Global Migration Management and Biopolitics


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Introduction

The authority to decide over who can legitimately enter a state’s territory is usually understood as an intrinsic part of state sovereignty. Migration policy still remains largely a matter of states’ prerogative. However, in recent years the lack of a global migration regime has spurred the interest of scholars, as evidenced in various research projects. But it has also been identified as problematic by policymakers at several levels, causing the establishment of several transnational cooperative fora on the regional as well as on the international level, with varying degrees of ambition. This has also caused the appearance of, or the increased importance of, international agencies of various kinds. In this paper, my empirical focus is the arguments for enhancing states’ dialogue, cooperation and coordination of migration policy, with the aim of strengthening global migration management.

In a critical assessment of current trends towards global migration management, Franck Düvell (2002) described this as “a major population policy process”, by which migration policy represents a strategy of “social engineering” on a global level. In this paper I have chosen to follow up on these thoughts and try to approach the subject from the point of view of biopolitics. This term was developed by Foucault in order to describe an important development in modern politics, by which the population appeared as a specific problem for governments to handle. My main aim is to investigate whether biopolitics could be a useful interpretative approach to the issue of international cooperation on migration management.

What we do see is the “mounting consensus that strengthening international co-ordination and cooperation in this area is necessary, if not essential, to ensuring that the benefits of migration are maximized” (UNFPA 2004: 18). Leaving aside the discussion on the likelihood of a “proper”, institutionalized regime ever to materialize, I do believe that these initiatives constitute a fruitful site for studying the current as well as possibly the future discourses of, and handling of, the movements of people in a global era. It could perhaps be argued that the regional European migration regime is the most advanced when it comes to cooperation on migration, and therefore most appropriate to study. But what is interesting about the international initiatives in question is precisely their global ambition – their aim is to serve the interests of both sending and receiving countries (as well as the migrants themselves) and therefore take also matters of development into account. In short, these global initiatives may bring light also to the relations between the North and the South as embodied in the actual movements of bodies.
I will start out the section on biopolitics by briefly introducing Foucault’s thoughts on the subject. Then I turn to biopolitics more directly related to my subject: biopolitics and the state’s need for identifying and knowing its population, and biopolitics and mobility. This is followed by a brief empirical overview of the arguments for international cooperation on migration. The paper ends with a discussion on the applicability of biopolitics for the initiatives and arguments presented (see footnote 3). First of all, however, I want to contextualize the arguments for global migration management by briefly describing the contemporary regulation of mobility rights, the eligibility for legitimate movement over state borders.

Contemporary mobility rights

To put the international initiatives into context, one must briefly reflect on the role of migration control in an era of increased international interconnectedness. This section contains some notes on contemporary mobility rights.

Over the last decade or so, many commentators have tried to make sense of the developments that characterize the world after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the crumbling of the Soviet Union. Many are the attempts to paint a comprehensive picture of the overall developments commonly referred to as “globalization”, and the resulting visions are certainly varied. Common features nevertheless include increased economic interdependence, the emergence of a single world market in the fields of capital, finance and traded goods, and increased interconnectedness resulting from cheaper and faster transportation, the global reach of media and the new communication and information technology. What all this signals is that globalization to no small degree is conceptualized in terms of a spatial reorganization including the decreasing importance of state borders, and of territory more generally. For instance, Kenichi Ohmae (1990) has brought forward the notion of an emerging “borderless world”, Richard Rosecrance (1999) celebrates what he calls “the emancipation from land” in the era of the “virtual state” and Richard O’Brien (1992) has launched the “End of Geography”-thesis, claiming that the forces of economic integration and technological innovations renders distances as well as geopolitical borders irrelevant. A recurring theme in these narratives of globalization is the increased mobility of people, capital, and information, often conceptualized as “flows”, across these ever more redundant borders.

As many scholars have noted, the limitations to this argument are evident when one turns to international migration and immigration controls. Whereas borders might be losing much of their previous military and economic relevance this development has been paralleled by re-bordering practices in the immigration control field. States may be giving up sovereignty when it comes to precisely military and economic issues, but this coincides with a reassertion of the sovereign right to regulate who is to cross its borders. This has been especially conspicuous in the increasingly restrictive control practices of the affluent states and regions in the world, particularly since the mid-1980s onwards (Andreas 2000). Focusing on the more restrictive asylum and labour migration control practices, critics have talked about “Fortress Europe” and “Tortilla Curtain” concerning the cases of Europe and the U.S. respectively, about a “Wall” being erected around the West (Andreas – Snyder et al: 2000), and even of an emerging “global apartheid” (cf. Dalby 1999; Richmond 1994; Alexander 1996; Tesfahuney 2001).
Whether current spatial reorganizations are experienced as decreased or increased importance of territory and state borders depend on the groups and individuals in focus. This is because the social relations of space are experienced differently by people and groups holding different positions in relation to it (Massey 1994: 3). Zygmunt Bauman (1998) has argued that there are indeed two tendencies when it comes to mobility – the tendency to increased borderlessness co-exists with a tendency to increased fixedness to territory. Moreover, there is a power aspect inherent in mobility rights:

Alongside the emerging planetary dimensions of business, finance, trade and information flows, a ‘localizing’, space-fixing process is set in motion. Between them, the two closely interconnected processes sharply differentiate the existential conditions of whole populations and of various segments of each one of the populations. What appears as globalization for some means localization for others; signalling a new freedom for some, upon many others it descends as an uninvited and cruel fate. Mobility climbs to the rank of the uppermost among the coveted values – and the freedom to move, perpetually a scarce and unequally distributed commodity, fast becomes the main stratifying factor of our late-modern or postmodern times (Bauman 1998: 2).

Focussing on the movement of people, it is evident that people move around with varying degrees of ease. Salter (2003: 2) argues that we see “two worlds of movement”, where citizens of the industrialized North enjoy freedom of movement whereas citizens of the developing world are restricted in their movement. These restrictions are partly the result of the increased use of “remote control” measures (Zolberg 1999: 73, 75f; Guiraudon – Lahav 2000) - meaning immigration policies designed to deter immigration by regulating departure at or near the point of origin. However, there are positions in between these two extremes, and perhaps mobility rights could be thought of as a continuum with the most and the least mobile on its endpoints. Ranging in-between are for example professionals of Southern countries, whose mobility is facilitated because their specific skills are demanded on Northern labour markets. Countering the general trend towards more restrictive labour migration policies in the rich countries, this sort of migration has increased over the last decade, which has led Nigel Harris (2002: 41) to conclude that “the underlying principle of this approach is that the world of migration is only for the professional and highly skilled, a privilege for the elite. Those counted as unskilled are to be tied, like serfs, to the soil of their homeland”. Khosravi (2004) even suggests that the ownership of a citizenship or a work permit in the rich western world today might be as important a class question as the conventional ownership of capital.

Underlying this asymmetry in mobility rights between capital and labour; “[o]ne of the most notable, yet least noticed characteristics of the inequality within the current type of globalization (Massey 1999: 37)” Capital, in the forms of investment, financial transactions and traded goods, is moving ever more freely over the globe, while labour is regulated and controlled. As Mike Haynes has aptly noted: “in these terms labour power is not a commodity like any other – it is inferior to the tin of beans, the machine, the dollar bill” (1999: 26). Labour is still to a large extent supposed to be fixed. People are, of course, still moving in search for better opportunities, but since their movement is regulated and controlled they are often obliged to do it illegally and take on the considerable risks associated with this type of movement. Every year large amounts of people get killed when they illegally try to enter the richer parts of the globe. A Dutch organization calculated that 1574 people died between 1993 and 2000 on the borders of Europe – drowned in rivers or at sea, frozen to death or suffocated in the back of trucks. This just concerns documented cases and should probably be seen as a
considerable underestimation. According to other estimations, the sum of deaths is the double or triple (Stalker 2001: 52ff; 130f). Still, many people manage to get in, and there are probably around 3 million undocumented immigrants in the EU area, devoid of any legal status (ibid: 11).

Moreover, it has been pointed out that this asymmetrical relation is underscored by the lack of a multilateral forum for labour (Harris 2002). Whereas the free trade regime is institutionally manifest in the WTO, and there have also at least been attempts at establishing a multilateral forum to deregulate investments through the MAI-treaty, there has so far not been any attempts at establishing a multilateral forum to do away with the barriers to the free trade in labour – although some economists believe that this would probably expand the world economy more than the deregulation of any other good on the WTO agenda (see, for instance, Rodrik 2002). All in all, states seem to be more hesitant to give up their sovereign rights when it comes to regulating the movement of people than when it comes to the movement of capital, information, images and the like. Migrants have furthermore increasingly been perceived as problematic and as posing security threats of various kinds (Huysmans 2000).

Do the international initiatives under study pose a challenge to this current state of affairs in which labour is largely supposed to be fixed, citizens of southern countries are allowed much less mobility rights than people from the industrialized North, and in which an international cooperative forum on migration is lacking? I will get back to this issue in the final section of this paper. After this contextualization I will now return to the main aim of this paper.

Biopolitics of population and migration

One of the great innovations in the techniques of power in the eighteenth century was the emergence of “population” as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as manpower or labor capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it commanded. Governments perceived that they were not dealing simply with subjects, or even with a “people”, but with a “population (Foucault 1998: 25).

The appearance of population as a matter for government was referred to by Foucault as biopolitics. Its aim was “to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race…” (1994b: 73). This was connected to a new state rationality. Before, government had primarily been about the control over territory, its aim being the preservation of order and to ensure obedience to the law. Now, population comes to appear as the ultimate end – the purpose of government is no longer government itself but the population as a whole. This means that there are multiple goals: the production of wealth, the improvement of life conditions, health, all of which are important for the improvement of population as a whole. At the same time, the means the government uses to achieve these ends are immanent in the population itself. One of the prime targets for biopolitical interventions has been the manipulation of family life. But the population also appears as a variable dependent on a number of external factors such as the tax system, the distribution of profit etc. So, the population is now conceived of as both the subject of needs and as something that needs to be managed by state interventions (Foucault 1991; 1994a).
Whereas power in pre-modern times had been about the sovereign’s right to take the life of whoever challenged it, power now instead became concerned with the generation of life, with a sort of caring for the population as a whole. But this is precisely what has made it extremely dangerous in another way. In the end of the first volume of The History of Sexuality, Foucault recognizes this danger with biopolitical modernity when he asserts that “For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question” (1998:143). What happened when the transformation to a “state of population” put the health and biological life of the nation at centre stage was “a kind of bestialization of man achieved through the most sophisticated political techniques” (from Dits et Ecrits, quoted in Agamben 1998: 3). This is because when the biological life of the national population became a political issue, the other side of the coin was state racism, eugenics projects and wars that were fought in the name of the preservation of the race. “Life-affirming bio-politics can only kill when it does so in the name of the life of the species” (Simons 1995: 34). Biopolitics has not only given rise to violence directed at other races or nationalities, but also to internal populations. One example is eugenics. Gunnar Myrdal, one of the most important “social engineers” concerned with the development of the Swedish welfare state, linked eugenics to the requirements of democracy when he wrote in his Population: A Problem for Democracy in 1940: “This first principle for a positive population policy in a democratic country, that undesirable births shall be prevented, is closely associated with the second principle, that the birth rate shall not be maintained by the undesired births…” (Tobin 2004: 98p). This quotation must be considered in relation to the Swedish sterilization programme that was already established at the time, and which by 1976 had sterilized about 63 000 people, mostly women of “asocial character”.

Foucault was only concerned with biopolitical issues related to national populations, and his own studies concerned subjects such as prisons, madness and sexuality. In this study, I am instead interested in how we can conceptualize biopolitics on the global level, within the frame of global migration management.

Knowing and identifying the population

For a state concerned with the management of its inhabitants, knowledge about the population becomes vital and biopolitics is closely connected to the emergence of the sciences of statistics and demography. With developments toward biopolitics the code word became “order” throughout the state, and to reach order one had to gain complete knowledge of the facts of the realm, among them the population (Soguk 1999: 69). In turn, this is connected to the development of the modern state. Demography appeared in the 1850s and became essential to the constitution of the modern state as an identity founded on a specific national population sharing detailed vital territorial, economic, cultural, and other characteristics. The statistical methods also suited very well the bureaucratic ideal of a non-partisan professional social service (Kreager 2004: 37f). The systematic study of population was primarily conducted by officials of European states for either public health or political economy purposes. However, Charlotte Sussman (2004) claims that the role of colonialism for the development of statistics and demography is frequently overlooked. Most of the groundbreaking work in human statistics was in fact done among colonial populations, such
as those in Ireland and the “new world”. Sussman therefore emphasizes that the histories of demography and of colonial ideology were historically intimate and mutually constitutive.

Statistical categorizations are certainly not neutral but create social reality. The demographic categories that was created by the use of statistics was a way of “making up people” – labelling people for the purpose of administrative control. Over time, individuals and groups tend to develop identities to fit the name they have been assigned, a process referred to by Hacking as “dynamic nominalism”. This way, the demographic categories tend to affect relationships within societies at large (Hacking 1986).

The knowledge of the population through these methods was mostly directed at the margins, at the underclass or the deviant. Particularly after Malthus, the underclass was perceived within demography as “more numerous, less industrious, less moral, and consequently a threat to the ruling elites of the social order” (Salter 2001: 343). This was not only the perception of the native underclass but also about the global underclass – the population of the colonies. Salter shows that these fears of the global underclass live on today not only in popular perceptions but are also reflected in the argument of some prominent international relations scholars such as Huntington, Kaplan, and Kennedy. The fears of the global poor are especially evident in the discourses of the “population explosion” in Southern countries, which is considered threatening precisely because it is understood as increasing immigration to the rich world.

Returning now to the role of the concept of population for government, the need to know the population was also connected to the state’s monopolization of the legitimate means of movement. This process happened gradually over several centuries. It took place unevenly in different places, but was everywhere connected to the development whereby modern nation-states replaced non-territorial forms of political organization. Transformations such as the nationalization of poor relief and the replacement of different forms of servitude by free wage labour, shifted the need for control of movement to from local to the outer national boundaries of the state. The “biopolitical” need to know the population was then motivated by the state need to define who belongs and who does not: in order to gain access to its population, this needed to be identified and distinguished from others. Censuses, registration systems and the development of identity cards all worked for this purpose. However, the identification system did not become effective until the advent of the modern passport system. The monopolization of the legitimate means of movement was an important component of the rise of the modern state, and the regulation of movement contributes to the construction of the state as such (Torpey 1998). It constructed the state as a bounded territorial entity, but it has also been vital for the construction of the population as a body of definable citizen-subjects. As Soguk (1999) explains, the legitimacy of the modern state rests upon the idea that it is nothing but representation. Its claims to the legitimate means of violence, its administration of resources and all the other prerogatives of the state are dependent on the idea of a body of people that the state is considered to represent. The practices of the state, its very reason for being, then depend on having a population as its source for authority. There is nothing essential about this; instead the state has to continually create the body of citizens-subjects that it represents. This is, in Soguk’s view, the fundamental problem for statecraft because “it is concerned with the production of the foundational subject on whom the state’s ontology – its very reason for being – rests” (1999: 39). This is moreover a process that has to take place silently – by positing an idea of the presence of a body of citizens which are already there to be represented – so as not to reveal the fact that the basis for state authority is far from natural and self-
evident. Thus, the state is in a continuing process of creating its citizens-subjects, and a central part thereof is the discourses on the excluded: the foreigner, the refugee, the marginalized. At the same time as these have challenged the fiction of the state-citizen relation, they have also been resourceful for statecraft since citizen-subjects have been constructed as the normality, while foreigners have been constructed as an aberration. Now, in an era of globalization, of increased interconnectedness of all kinds, the lack of any real foundation for the state in the form of a natural connection between the citizen and the state has become more exposed. To Soguk, this implies a crisis of representation for the state, and has made the practices of statecraft harder (ibid: 43).

*The biopolitics of mobility*

As we have seen, Foucault dated the birth of biopolitics to the 18th century. However, when it comes to the biopolitics of mobility, it is interesting to note that demography as a discipline developed out of 17th century political arithmetic in England (Sussman 2004; Hacking 1975). Political arithmetic was, in short, the process of calculating the financial worth of a population. It developed in the context of colonial expansion and its first proponents (Graunt, Petty) were inspired by the mercantile assumption that “people are the wealth of the nation”. During this era, then, population came to be considered a natural resource, like land or mineral reserves, a resource which should be managed to maximize national wealth. The idea was that a population should be run by the state in a similar manner as a businessman runs his company. This was to be done by the state interfering in sexual relations, reproduction, and also migration. In political arithmetic, people were classified on basis of their labour, thus marking the importance of class identities rather than religious or regional ones. It thus contributed to the creation of new categories – an early case of “dynamic nominalism”. This had important consequences in terms of mobility.

When persons are understood to be valuable in terms of their labour power, rather than their regional or religious loyalties, in theory they become portable. Thus early population theorists often counted people for the purposes of moving them around – in imagination at least […]. The distinction between mobile and immobile populations, then, became a significant aspect of the rhetoric that distinguished subaltern populations from dominant groups (Sussman 2004: 103).

Apart from size and value, these early demographers often assessed the “portability” of the poor, the disenfranchised and the colonial populations, and the proponents developed schemes on counting, increasing and transporting populations. Portability was thus one way of distinguishing between national and peripheral populations, but also between wanted and unwanted parts of the national populations. Groups were rendered subaltern not only because of where they came from, but also because of the nature of their relation to that place, their vulnerability of being displaced by the colonial powers and used someplace else. It is interesting to note the relationship between mobility and immobility in terms of power seems to have been the reverse of today. As we have seen, Bauman (1998) claims that mobility is becoming the most important power asset in today’s world. In those days, being mobile instead signified powerlessness. Insofar as “mobility” connotes voluntary movement, whereas “portability” signifies the risk of being moved against one’s will, the difference in perhaps obvious.
Few of these schemes were put into practice in the Western world, but they did have impact on the approach to the colonies. In 1797, Napoleon’s foreign minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand characterized “Empire” as “the art of putting men in their place” (quoted in Pagden 2001: 10). This involved large-scale migrations, some more or less voluntary as the movements of the poor and marginalized in search of a better life, others completely involuntary – such as the Atlantic slave-trade. So, although the slave trade is probably the most obvious example, this moving about of bodies to achieve “biospatial rationalism” (Sussman 2004: 109) also had an internal side – the idea of ridding Great Britain from unwanted or ‘surplus’ people by sending them off to populate the colonies. The idea seems to have been an enduring one. In 1832, T.R. Edmonds suggested that Britain send over “paupers” to the colonies, thus relieving the domestic tax payers from the burden of supporting them. This would also have the positive outcomes that the paupers who remain in the mother country would have better chances of getting employment. Moreover the new paupers-colonizers would create a demand for British manufactures (see Tobin 2004: 91p).

States have perhaps always tried to “design” their populations by the means of migration policy. In the case of Sweden (but I am quite sure that this is similar in many countries of the world) historically, the two recurring parameters by which immigrants have been judged as desirable or undesirable is culture/race (being or not being considered “compatible” with Swedish culture/race) and economic contribution (having or not having demanded skills and/or private fortunes) (Mörkenstam 2002). Studying the international initiatives may thus give an opportunity to see population policy at work on a global level through the arguments concerning who becomes eligible/not eligible for mobility on a world scale.

Towards global migration management?

In this part I will present the empirical material about global migration management. The initiatives and calls for increased international cooperation on migration issues are certainly varied in scope and ambition (see footnote 3). Whereas some call for comprehensive schemes addressing all sorts of migration (including refugees) some are more modest and exclude forced migration from their proposals. Furthermore, some see the future design of a multilateral cooperation on migration issues reminiscent of the WTO, whereas others merely call for increased dialogue and technical cooperation. However, there are some themes and problem description that I have found present in all of them. These are: the description of migration as a more or less permanent phenomenon in today’s world, the recognition of the potential benefits of migration – especially labour migration, the negative effects of irregular migration, and the need for greater international cooperation on migration management issues in order to reap the benefits from, and avoid the negative consequences of migration. Here, I will present the arguments one by one, drawing on empirical material from various international organizations, initiatives and conferences as well as from some scholarly sources. It is important to keep in mind that the sources and initiatives referred to may have different opinions when it comes to the extent of cooperation and the precise design of the schemes. Since my aim is to present some of the similarities in the argumentations, these differences might not be sufficiently evident from this short overview. Also, I have chosen to concentrate primarily on two very central migratory movements: labour migration and irregular migration. This is because my general interest lies in finding out whose movement is
wanted and encouraged, and whose is not. It is striking how labour migration is now being seen in a more positive light in these initiatives, which might imply a change in the current mobility regime (moveable capital and fixed labour). Meanwhile, irregular migration is the most feared sort of migration, and the one that most control measures are directed against. However, while focusing on the way these migratory movements are addressed, I might miss out on some other similarities in the argumentations for greater cooperation on migration issues.

Migration as a permanent phenomenon
There is a general tendency to regard migratory movements not as a separate and temporary phenomenon – which is how it has usually been conceptualized until now, but as permanent issue in today’s world, linked to larger developments connected to various aspects of globalization.

The ILO (2004a), for instance, state that “the pattern of migration is clearly linked to increasing globalization”. Issues that contribute to migration are, in their view, the declining costs of transportation and the advent of cheap mass travel, the ICT revolution, the global reach of the media, and the awareness of differences in living standards between the rich and poor countries. The Declaration of the UN World Conference against Racism also states clearly that “We recognize that interregional and intra-regional migration has increased as a result of globalization, in particular from South to North” (UNWCR 2001, paragraph 12). Solomon and Bartsch (2003) of the IOM hold that transnational migration is linked to issues such as “security, social, political, and economic stability, trade, employment and health”.

Now, it is obvious that these phenomena contributing to population movements are unlikely to go away. Therefore, migration is considered a more or less permanent feature in today’s world. For instance, the Berne Initiative’s starting-point is “the recognition that international migration is an established feature of contemporary social, political and economic life” (BI 2003).

In some of the documents, there is also recognition that the permanence and likely increase in the volumes of migration requires a new approach to the phenomenon. “As people become more mobile, traditional assumptions and concepts in the field of international migration are steadily breaking down”, claim Karlsson and Ramphele of the GCIM (2004), and go on to specify: “it is no longer possible, for example, to draw a sharp distinction between countries of origin, transit and destination […] Nor is the notion of nationality as clear-cut as it once was”. This call for a renewed approach could open up both for a changed theoretical understanding of nationality and belonging as connected to the state system, and for the handling of migration issues.

It is important to note, however, that all the initiatives that I have studied underline the sovereign right of territorial states to retain control over the entry onto its territory. What is called for is increased international cooperation and more effective migration management, not a fundamental change of the state system.

The benefits and challenges of labour migration
A remarkable aspect of the calls for international migration management is the willingness to see in migration not only a threat – which has been common during the last decade (see, for instance Huysmans 2000) – but also as a potentially positive phenomenon. The possible benefits of migration – at least of orderly and managed migration – is often framed in
economic terms and linked to the possibilities of labour migration. “Orderly international migration can have positive impacts on both the communities of origin and the communities of destination, providing the former with remittances and the latter with needed human resources” (ICPD 1994: 10.1). Here I will briefly describe the benefits and challenges of labour migration as described in the texts investigated.

Concerning receiving countries’ need for labour migration, an important theme is demographic. The ageing populations of developed countries and the ensuing labour force shortages is perhaps the main reason for opening up labour migration channels. “…demographic trends in some countries project a sharp rise in the demand for workers and professionals because of the consistently low fertility rates there” (IOM 2004: 8; see also UNCHS 2003: 44). In an interview, the former head of ICMPD Jonas Widgren explains the worrying prospects of the future Europe: “In 50 years, Europe will have lost in productivity compared to America, unless we use a range of measures – immigration being merely one of them – solve the demographic crisis. Otherwise we will become a zoological garden for only old people” (Fleischer 2003, my translation).

There is a general belief in the contribution of labour migration, as long as it comes through legal channels. “Documented migration is generally beneficial to the host country, since migrants are in general concentrated in the most productive ages and have skills needed by the receiving country, and their admission is congruent with the policies of the Government.” (ICPD 1994: 10.9). Regular labour migration can be adapted to labour market demands, which is why it is quite obviously desired. This can also be arranged so as to not threaten the native working-class, by means of selecting immigrants into sectors where they do not compete with native labour. Supply-driven migration (network migration, family reunification migration, asylum seekers and illegal migration) on the contrary, does not necessarily meet labour markets’ demands. Therefore, receiving countries have incentives to minimize supply-driven migration and maximize demand-driven (Straubhaar 2000: 118). To open economically motivated gates of entry would possibly reduce the pressure on asylum and family reunion “gates”, but primarily it would change the composition of migrants and “may well lead to both more and better qualified migrants” (Holzmann-Münz 2004: 32). Holzmann and Münz suggest that Europe now might have a “suboptimal selection of immigrants” (ibid:27), and they state that: “Preferably, the host country would not only admit migrants for a particular sector that suffers from labour shortages, but also migrants with a high educational level and the necessary language skills and cultural background” (ibid: 35).

While the selection theme is quite common, it must be made perfectly clear that all the initiatives and arguments underscore the need to protect the human rights of migrants.

Then, what is in it for sending/developing countries? There is now an increased research focus on the migration/development nexus, and migration is thought of as potentially being of great value for the development of the home country. One point here is, again, demographic. While Northern countries face a future of ageing populations and decreasing labour forces, many Southern countries will have an ever growing labour force. Labour migration is a possible outlet for parts of the people in working age. However, in Straubhaar’s (2000) view, it has to be managed because otherwise countries of origin will have the incentive to send the least productive parts of their population abroad, an argument which reflects the 19th century concern of T.R. Edmonds above.

Another issue that is often mentioned is remittances. This is not very surprising since it has become very voluminous: World net inflow of remittances to developing countries in
2002 was estimated to around $80 billion, not counting the informal flows. This is 2-3 times more than total overseas development assistance (Ramamurthy 2003: 10). “The remittances of documented migrants to their countries of origin often constitute a very important source of foreign exchange and are instrumental in improving the well-being of relatives left behind” (ICPD 1994: 10.9). Another aspect conducive to development is the “diaspora effect” - migrants’ investment in home countries, which may stimulate the growth of high-tech and other industries, as has already been shown by the East Asian countries and India (ILO 2004a: 96). Temporary migration is also thought of as possibly beneficial. The *Programme of Action* of the ICPD mentions the following potential benefits for “developing countries and countries in transition”: improvement of skills of nationals of countries of origin, the transfer of knowledge, skills and technology. However, as is explained in paragraph 10.5, this requires great cooperation between sending and receiving countries (ICPD 1994: 10.5).

There are also risks connected to labour migration schemes, the greatest one perhaps being that of “brain drain” in poorer, sending countries. Brain drain deprives poor countries of skilled workers, and also entails a loss in investment in human resources, in the countries where education is publicly financed. The risks of brain drain for sending countries is one of the main reasons why migration has to be properly managed (ILO 2004a: 96; Straubhaar 2000).

**The threats of irregular migration**

One of the main preoccupations is the increase in irregular migration. All the proposals studied underscore the need to fight irregular migration, as do all the regional consultative processes (see footnote 2). Also, there is a general fear that the problem of irregular migration might be rising. There is a demographic element in how the problem of irregular migration is perceived: since the labour forces of sending countries continue to increase, pressures for migration is growing and hence irregular migration is expected to rise (ICPD 1994: 10.15).

It is interesting to note that the “irregular migration” theme often turns directly into the “smuggler network” theme. Irregular migration is thus often directly connected to organized crime. For instance: “Irregular migration is escalating and technological advancements provide more refined tools for trafficking and smuggling networks to circumvent government efforts to monitor and control movement”. Here, we see that irregular migration is a threat because it challenges governments’ control efforts. Precisely its irregularity is a threat to the order necessitated by (primarily receiving) states. This issue goes to the heart of state sovereignty because it is the sovereign right to control entry that is under threat. As UNCHS understands it, it is a threat to state security and should therefore also be met with a state security perspective (UNCHS 2003: 43). In the words of the co-chairs of GCIM, governments may “perceive the arrival of such migrants as a threat to social cohesion and a challenge to the right of states to control the movement of people onto their territory” (Karlsson – Ramphele 2004). Therefore, the proposals include cooperation on fighting illegal migration as well as provisions of readmission agreements for deportees.

But it is also thought of as threatening the migrants themselves: “These networks play a pervasive role in facilitating irregular migration resulting in an alarming rise in abuse and exploitation of migrants” (IOM 2004: 13). Karlsson and Ramphole (2004), who interestingly connect irregular migration to the increased barriers to movement of asylum seekers, low-skilled workers and family reunification, also deplore the need for people to turn to human smugglers. “In doing so, they are obliged to spend large amounts of money and to run
numerous risks, including that of being detained and deported”. Moreover, those who make it to the destination “may have little alternative but to live a life of clandestinity, exploited in the workplace and marginalized in society”.

Furthermore, it is sometimes stated that irregular migration is often not separated from other sorts of migrations in the minds of the general public. Therefore, irregular migration brings about negative images of migrants as a whole in the minds of receiving countries’ populations (IOM 2004: 13).

So it seems that irregular migration is viewed as a phenomenon that not only threatens governments claim to control, it also poses a threat to the migrants themselves as well as for all other migrants that get associated with the dirty business of clandestine movement.

To sum up the varying interests of sending and destination countries in migration issues, I turn to the Berne Initiative (BI 2001). According to them, the main interests for receiving states are: “encouraging legal migration and discouraging irregular migration, including migrant smuggling and human trafficking; effective integration of immigrants; return of non-authorized migrants; planned immigration to compensate for labour shortages and population decline; and protection of refugees and other vulnerable groups.” The migration interests in countries of origin are instead: “relieving pressure on national labour markets through out-migration; promoting skills of national work forces; avoiding negative effects of brain drain while taking advantage of positive effects of skilled workers’ out-migration; ensuring protection of migrants’ abroad; fostering economic development through migrants training, planned and regular flow of remittances, reduction of trade obstacles and promotion of foreign direct investment, and benefits from increased development cooperation”.

Next, I will turn to the proposed international cooperation in migration, which is thought of as a necessary way to solve the problems associated with, and reap the potential gains of international migration.

Managing migration – and maximizing it
The collaboration on migration is often described as concerned with “migration management”. This is a term that has been increasingly used since the early 1990s. It is a broader term than control and regulation and it suggests the need to regard migration policies as comprehensive, spanning over all aspects of migration, as well as all the stages of the migratory process – from the causes of migration, its means and routes, to regulation of entry, settlement, integration and return, as well as international cooperation (Tamas 2003: 37). IOM is probably the most dedicated agency when it comes to migration management, with the slogan “Managing migration to the benefit of all”. The organization has developed a “Four-box Chart” explaining the principle areas for migration management: migration and development; facilitating migration; regulating migration and forced migration. The argument is that these issues have to be met in a comprehensive manner. The Director-General of IOM, Brunson McKinley, underscores the importance of managing migration:

If properly managed, migration can be beneficial for all states and societies. If left unmanaged, it can lead to the exploitation of individual migrants, particularly through human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and be a source of social tension, insecurity and bad relations between nations. Effective management is required to maximize the positive effects of migration and minimize potentially negative consequences. It is essential to establish orderly and safe migration opportunities while ensuring respect for the integrity of national, sovereign borders (IOM 2004: 3).
The migration management proposals often describe migration as a phenomenon which has the potential of bringing about positive consequences. The UN Commission on Human Security states that migration management has to go beyond the mere coordination of restrictive measures among states. Instead, it must recognize the importance of migration for human security, and migration must also be seen as a process that creates new opportunities for people and states (UNCHS 2003: 47). All the various proposals and arguments deplore the absence of a multilateral framework, or some other form of cooperative arrangement, on the cross-border management of people. The UNCHS find the absence of an international migration arrangement “remarkable” since it affects the security of both people, the migrants themselves, and states (ibid: 45). According to The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, previous attempts to initiate discussions on the subject have led nowhere because “countries are simply unwilling to contemplate any weakening of their sovereign right to control entry” (ILO 2004b: 375).

ICPD encourages more cooperation and dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination “in order to maximize the benefits of migration to those concerned and increase the likelihood that migration has positive consequences for the development of both sending and receiving countries” (ICPD 1994: 10.2.b). Often, the benefits are expressed in economic terms. For instance: “…global labour productivity would increase through this process since the migration would be from low-productivity, surplus labour countries to higher-productivity ones” (ILO 2004a: 96). This last quotation both illustrates economic gains and the direction labour migration is expected to take.

Whereas some merely proposed enhanced dialogue, others take it a bit further. One of the tasks of GCIM is to propose how to fill the absence of a multilateral framework on migration issues in the international system by proposing alternative policy options to the current national ones (GCIM 2005). The Berne Initiative notes that “In contrast to the international regime for the protection of refugees, there is no comprehensive and harmonized system regulating international migration through which the movement of people can be managed in an orderly and cooperative way” (Solomon – Bartsch 2003). Therefore, the hoped outcome of the process will be “a broad policy framework aimed at facilitating cooperation between states in planning and managing the movement of people in a humane and orderly way. This inter-governmental framework will offer a set of effective policies and practices for a planned and coherent approach to migration management” (ibid). The mutual benefits from enhanced inter-State cooperation were identified by the Berne Initiative (BI 2001) as: “Meeting labour market needs in receiving countries and labour demands in source countries; responding to demographic developments; developing mutually beneficial return and reintegration policies; maximizing the effective use of remittances; increasing and facilitating development cooperation, direct foreign investment and reducing barriers to trade in services; more effectively combating irregular migration, including migrant smuggling and human trafficking”.

The ILO has identified the absence of a comprehensive multilateral framework for governing the cross-border movement of people as “A major gap in the current institutional structure for the global economy” (ILO 2004a: 95). They recommend actions on three different levels: the extension of already existing international instruments; the increased dialogue between countries of origin and destination; and the initiation of a process towards a more general institutional framework for movement of people, the ultimate objective of which is the creation of a multilateral framework, negotiated by governments and similar to the
multilateral frameworks existing for the movement of goods, services, technology, investment and information (ibid: 99). The desirability of an institutionalization of migration management similar to the trade regime, has also been forwarded by Straubhaar (2000), who calls for a “General Agreement on Movements of People (GAMP)”. Ghosh proposes a “New International Regime for Orderly Movements of People” with the aim of making movements of people more “orderly, manageable, and productive”. The regime should be based on the principle of “regulated openness” and provide a multilateral framework that combines and balances the interests of all the parties involved – the sending, receiving, and transit countries and the migrants themselves” (2000: 221).

To sum up the empirical findings, it seems that the increased cooperation on migration issues is perceived to maximize the interests of both sending and receiving countries – it is described as a win-win situation. The interests concerned are to a large part described as economic (labour market concerns), but other consideration such as demography, state integrity (fighting irregular migration) and good relations between sending and receiving states are conceived as instrumental.

Biopolitics of international migration management?

One of the questions I posed in the introduction concerned whether the proposals for international cooperation on migration management would constitute a change compared to the current mobility regime. The answer seems to be that it does, in a few different ways. Whereas migration before has been described as an aberration to the normal state of affairs, these suggestions establish a view of migration as a more or less permanent feature in a era of globalization. Also, whereas restrictions of immigration have been underscored by increasing perceptions of immigrants as security threats, these new initiatives point instead to the potentially beneficial effects of migration and the need for changing the public perception among populations of the host states is frequently pointed out. Perhaps the most important change, however, is that the current mobility regime, which is characterized by the fixedness of labour as opposed to the mobility of capital, is potentially challenged by the stated need for opening up regularized channels for labour migration. This includes migration from the South to the North, which implies a challenge to the current order where mobility rights are asymmetrically distributed to the benefit of citizens of the industrialized North.

However, it is not a question of free movement for Southern people. Instead irregular migration is to be combated relentlessly, and the calls are for more managed movements – indeed the whole point of wanting international cooperation on this issue is the perceived need for steering and guiding the movement of people in all its phases in a detailed and precise manner previously unknown. Whereas migration control has largely been a question of numbers, it now becomes a question of composition. The plan is to introduce measures that simultaneously allows for the mobility of some people while also facilitating deportation measures for others, which suggests that the important thing is control of the composition of immigrants rather than the number of immigrants. People are to be granted mobility rights on basis of their role as labourers, in the cases the labour they perform is desired in receiving countries. Eligibility on economic criteria is perhaps not a new phenomenon, what is new is instead that it is taking place on the global level. With the historical perspective in mind, it is tempting to draw parallels to the way political arithmeticians of older days elaborated
schemes on how to move about “portable” populations within colonial empires in order to achieve “biospatial rationalism” and maximize national wealth for the sovereign. However, in Foucault’s thought, the birth of biopolitics is historically located after the end of the mercantilist era, and its final aim was distinct: the population is now appears as both the final aim of government (meaning that the aims are varied: health, production of wealth...), and the objective for interventions to achieve these varied aims.

Then, is it possible to see the proposals for international management of migration as an expression for biopolitics? Franck Düvell (2002) seems to think so, when he writes about global migration managements that: “migration politics appears as a modus to run ‘UK plc’ or ‘Deutschland AG’ and represents a strategy of social engineering to rationalize and to recompose its population, similar to a workforce. That because of its transnational character is a new quality in migration control”. To return to Foucault, one problem is that he only was concerned with national populations, and when discussing these proposals we are talking about interventions in different populations. Then, perhaps only if there is any reason to talk about a “world population” would the concept of biopolitics make sense in this context. Then, migration management can be seen as a sort of social engineering, as one way of intervening in “world population” in order to achieve improvements for the same “world population”, as a way of putting people in their appropriate places for the benefits of not only themselves but for that “world population” at large. Indeed it seems that there are high hopes invested in the individual migrant. Apart from filling the demands for labour in the host community, he is also hoped to solve demographic crises as well as contributing to development in the country of origin. However, his movement has to be properly managed in order for him not to pose a threat to state sovereignty, himself or fellow migrants. The way the last sentence is formulated is not a coincidence: the newness of this approach lies in opening up at least a bit for labour immigration from the South and it is implicit if not always explicit that this is the direction that the migratory movements will go. Northern populations will still be able to go wherever they want, Southern populations will be able to move a little bit more but their movement is to be managed and regulated. In this sense, the current migration regime should perhaps be seen as modified rather than radically changed in the new proposals.

If biopolitics is only a useful tool if we can confidently talk about a “world population”, its limits become apparent as the continuing central role of the state in the new proposals has to be emphasised. State sovereignty in regulating mobility over their borders is in all the initiatives explicitly guarded. To that end it is also one of the greatest concerns to combat irregular migration. Mobility is to be managed and regulated at the will of the state, not happening haphazardly and chaotically at the will of individual people. Neither should the states be left with responsibility for its unwanted migrants, something that is shown by the emphasis that is put on readmission agreement to ease deportations. Also, the benefits of migrations are not formulated in terms of the world population. Instead, they are formulated in win-win-terms, meaning that both sending and receiving states stand to gain, not the whole world conceptualized as a whole. So, the state is certainly of continuing relevance. Then, a few questions arise: Is it still meaningful to talk about biopolitics on the global level? What is the relation between the national and the global levels in terms of biopolitics? And how are we to understand the biopolitics of statecraft related to the management of mobility on the global level?

Another, related question for further investigation would be to what end the international cooperation works. In Soguk’s (1999) study of the international regime for refugees, one of
the conclusions is that the regime activities should be seen as instances of statecraft in that the “refugee problem” is normalized into one that should be solved within the realms of the state. Therefore, the international cooperation on this issue allows for the continuing relevance of the state rather than challenges it. In further study it would be interesting to see if the cooperative activities investigated in this study could be regarded in this manner. In one of the quotes of Karlsson and Ramphele above, it is suggested that the permanence of international movement forces us to rethink our understandings of migration as well as of nationality and belonging. However, in the way the issue is handled in the arguments, this potentially radical idea is left and mass migration clearly becomes a matter to be ‘solved’ within the state system’s normal conceptualizations.

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1 For instance, the “New International Regime for the Orderly Managements of People” project (NIROMP), directed by Bimal Ghosh (Ghosh 2000); and the workshop series “Stockholm Workshops on Global Migration.
Regimes” organized by the Swedish Institute for Future Studies together with the Centre for History and Economics, Kings College (Cambridge University), the Global Equity Initiative of Harvard University, and the Common Security Forum (publications, ex: Holzmann – Münz 2004; Tamas 2003). Also, the “International Metropolis Project” includes both academics and policy makers, and tries in various way to strengthen international migration policy. COMPAS at Oxford university has established a research program with a focus on “Migration Management”, and the UC at Davis runs the project “Cooperative Efforts to Manage Emigration” together with ISIM at Georgetown University.

Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (“RCPMs”) are non-binding, regional consultative fora. These include, among others, the Budapest Process, the Puebla Process, and the Bali Process.

The most notable of the organizations involved in global migration management is the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The IOM is part of most of the initiatives on both the regional and international levels. On the international level, it co-organizes “International Dialogues on Migration” together with OECD and WTO, and it also hosts the states-owned Berne Initiative – initiated by the Swiss government and having the aim to establish a broad policy framework for facilitating cooperation between governments on migration management. Others that can be mentioned are the policy institutes International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), and the Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugees and Migration Policies (IGC) – both of which have a European focus. Other international organizations involved in these issues are the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). The International Migration Policy Programme (IMP) is an inter-agency initiative between ILO, IOM, UNFPA and UNITAR (UN Institute for Training and Research) with a developing regions’ perspective. Several UN World Conferences have also discussed the issue of a strengthened migration regime, most importantly the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo 1994. Lastly, the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) was established in 2004 on the encouragement of the UN Secretary-General, in order to place international migration on the global agenda, to analyze gaps in current approaches to international migration, to examine inter-linkages with other global issues, and to present recommendations to the Secretary-General.

I am a PhD student and I am currently working on the theoretical framework for my dissertation. The theoretical approach used in this paper is new to me, so I would be especially interested in reactions concerning the potential of biopolitics as a tool for studying international migration management practices.

The cornerstones of the EU approach to migration and asylum are the Schengen agreement, the Dublin Convention and the Amsterdam treaty. An important development in recent years is the Cotonou Convention (2000) – the major development policy document according to which a paragraph on migration control and the readmission of migrants shall be added to all bilateral agreements with developing countries on development policy, technical cooperation and aid. Also, in Tampere in 1999, the EU countries agreed to modernize their immigration policy along three lines: containing asylum migration; fighting irregular migration, and opening up channels for labour migration (see European Commission 2001).

The origin of this system of control is the elaboration and universalization of a visa regime. By requiring visas, the control procedure is located in the prospective immigrants’ home country, which greatly diminishes the number of people who will turn up at the actual border. In recent years the system of remote control policies has become much more complex. Guiraudon and Lahav (2000) list a range of such activities, aimed at preventing departure: information campaigns to deter potential migrants, visa requirements, carrier sanctions, liaisons with foreign control authorities, physical interception of people travelling with fraudulent documents, and the establishment of “buffer zones” beyond national borders. It should be noted that this potentially breaches the right to leave one’s country, a right embodied in the UN Declaration of Human Rights which is why it has been condemned people concerned with human rights. Joseph Carens, for instance, judges this type of policies as the “least ethical” since it prevent asylum seekers from arriving. (RSC 1998).

The historical appearance of biopolitics is debated. Agamben (1998), for example, sees biopolitics as a much older phenomenon – as an element inherent in Western thinking at least since Aristotle’s time.