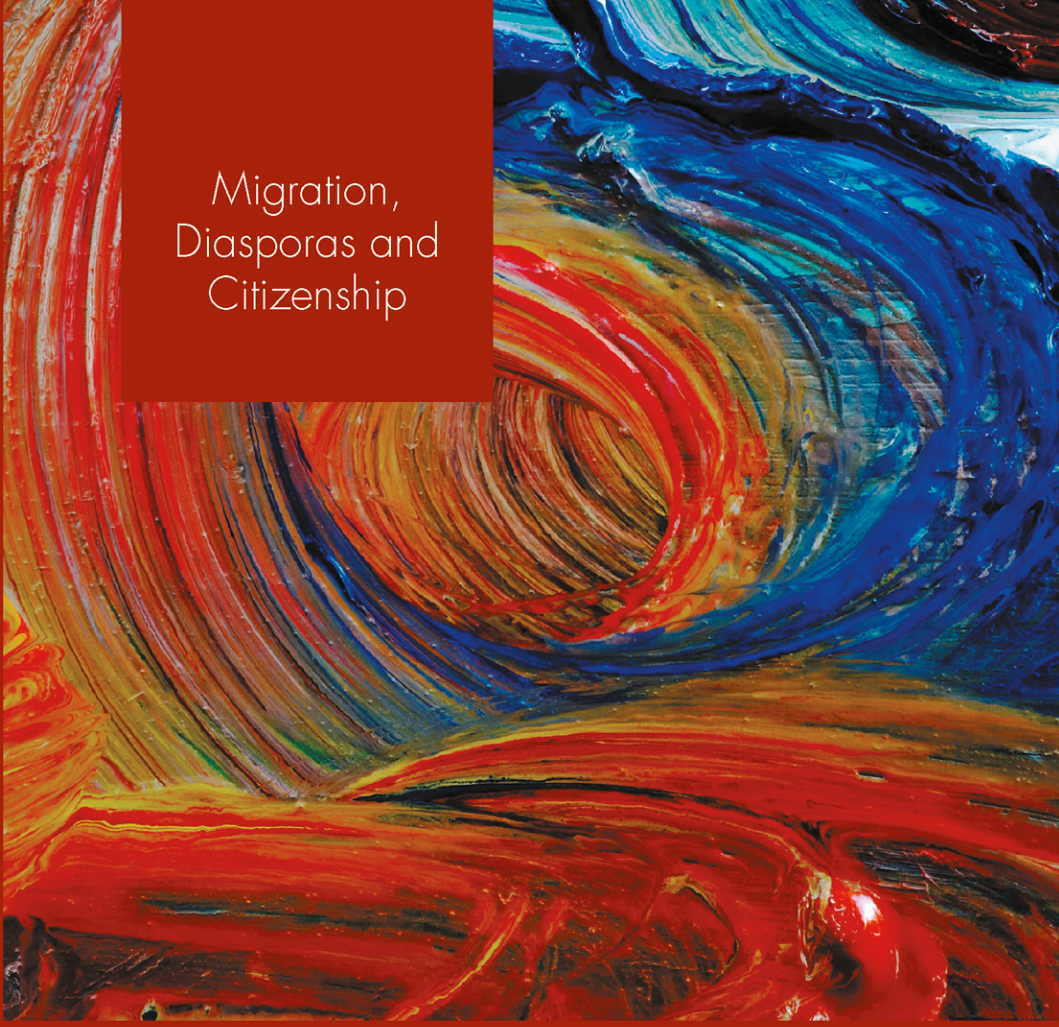
Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship



BEYOND NETWORKS

Feedback in International Migration

Edited by
Oliver Bakewell
Godfried Engbersen
Maria Lucinda Fonseca
Cindy Horst

Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship

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Beyond Networks

Feedback in International Migration

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume is the result of the collaboration of an international team of researchers who worked together on the project Theorising the Evolution of Migration Systems in Europe (THEMIS) between 2010 and 2014. The project was coordinated by the International Migration Institute (IMI), University of Oxford, UK, where Oliver Bakewell was the principal investigator. The principal partners were the Citizenship, Migration and the City (CIMIC) research group at Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands, led by Godfried Engbersen; the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning (IGOT), University of Lisbon, Portugal, led by Maria Lucinda Fonseca; and the Migration Research Group at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) led by Cindy Horst.

All contributors have been working on the project at various stages. Many others were also involved in the project and have contributed immensely to the research underpinning this book. First, there are a number of other researchers who worked at the four partner institution at various stages, each making a valuable contribution to the project: at IMI, Gunvor Jónsson, Carolin Fischer and Anais Resseguier; at CIMIC, Sanne van de Pol and Margrietha 't Hart; at IGOT, Dora Sampaio, Rui Carvalho and Juliana Iorio; and at PRIO, Rojan Ezzati, Jennifer Wu and Tatyana Tkachenko.

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The origins of THEMIS lie in discussions among Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Oliver Bakewell at the IMI in Oxford from 2009. This gave rise to the original proposal which was then refined in discussion with the various partners. Robin Cohen was the first project leader and on his retirement in 2011 this mantle was passed on to Oliver Bakewell. While distance or the pressures of other commitments have limited their day-to-day involvement in the project, Stephen, Robin and Hein have all continued to take a close interest in THEMIS and have provided invaluable advice and encouragement.

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As editors, we would particularly like to acknowledge the contributions of Agnieszka Kubal (IMI) and Sónia Pereira (formerly IGOT now at the University of Deusto, Bilbao), who played an invaluable role in

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1
Introduction: Feedback in Migration Processes

Oliver Bakewell, Agnieszka Kubal and Sónia Pereira

Introduction

The story of the pioneers setting off on an adventure into distant places, building new lives and then calling on people back home to join them has been told in many different ways over generations. Such tales of journeys and migrations lie at the heart of many narratives of national origin. For example, this is seen very clearly in the foundations of the United States, with the European 'discovery' of the New World and the subsequent mass migration across the Atlantic away from the desperate poverty of Europe. Today, it is commonly reflected in debates about the growth of migrant populations across the world. The idea of migration stimulating further migration is also well established in migration studies (de Haas, 2010; Massey et al., 1998). However, this process is often taken for granted and there is very little analysis of how and why this should happen, or – perhaps equally importantly – we are lacking the in-depth exploration of cases where it does not occur or when the process appears to be reversed so that initial migration actually hinders further migration.

This is the starting point for this volume. In this book, we examine how migration at one time affects subsequent patterns of migration. Inevitably, this leads to a concern with understanding how the presence of one group of migrants may influence the decisions and actions of those who come later. We need to go beyond the simple correlations that can indicate the possibility of a relationship between an independent variable (migrants already present) and an observed outcome (new migrants arriving) to unpick the social mechanisms that operate to create these links across time and space. Throughout this volume we ask, how does this work?

We describe this mechanism as feedback, drawing on a metaphor long used in migration theory and derived from broader theories on social systems (Mabogunje, 1970). In this Introduction, we present the broad themes running through the volume, starting with our basic research questions and showing how these led us to focus on feedback as a social mechanism through which migration at one time changes subsequent patterns of movement. While this idea of feedback is frequently invoked in the migration literature, we argue that too often it is elided with the analysis of migrants' social network. We then move on briefly to present the empirical basis for the volume – the findings of THEMIS, a project exploring the evolution of migration systems in Europe – and explain the other elements of our conceptual framework that were developed in this project. In the final section of this Introduction, we show how the various chapters contribute to these debates in different ways.

The questions and the main focus of this volume are unashamedly theoretical. At the same time, our work is grounded in particular empirical settings: the movements between a set of three origin countries (Brazil, Morocco and Ukraine) and four European destinations (the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom). While we are not aiming to provide exhaustive empirical analysis of the movement between any of these origin/destination pairs (or migration corridors – see the following), the chapters present new empirical evidence that illustrates important migration processes taking place in each corridor. Some of these have already been the subject of considerable volumes of research; for example, there is extensive literature on Moroccans in the Netherlands (e.g., see De Haas, 2007; van Meeteren et al., 2013) and Brazilians in Portugal (e.g., Malheiros, 2007; Góis, 2009; Padilla, 2006). There is much less material on some of the other corridors, such as Brazilians in Norway or Moroccans in Portugal, and the volume can offer some tantalising glimpses into these little-explored movements. The discussions of the changing economic, social and political contexts for migration in the different countries aim to serve only the theoretical arguments in the various chapters. We are aware that this may disappoint those who seek detailed analysis of migration in the different corridors, but to include that would have made for a very different volume.

While the focus of the volume may be theoretical, there are important implications for policy and practice, especially at this time of heightened concern about migration in Europe and many other parts of the world. This idea of feedback has permeated into the policy arena, where there is a widespread assumption that the presence of migrants from

one origin area is likely to stimulate the arrival of more migrants from the same area. To some extent this has been institutionalised in policies of family reunification, developed in response to human rights' obligations. It is also seen in public policy concerns about the development of ethnic enclaves, integration and transnational engagement and identifications. The concept of feedback is rarely explicitly invoked in these discussions, but it can be clearly seen to underlie the widely held view that migration begets more migration. In addition, these contemporary policy debates have been focused on migrant networks as if they were the primary cause of further migration, rather than exploring the broader range of factors that shape migration patterns. Moreover, the discussion about feedback, *qua* social networks, tends to be restricted to particular subsets of migrants, in particular low-skilled labour migrants and irregular migrants. The differential operation of feedback across various social and economic classes and groups is rarely considered. While this book cannot hope to bring solutions to these problems of policy, it can help by developing a more substantial foundation of social scientific knowledge on which policies can be designed.

The origins of this book: From systems to feedback

This volume is the product of extensive collaboration among an international team of researchers based in four academic institutions: the University of Oxford, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the University of Lisbon and the Peace Research Institute Oslo. In 2010, we set out on a research journey to explore the evolution of migration systems, drawing on empirical case studies of migration to Europe. This project, *Theorising the Evolution of Migration Systems in Europe* (THEMIS), was funded for four years by the NORFACE research programme on *Migration in Europe – Social, Economic, Cultural and Policy Dynamics*. The central aim of THEMIS was to explain how and why migration between particular origins and destinations waxed and waned. Why is it that sometimes the movement of a few people to a new destination heralds the beginning of a new pattern of migration that may expand and become well established? For example, we can think of the movement of Polish migrants to the United States in the late 19th century (as described by Morawska, 2011). Under what conditions do such patterns start to break down? Or why do we sometimes see no such patterns being formed? Here examples are less well documented as social scientists and policymakers have not been concerned with the non-story of somebody migrating and little more happening as a result.

As we debated how to get purchase on these questions, it rapidly became clear that we needed to understand how the experience of one group of migrants mediated their influence on and the relationship with any people from the same origins who contemplated migration at a later date. We were inspired by the work of Mabogunje (1970), Kritz et al. (1992), Massey (1990), Faist (2004) and the critical perspective on migration systems offered by de Haas (2010).

Although the project was originally framed in terms of migration systems, it soon became clear that the idea of the system would make a poor guide for our empirical endeavours. Given that we were interested in understanding both when systems are formed and when they are not, we could neither make migration systems the object of our enquiry nor take them as the unit of analysis for the study. Moreover, coming from our different backgrounds and disciplinary perspectives, there was no clear consensus on the definition of a migration system or even the analytical value of the concept (see Bakewell, 2014, for a much more detailed discussion of migration systems). Hence, it was also impossible to set the migration system as the outcome to be explained; after all, lacking a consistent definition, it was not clear how we should recognise a system when we saw one. However, recalling our research questions, our collective interest was not so much in identifying and defining systems as observing when migration flows started to show systemic properties or exhibited *systemicity*.

The notion of feedback emerged as a central theme in our search for systemic properties and social mechanisms that could explain the various dynamics of migration movements. We see feedback operating when it is possible to trace a path from the observation of migration from A to B at one time to changes in the patterns of migration from A to B at a later time. Feedback can operate in either direction on a broad continuum – to encourage further migration or to dampen down movement. In other cases, it may be impossible to discern any feedback. It is important to emphasise that this does not mean that migration does not occur nor even that it may be expanding, but we cannot find a plausible link that relates that change in migration patterns to earlier movements. For example, if a new industrial centre is developed, it will attract new migrant workers, who continue to be drawn in by news of sustained economic growth rather than any contact or knowledge of those earlier migrants. In system terms, this would be considered migration being stimulated by a change in the wider environment – the economic conditions (Bakewell, 2014).

This conception of feedback draws on the growing literature on social mechanisms in broader sociological theory (Bunge, 2004; Gross, 2009;

Hedström and Ylikoski, 2010). Merton saw social mechanisms as 'social processes having designated consequences for designated parts of the social structure'; he argued that the main task of the researcher is to 'identify' those mechanisms and to establish under which conditions they either 'come into being' or 'fail to operate' (Merton, 1967; Hedström and Swedberg, 1996, pp. 43–44). In the light of this, we see feedback as a social mechanism of the middle range, to be explored by 'an intermediary level of analysis in-between pure description and storytelling, on the one hand, and universal social laws, on the other' (Hedström and Swedberg, 1996, p. 281).

If we can understand the operation of feedback, we know the means by which migration at one time has a causal relationship with subsequent migration patterns (or not). Moreover, we seek some degree of generalisation of these feedback mechanisms so that we can relate what we observe happening in one setting to what we might expect to observe in another. At the same time, feedback is not directly observable in itself. It is not sufficient simply to observe the correlation between migration at one time and that at another. Our focus is on what underlying social processes are at work to bring this link about.

The task of this volume is to pull apart feedback as a middle-range social mechanism in migration – to understand better its different components and configurations and how they operate in a range of contexts. As we explain in the next section, our central critique of the existing research on feedback in migration processes is that it has been largely conflated with the analysis of migrants' social network, which is often poorly specified, and tends to downplay the role of other factors, such as the changing immigration regimes, the migration industry of travel and employment agencies, class relations and so forth, that shape migration patterns.

Feedback in migration processes

We make no claim to be first to analyse this feedback as a social mechanism shaping migration patterns. Ravenstein's laws of migration published in the late 19th century (1885; 1889) brought to the forefront the observation that migration in one direction stimulates movement in the opposite direction. Nearly a century later, in his article on rural–urban migration systems in Africa, Mabogunje (1970) explicitly introduces the concept of feedback. He understood feedback as the flow of information sent to the area of origin about the success (or failure) of specific migration projects. This was assumed to influence potential migrants' decisions about following the footsteps of the first migrants

and put in motion more stable migration patterns, often independent of the initial conditions for moving.

Massey provides a more systematic analysis of the operation of feedback within migration systems through the idea of 'cumulative causation', which he coined to explain how migration between localities can become a self-sustaining process, based on the experiences of Mexican migration to the United States (Massey, 1990; Massey et al., 1987; Massey et al., 1993; Massey et al., 1998). According to this account, the operation of feedback can first be observed when migrants provide information and assistance through their social networks to contacts in their area of origin. This reduces the costs and risks of migration and encourages more and more people to move towards the same location.

As migration expands, the networks expand even more and the process becomes self-sustained, independently from the structural conditions which generated it in the first place. For example, the emigration of the more entrepreneurial and better-educated population may set back economic growth in the area of origin, reducing employment opportunities and making emigration more attractive for others. While the direction of such cumulative causation – to stimulate rather than inhibit migration – has been contested (de Haas, 2010), it does draw attention to a set of feedback mechanisms that lie beyond networks. As a result of this process, migration flows tend to 'acquire a measure of stability and structure over space and time, allowing for the identification of stable international migration systems' (Massey et al., 1993, p. 454).

While this account does not restrict its focus to the operation of social networks, it does place networks at the core of its explanation of the emergence of these migration 'systems'. It is only as the scale of movement increases to such a level that it affects the broader conditions that the reliance on networks diminishes. It is perhaps then little surprise that much of the literature that draws on cumulative causation as an explanation for migration dynamics focuses rather narrowly on the operation of feedback through migrants' social networks.

What is more surprising is that this emphasis on networks is often not accompanied by a clear definition of these social networks or detailed consideration of the different ways in which they may operate. With notable exceptions (e.g., Paul, 2013; Epstein, 2008; Haug, 2008; Collyer, 2005; Böcker, 1994), there is little attention paid to the wide, and growing, array of forms of network that may be implicated in feedback mechanisms. Simply referring to migrant networks without any further specification gives little clue as to how and why migration patterns change as they do. In general, when the network is invoked, it conjures

up images of migrants facilitating their family and friends back home to come and join them. While this may be part of the story (and perhaps the major part in some cases), as we show in this volume, there is a much more complex set of inter-relationships. In showing the operation of feedback as more complex and nuanced, we thereby challenge simplistic formulations such as '[w]hat matters for the rate of migration is the number of people who are related to new migrants *and who are prepared to help them*' (Collier, 2013, p. 41 emphasis in original).

DiMaggio and Garip (2012) have proposed a more sophisticated analysis of the role of migration networks in shaping migration patterns. They suggest three social mechanisms that lead to network effects in migration, which could be conceptualised as corresponding with the main sources of feedback:

- *social learning* or facilitation (Garip and Asad, 2013) – offering support and advice that reduce the risks and costs of migration;
- *normative pressure* or influence – which shapes people's views of migration and may support or discourage subsequent movement;
- *network externalities* – the pool of common resources created by previous migrants, institutions such as smuggler gangs, migrant business associations, migrant support groups and hometown associations.

This is a useful starting point for breaking down the feedback mechanisms operating through social networks, but the empirical work presented in this volume suggests it could be refined in at least three ways. First, this approach does not examine the different spatial operations of these mechanisms; for example, where does the social facilitation occur – at origin or destination, or transnationally? This is important when we think about how feedback operates and what effects it has. Intuitively, feedback processes seem to belong to the now-established and celebrated transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004); however, we argue that they are not confined to this sphere only. Social learning among migrants may facilitate their settlement in the destination, but it may only start to operate when a new migrant arrives and finds co-nationals. This is rather different from the social learning that operates where a potential migrant learns about particular opportunities or strategies for finding employment from a neighbour who has recently returned from the potential destination. This spatial dimension is of critical importance to questions of causality. After all, if someone has already moved and then gains assistance through some form of network, one cannot argue that the network caused their migration.

Second, we can start to move beyond social networks by looking at how *social examples*, migrants' narratives of success and failure, can be broadcast through different media outside social networks. For example, even in the absence of any personal link, people may become aware of new houses built by migrants or watch the soap opera featuring the lives of migrants, with potential effects on their migration aspirations. This suggests that we can usefully distinguish between narrowcast and broadcast feedback (Chapter 9), where the former is concerned with mechanisms that target particular individuals or categories of migrants (often operating through networks) and the latter is about more general impacts on migratory conditions, which are independent of one's own networks.

Third, an important task for this volume is to move beyond a narrow focus on the feedback arising from social networks to include interactions such as those with the state, employers, educational establishments and new connections created by social media and information communication technologies (ICTs). DiMaggio and Garip's notion of network externalities only captures some of these in as far as they emerge from network relationships among migrants, but many emerge with minimal or no direct engagement with existing migrants.

We therefore propose that we distinguish between direct and indirect operation of feedback. The former is concerned with how migrants may directly shape subsequent migration, perhaps by assisting or hindering those that follow. The latter is concerned with more extended causal processes. For example, the presence of migrants working in a particular sector may stimulate the creation of employment agencies that subsequently start recruiting in the country of origin, encouraging more migration. These indirect causal mechanisms are likely to operate across different analytical levels. To extend the example, migration at one time may change the labour market, resulting in different levels of demand for migrant labour in future years at the macro-level, which then translates into altering the relationships between the employers and migrants and the operation of migration industry at the meso-level. These changes, in turn, 'trickle down' to the micro-level and may be reflected through varying aspirations and capacities to migrate as expressed by individuals. The growth of the institutional actors of the migration industry – such as travel agents, employment agencies, smugglers and so forth – may be accompanied by the transfer of economic, social and political remittances which convey images and ideas about migration to a broad array of people in the origin country far beyond any social network (Kubal, 2015; Levitt, 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2010; Levitt et al., 2011).

Alternatively, an increase in the number of migrants in one place may be used as a rationale for the destination state introducing tighter controls, restricting the opportunities for regular migration. This may result in more migrants falling on the wrong side of the law, pushing a larger proportion of the migrants into irregularity and resulting in the 'problem' of migration appearing to increase and increasing hostility to migration (De Genova, 2004). This is an example of feedback operating through policy, where responses to migrants at one time influence the reception of those who come later. Here, it is important to note that social networks may play a part in the operation of this indirect feedback, but they cannot be identified as the cause. For example, the changing economic and social environments for immigrants in the Netherlands have resulted in the tighter immigration laws, which have made it much harder for new migrants to come from Morocco. As we see in the chapter by Snel, Engbersen and Faber (Chapter 7, this volume), the social networks of current migrants can play an important role in conveying this message that the gate is closed.

This example also reminds us that feedback does not always have a positive impact on the rate of migration. Theories of migration systems and cumulative causation were developed as attempts to explain the growth of migration between localities over time. However, our notion of feedback has a broader purpose: to understand how migration at one time affects movement at a later time, whether to cause it to increase or *decrease*. As de Haas (2010) noted, migration flows once started do not necessarily expand indefinitely but may stabilise or decline, despite the presence of migrant networks. One only has to think of the very well-established patterns of migration from Europe to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to find examples of 'systems' that eventually appeared to run out of steam (Hatton and Williamson, 1998; Morawska, 2001). This volume will seek to examine how feedback mechanisms may act not only to expand migration but also to reduce it.

The extent to which networks play a role in negative feedback is open to debate. Previous research has found that (a) migrants do not easily transmit the negative side of their migration experience but rather tend to 'sweeten the truth' and (b) dissenting views on migration passed on to prospective migrants are more difficult to accept and acknowledge than positive views (Garip and Assad 2013). The empirical examples presented in this volume suggest that they may play an important role, either actively discouraging new migration or reinforcing the feedback operating through other channels, such as tighter immigration controls or broadcast media.

The empirical basis for the volume

Unpacking the theoretical questions around the operation of migration feedback, we draw on the empirical findings of the THEMIS project. This project explored movements to cities in four European countries – Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Portugal – from Brazil, Morocco and Ukraine, focusing on how the migration processes of yesterday influence those of today. Between 2010 and 2012, the project team gathered a unique and rich set of data on these themes. All the chapters in the book draw on this qualitative and quantitative database. The former consists of 360 in-depth interviews with Brazilian, Moroccan and Ukrainian migrants in four European countries (Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Portugal) and 270 in-depth interviews with return-migrants and their family members in the respective origin countries. The quantitative component consists of over 2,400 surveys with migrants in the above-mentioned European destination countries, as well as 1,800 surveys in origin countries – Brazil, Morocco and Ukraine – known for high out-migration. More detail about the methodology and some background data on the dynamics between the chosen origin and destination countries can be found in Chapter 2.

Our empirical research was therefore focused on 12 migration 'corridors', or dyads of origin and destination in which changing patterns of migration (or the absence of migration) can be observed. This notion of migration corridors is presented in more detail in Chapter 2, which explains the important role it played in the selection of our case studies. However, in order to understand the mechanisms which drive the changes in migration patterns, a more fine-grained analysis was also required, which took us below the national level of the corridor. The first and most obvious step was to zoom in by geographical scale and focus on particular locations. This was essential for the design of a feasible research strategy. Moreover, our inspiration from the migration systems literature was the way in which migrants from one particular origin come to be clustered around a particular destination. We were not seeking to explain the changing dynamics of migration from Ukraine to Portugal; nor could we do so in practice. Instead, we wanted to understand how and why migrants from Kiev came to be in Lisbon (for instance). At the same time, we were also interested to understand when initial migration does not result in cumulative causation: Why was there no similar clustering of migrants from Kiev in Oslo? Hence, we needed to examine not just the growth of migration but also its stagnation or decline, but always focusing on particular localities.

As we progressed with the research, it was important to disaggregate the migration flows between localities according to a range of characteristics related to the time of migration, which we refer to as *waves*, as feedback could operate rather differently depending on the time of migration and as there may be limited interaction between waves. This was illustrated very clearly in the case of Ukrainians in London (and to a lesser extent in the Netherlands), where there was quite a sharp divide between temporal waves. The relationships between those who came in the aftermath of the Second World War and those who came after Ukrainian independence were somewhat strained, and this appeared to affect how they responded to new migrants (Kubal and Dekker, 2014). Migration flows could also be differentiated on the basis of levels of education, socio-economic status, region of origin and race. This was particularly noticeable in the case of Brazilians moving to the Norway, Portugal and the United Kingdom, where it is possible to see sharp class divisions from Brazil reproduced in migration processes. This example is presented in more detail in Horst, Pereira and Sheringham (Chapter 5, this volume). Similar differences are revealed by breaking down the analysis on the basis of migrants' rationale for moving, their economic activities or their immigration status. This became clear through the research process, as the sampling strategy revealed the limits of trying to find common social networks between the 'high-skilled' and the 'low-skilled' migrants (even active strategies of 'avoidance') from the same origin area living in the same city (see Carling and Jolivet, Chapter 2, this volume, for discussion of the respondent-driven sampling).

How does the feedback work?

These theoretical reflections and empirical findings produced a set of themes and ideas which run through this volume. We look at the operation of feedback mechanisms in affecting the patterns of migration within the 12 different corridors. Through our interviews with migrants in destination areas and return-migrants, family members and the wider population in origin areas, we have sought out explanations for people's migration decisions. In particular, we have probed both what influenced their individual migration story and how they may have contributed to the migration of others. While our aim is to dig below the simplistic reliance on the operation of migrants' social networks as the principle feedback mechanism – to reach beyond networks – they remain an important starting point for the analysis.

This starts in chapters 3, 4 and 5, which pull apart the operation of social networks, highlighting the fissures between migrant waves that create different forms of networks and associated feedback. In Chapter 3, Van Meeteren and Pereira look at the data on Brazilians moving to Portugal and the Netherlands to show how the role of networks varies between both these two destinations and the primary motivation for migrating, differentiating between those moving for employment, study, seeking life experience and family reunification. They carefully note where such interventions arise, whether in Brazil or the destination, thereby calling into question if networks are causing migration or playing a more incidental part. While families and friends often play a major role in facilitating migration, Van Meeteren and Pereira draw attention to the significance of other sources of information and assistance from institutions such as employers and embassies, and also the internet.

The influence of the internet and virtual social networks is a theme taken up by Dekker, Engbersen and Faber in Chapter 4. They analyse how respondents in the THEMIS project reported their use of various online media. They find that it is primarily used as a complementary means of sustaining communication with friends and family living abroad (whether in the origin or destination areas), alongside telephone calls, letters and visits. Nevertheless, it clearly extends the reach of people's networks to sustain and perhaps even strengthen weak ties that may have lapsed in the absence of social media. They also show there is some evidence of people reaching out to complete strangers online, passing on information about places and opportunities. This suggests that operation of virtual social networks cannot be assumed to match that of the personal face-to-face networks envisaged by migration theorists in the 1990s.

Moving away from this focus on these channels of feedback, in Chapter 5 Horst, Pereira and Sheringham examine how the feedback processes vary depending on the social class of the migrants. They note that the idea of class was explicitly invoked by Brazilian respondents to explain differences within the migrant population. In the cases of Portugal and the United Kingdom, the early migrants were more middle class and they are now being joined by lower-middle and working-class compatriots; while in Norway distinctions are made between the well-off migrants from the large metropolises from the Southeast of Brazil and the 'marriage migrants' from the Northeast. Such class differences, in terms of access to both resources and aspirations, clearly shape migration practices, but this chapter shows how class fissures are also