links the various aspects of migration from the country of origin to the host country. It aims to give the emigration and country of origin perspective equal attention to the immigration and host country perspective. Exodus/emigration can also be a challenge – partly, as we learn from the book **Exodus**, an unintended outcome of host countries migration policies.

**Exodus** dives into questions of migration and its effect on key issues to provide fertile directions for country specific empirical research and policy formation: How does migration affect (i) the country of origin? (ii) the migrant himself? (iii) the indigenous population in host country?

The inter-linkages, perspectives and questions dealt with in **Exodus** appear to be highly relevant as a platform for a constructive discussion towards a general theory of migration and for policy making.

**Exodus** - attempts to infer policy consequences and provide policy advice. Given **Exodus** prediction that migration will accelerate for years to come, the challenge is: "*what migration policies are appropriate?*"

**Exodus'** position is clear and mostly in line with UN sustainable development target 10.7 (see below), as well as targets 8.8, 16.9 and 17.18: Migration controls are going to be increasingly important tools of policies guided by the pertinent question "*....how much is best*" (**Exodus** p. 26). To use Collier's metaphor: Migration is neither good or bad, but like eating, so to speak "a natural fact" of which there can be too little and indeed too much as well as more or less healthy compositions. In other words: Which levels and compositions of i) emigration from countries of origin and ii) immigration to host countries, are healthy/sustainable?

The purpose of this workshop is to approach these challenging and politically highly relevant questions by using **Exodus** – in the way understood here - as a platform *Towards a General Theory of Migration*.

Finally some words on terms: We use the term "*general*" to signify that a *General Theory of Migration* must be based on a "*unified analysis of ....specialist research, across social sciences and moral philosophy*", and attempts to grasp the "whole" as structures and processes interlinked. We use the term "*theory*" and not "*understanding*" to emphasize that this "General Theory" could lead to many fertile country specific hypotheses which can be tested and followed up in research, for example in Norway.

### SDG target 10.7

*Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies"*