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Human mobility in a globalising world

Editorial

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Editorial

Armando Montanari

- 1 The present publication is the fourth collective publication by the International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission on Global Change and Human Mobility (Globility). There are also many other works that have been published in the form of contributions to international specialised journals, but also national publications. The variety of publications in native languages constitutes the added value of the works promoted by the IGU – an element of great cultural significance although one not easy to evaluate and measure.
- 2 The research programme proposed by Globility was approved by the IGU Executive Committee in the autumn of 1999 and has been in operation since the IGU Congress of Seoul in August 2000, remaining so at least for the present phase until the IGU Congress of Glasgow in August 2004. A project of this dimension and complexity does not represent an easy venture and it is certainly the result of a combined effort which began much before the year 2000, requiring an ever greater number of colleagues and scholars able to carry out this type of research in various parts of the world. Although many contributed to the launch, and we hope that they will continue to contribute to the success of the project, this type of initiative always has a small group of pioneers who silently prepare the methodological and programmatic basis for its development. Perhaps one could even identify the precise moment in which the project lifted off – that is from an abstract idea, a hypothesis or a dream – the moment in which it began to transform itself into something more definite and concrete.
- 3 Following four years of operation, Globility has entered a phase of maturity and now the results of certain methodological approaches are beginning to emerge. The initial group of pioneers has been joined by a sizeable team of colleagues who have undertaken to collaborate with intensity, enthusiasm and skill in the success of the project.
- 4 Globility considers it a fundamental element to endeavour to operate within the framework of continuous collaboration between North and South. This aspect which should form the cultural essence of each IGU Commission becomes a crucial element for a Commission whose scientific objective is human mobility. This condition,

however, is not an easy one to implement. Participation in Commission meetings is a costly affair and in contrast to the universities of the wealthier, industrialised countries, the others have great difficulty in funding their scholars' trips. The IGU Globility Commission has over one hundred members amongst which approximately half are Europeans and the remainder originate from the rest of the world. As participation is difficult for many colleagues, Globility has endeavoured to organise meetings in as many continents as possible. The meeting location has thus determined the nationality of the participants and therefore the cultural approach and the subject-matter.

- 5 Globility's first meeting was held on 20th-22nd April, 2001, in Loreto Aprutino, Pescara, Italy. Thirty-four papers as well as the two welcome addresses were published in the volume "Human mobility in a borderless world?" edited by A. Montanari.
- 6 The second meeting sponsored by the Globility Commission was convened at the annual congress of the Association of American Geographers on 21st March, 2002, in Los Angeles, U.S.A. The third meeting was held at the IGU Regional Conference on 8th August, 2002, in Durban, South Africa. The fourth meeting was run jointly with the Institute of Geography, Mongolian Academy of Sciences, on 10th September, 2002, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. A selection of the papers presented at these three meetings was published in the volume "The new geography of human mobility. Inequality trends?" edited by Y. Ishikawa and A. Montanari. In the meantime, during the course of 2002, certain colleagues from the University of Brussels prepared and coordinated a research project on "Interregional migrations in Europe" (MIRE), funded by the European Commission (research VS/2001/0247) and to which contributed researchers from the universities of Brussels, Copenhagen, Duisburg, Madrid, Newcastle, Pescara and Vienna. The final report was produced by C. Vandermotten, G. Van Hamme, P. Medina Lockhart and B. Wayens and was published in the volume "Migrations in Europe. The four last decades"
- 7 The fifth Globility meeting was held on 3rd-5th April, 2003, in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. The local organizer was Pere Salvà-Tomàs (University of the Balearic Islands). Forty-five scholars from seventeen countries attended and twenty-three papers were presented. The sixth meeting was a Session organised together with the European Society for Geography (Eugeo) during the RGS-IBG Annual Conference in September 2003 in London.
- 8 The Globility Commission has decided to publish the results of the meetings in Palma and in London within the framework of collaboration already established with C. Vandermotten, co-editor of *Belgeo*. P. Salvà was particularly involved in the organisation of the Palma di Mallorca conference; his initiative and organisational skills made the Globility meeting accessible also to colleagues coming from developing countries and to young scholars with limited means. For this reason, we must also thank the University and the Government of the Balearic Islands (Universitat de les Illes Balears e il Govern de les Illes Balears).
- 9 For some of the scholars who collaborated in this edition of *Belgeo* it is also particularly difficult to access international publications. These are necessarily produced in English, a language and culture foreign to the great majority of those that contribute to the Commission's work. Furthermore, not all the names of the researchers who contribute to Globility are sufficiently well-known in Anglo-Saxon literature to have commercial "pulling power" and therefore are of little interest to the publishers that base their

activities on economic sustainability. The freedom of choice granted by Belgeo has enabled us to select the contributions on the basis of quality rather than their reputation. This is a great opportunity for those that have the possibility of accessing the international market of culture, but also for those readers who will in this way become acquainted with different worlds and schools of thought of great value, even though at times unfamiliar. Thus, Globility has created within its framework a group of scholars who have learned to know each other better, to collaborate and who succeed in undertaking all of this in a climate of friendship and mutual respect. Like all the IGU Commissions, Globility is an open entity and is thus particularly interested in welcoming new arrivals and collaborations.

- 10 The selection of the papers and the proposals for their re-elaboration are the result of a joint effort with P. Salvá and C. Vandermotten. The special issue could not have been realised in the manner and timeframe desired without the skill and continuous collaboration of Tania Lines, who also provided linguistic editing.
- 11 The Palma de Mallorca and London meetings focused on human mobility in the European Union and in the rest of Europe. The European Union (EU), from the 1990s, and therefore from the break-up of the Soviet Union and the fall of the communist regimes, found itself faced with two simultaneous problems: its enlargement to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area. The enlargement to Central and Eastern European countries is for the time being limited to the ten countries which have requested accession to the EU, eight of which were admitted from 1st May, 2004. The Euro-Mediterranean free trade area will be established by the year 2010 and will include the fifteen EU member states and the twelve non-EU Mediterranean countries which signed the Barcelona Declaration in 1995. The creation of a large Euro-Mediterranean free trade area has until now been a slow process and the bilateral treaties between the EU and the individual Mediterranean countries are still at the preliminary stage and only a few countries have begun to reduce the excise duty which should be reset to zero in the year 2010. Despite delays, by the first decades of the century a free trade area could be created to which at least 40 countries would adhere. The priorities of the work programme defined in the Barcelona Declaration should guarantee the control of illegal migratory flows but should also enable a human mobility comparable to that granted to merchandise. There is much concern about the consequences that this would have on the basis of the newly-acquired freedom of movement and settlement and therefore on the feared possibility of a new mass migratory flow towards the EU Member States. The East-West migratory flow would overlap the South-North flow which, already consistent, could subsequently grow as a result of the creation of a free trade area in which all fifteen EU countries would participate.
- 12 The EU's enlargement to the East has reopened the debate on the effective consequences that this would have on the mobility of the population. The EU is based on four freedoms of movement: goods, services, capital and persons. If the situation does not change, it is possible that from 1st May, 2004, the new citizens, to all effects EU Nationals, will on the contrary be considered non-EU citizens insofar as their capacity for human mobility. The paradox results from the decision made in 2004 by the fifteen current Member States to insert a clause in the accession treaties which would grant them transitory periods, of up to a maximum of seven years, which limit the freedom of movement of the citizens of countries included in the enlargement. Indeed, it is feared

that there could be an invasion of workers from the “new” countries, attracted by higher wages and a more generous and efficient social service system. A regulation that is certainly not considered in positive terms by the circa seventy-three million new Europeans but which could also have negative repercussions on the development of the economy of all the Member countries. The problem was already dealt with following the fall of the Berlin Wall as an instrument of foreign politics. The Central and Eastern European countries, using the threat of large emigration flows, pressurised the Western countries in order to obtain the economic aid necessary for the development of their areas of origin and therefore to avoid the necessity of migration. On the basis of studies carried out by the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA), independently from the EU enlargement processes, a model was conceived to identify the number of immigrants from Eastern European countries, considered in a broad sense and therefore also including the ex-Soviet Union republics, according to six alternative scenarios based on three levels of migration – low, medium and high – and two levels of integration – low and high. A maximum number of immigrants from the East was forecast, for three scenarios in the year 2000, with in excess of 5,000,000, for two scenarios in 2010 with 5,700,000 and for one scenario in 2010 with 6,800,000. All the scenarios predict an end to East-West migration flows in 2010 and, in consideration of the high levels of integration, it is estimated that in 2050 it will no longer be possible to identify sub-groups from Eastern Europe in Western Europe. With the opening of negotiations for the enlargement, the free circulation of workers has been a subject which has provoked reflection, the construction of scenarios and discussions. On the occasion of previous enlargements to countries providing workforces, there were also similar discussions and transitory periods were agreed upon, as in 1981 upon the accession of Greece and in 1986 with that of Spain and Portugal. In 1971, the total number of Greeks, Portuguese and Spanish in the Benelux countries, France and Germany had surpassed two million and this was certainly a matter for concern for the authorities of the then European Community from an accession point of view. In 1981, the number of these immigrants, as a result of the reversal of migration flows from the mid-1970s, dropped to slightly over 1,800,000. However, due to the ever-present fear of an uncontrollable migratory flow, Spain and Portugal were given a transitory period of seven years, and of ten years for entry into Luxembourg, subsequently reduced to six years since there was no evidence of the risk. The enlargement which is about to take place also poses the concern that a new and massive migratory flow could be generated especially towards those countries in which there already live communities from Central and Eastern Europe and specifically towards the frontier regions. This is the case for Germany and Austria which already host 80 per cent of the workers from Eastern countries and which have anticipated their wish to make use of their right to restrict entries until 2011, the maximum length of time consented for a transitory period. In a study carried out in 2000 for the European Commission, it was calculated that immigration in the first years following accession could reach an annual flow of 335,000 which could be halved in approximately ten years. However, the flow would essentially be concentrated towards two countries: Germany, slightly less than 70 per cent; and Austria, 10 per cent. The fear of invasion is therefore widely exaggerated and the restriction of entries is economically short-sighted. Human mobility could be worth at least 0.2-0.3 of the GDP, and is therefore essential to the development of the destination territories and economies.

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