Interview – Daniel Naujoks

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Daniel Naujoks is the director of the International Organization & UN Studies Specialization at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. He is the author of *Migration, Citizenship, and Development* (2013, Oxford University Press) and his research focuses on global governance, migration, refugees, citizenship, multilateralism, and sustainable development. Dr. Naujoks regularly advises governments and international organizations on issues of migration, diaspora engagement, human rights, displacement, and development. He edits the blog Multilateralism in Action and tweets at @danaujoks.

Where do you see the most exciting research/debates happening in your field?

When it comes to the study of International Organizations (IOs) and the United Nations (UN), I see interesting new debates emerging on the role of IOs at the country level. Until now, scholars have focused predominately on the global level and how states act within IOs or how international bureaucracies shape global discussions and outcomes. A promising trend in IO studies now emphasizes the role IOs play at the country level, where they advocate, advise, and support governments and work directly with stakeholders. The dynamics of IOs at the country level differ significantly from processes at the global level, including when it comes to interagency cooperation, collaborations with civil society, and political influence from donors. For example, since 1997, almost 500 UN Development Assistance Frameworks and Cooperation Frameworks have been adopted by UN country teams. But we're only slowly starting to research what they are, how they are formulated, and what impacts they have. In fact, one of my major research projects looks into how migration and displacement have been incorporated in all existing UN cooperation frameworks and what are key determinants of such incorporation. This 'local turn' of IO and UN studies offers many fascinating new avenues for research and I'm sure we will see a lot more work in this area.

In the area of migration and international relations, we see a significant and much-needed increase in scholarly interest in the Global South. This includes how governments use migrant and refugee flows to bargain with countries in the Global North for more development assistance. Or how countries in the Global North try to externalize their borders through international cooperation with key transit countries, often in ways that are problematic from a human rights perspective. Human mobility scholarship also focuses increasingly on understanding displacement and migration policy in developing countries––that host a large share of the world's migrants and refugees.

Lastly, in 2018, the global community adopted two non-binding Global Compacts, namely the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Beyond the narrow confines of public international law, scholars are looking into various ways in which certain norm-entrepreneurs, including IOs and civil society, as well as processes and platforms, such as national voluntary reviews ahead of the International Migration Review Forum, the GCM review platform, or specific pledges ahead of the corresponding process of the GCR, the Global Refugee Forum, create and diffuse norms around migration and refugee policy.

How has the way you understand the world changed over time, and what (or who) prompted the most significant shifts in your thinking?

My general belief in the workings of the world has been relatively constant. I'm a constructivist and I believe in the power of social norms in the international arena. And I'm an optimist. I've always been a bit impatient with the speed

of change but having witnessed the direction of change over time I know that some adjustments in deeply held norms about who we are as 'nations' take time to take root. I was recently asked to write about how I predict migration governance in 75 years. Of course, any prediction about the distant future is riddled with uncertainty. But looking back at achievements in global governance, migration policy, and human rights norms over the past 75 years and looking at broader, long-term trends, I feel optimistic that we will be moving in the right direction. For this reason, it's important that we work to create better multilateral processes at the global and regional levels with meaningful incentive structures and accountability mechanisms.

How have migration policies and movement in the Global South been impacted by the influence of former colonial powers? How might countries impacted by colonial pasts counter this and shift to more progressive policies?

Immigration and emigration movements and policies in the Global South are heavily influenced by the actions of colonial powers before decolonization, as well as by continuing activities by, and social networks in, former colonial powers. In some countries, such as in India, today's immigration legislation dates back to pre-independence British India. In India's case, this legislation focuses on foreigners' offenses, rather than on a rules-based, proactive immigration policy. In some cases, the experience with colonialism also prompted a certain wariness to allow foreigners to come, work, and invest. This is fully understandable but it does not necessarily lead to a meaningful immigration policy. In addition, the random national borders drawn by former colonial powers often divide ethnic communities. For this reason, borders need to be more porous and allow for the fluctuation of such communities that spread across national borders. This in turn poses specific challenges for these countries' border management and the incorporation of such movements into migration policies.

When it comes to emigration, on the other hand, colonial ties remain a key factor that determines where people from the Global South migrate to. For example, migrants from francophone Africa tend to head for France, migrants from lusophone Africa to Portugal and former British colonies to the UK. And in some cases, emigration control policies and institutions created during colonial rule, live on until today, shaping the management of outward migration.

Lastly, because former colonies are often seen as key sources of migrants and transit migrants heading to their former colonial powers, the latter try to actively influence the former's emigration, immigration, and border control policies. While some low-income countries have adopted new and progressive immigration regimes, such as Morocco, they are often not implemented and serve more as a discursive tool toward other countries (in Morocco's case both toward African countries and the European Union). This being said, some regional economic powerhouses, such as Ghana, are embracing regional mobility regimes, such as the one in ECOWAS, to welcome labor migrants from neighboring countries.

As I see it, countries in the Global South have to overcome a few hurdles to design progressive immigration policies. First, they need to withstand the securitization pressures from donor countries that are interested in effective border management to hinder people's mobility. Second, many low and middle-income countries see themselves predominantly as emigration countries, devoting little thought to issues of immigration. Using data from the UN Population Division, I have shown that most countries in the world are actually both, immigration and emigration countries. But this insight has yet to be accepted in many places and lead to a shift in policy attitudes. Lastly, economies in low-income countries are characterized by largely informal labor markets and significant competition for resources. Whereas immigration often has significant positive effects on the host economy, in low-income settings, it is sometimes harder to justify a large inflow of migrants.

But I am certain that more countries in the Global South will overcome these obstacles. Their lived realities of border-crossing communities, strong cultural ties to other societies, and the development of regional frameworks, such as in the Andean Community, Mercosur, ECOWAS and elsewhere, are good indications that some of these countries will soon be providing policy options that the rest of the world can learn from.

Your book *Migration, Citizenship, and Development* analyzes citizenship policies in relation to diaspora, specifically the Indian diaspora in the United States and return migrants in India. Many countries have

long histories of allowing multiple citizenships, but countries like Germany have recently begun to alter their citizenship laws in this direction. Has this impacted the debate around identity and citizenship in countries that have adopted this and how do you see this impacting Germany?

I am sometimes surprised by the tenacity of certain arguments brought forth against dual citizenship. This often goes to the core of what citizenship, understood as official membership in a political community, means. Critics compare citizenship with marriage (and consequently dual citizenship with bigamy), fear that assumed 'outside interests' would create unreasonable voters, or that naturalization requires relinquishing one's former identity and 'fully committing' to the new country's identity.

Although permutations of such arguments resurface in regular intervals, I am encouraged by the fact that the lived realities of societies in which members have genuine and meaningful relationships with more than one state increasingly normalize multiple social and political memberships. More and more countries around the globe tolerate dual citizenship and we see that the fear that this might erode democratic behavior is completely unfounded. The European University Institute's GLOBALCIT Citizenship Law Dataset shows that in 2022, almost half of the countries around the world fully accept dual citizenship (49 percent**)**, whereas only one-fifth consistently restrict dual citizenship at naturalization (21 percent). For this reason, a consensus starts to emerge that having political rights in one country is not diminished by the fact that a person may have political rights or a citizenship-like relationship with another country.

For a long time and in many contexts, citizenship had a strong identity component. This linkage between national, cultural (and sometimes ethnic or racial) identity and citizenship is diminishing in many countries that experience sustained, heterogeneous immigration. This de-essentialization of citizenship contributes to a broader recognition of immigrant naturalization and to the recognition of multiple citizenships. By the way, controversial discussions on dual citizenship also occur in *emigration* countries, where official membership status is hoped to spur remittances, while also being securitized as threats to national security.

In addition, it's not always uniform what formal citizenship status means. In my research, I show that states have experimented with various concepts of atypical citizenship statuses and that different countries have different bundles of rights and duties associated with citizenship status. For these reasons, I am hopeful that transnational societies, changes in our discursive practices and media portrayals, research on the harmlessness of multiple passports, as well as a continuing modernization of concepts such as citizenship will lead to a further increase in our acceptance of multiple citizenships. Obviously, this is not a universal process and we see backlashes from certain constituencies on the right edge of the political spectrum. But I am confident that the mainstream consensus, legal, media and bureaucratic processes move in this direction in Germany and in many parts of the world – albeit sometimes slower than I wish.

You conducted one of the first studies analyzing incentives created by governments for diaspora investments, can you elaborate on your findings and motivation behind this project?

For a long time, low-income countries that struggle with attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) have set their eyes on tapping into the investment potential of their diaspora communities. In fact, according to data from the UN Population Division, 60 percent out of 99 countries with data had instituted at least one policy specifically for diaspora investors. Interestingly, in spite of the longstanding interest among governments and migration scholars, our knowledge about such investments remains limited. This starts with the almost complete lack of statistics on diaspora FDI and continues with open questions about its determinants, impacts, forms, the role of policies and methodologies for examining diaspora FDI.

I have studied diaspora investments in India; and on behalf of the UN Development Programme I conducted a survey in Tunisia that unpacks some of the existing myths around these financial flows. The research shows that diaspora FDI tends to go into regions that are underserved by other FDI. However, my research questions existing assumptions about diaspora FDI generating more local income and employment than non-diaspora FDI or transferring more knowledge to local partners. It also puts into question to what extent diaspora investors are being

incentivized by policies aimed at increasing their engagement. This serves as an important reminder to base policies on empirical evidence.

You have proposed a mobility mandala that examines the links between human mobility and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Can you explain the mobility mandala?

Having worked at the intersection of human mobility and development, I often noted a siloed approach to the various linkages, both in the academic literature, as well as by practitioners at the UN and development partners. Human mobility––a broad term that includes issues related to immigration, emigration, refugee movements, displacement, return, and diaspora relations––plays a fundamental role in sustainable development across the globe. Under the right circumstances, mobility can lead to enormous development gains for migrants. It can also generate significant benefits for the communities they leave and the communities they join. In other scenarios, it can threaten development gains in fragile host communities or impede sustainable development and put people on the move in vulnerable situations. To address the complexity of this nexus, I proposed the mobility mandala as a comprehensive and globally applicable framework to understand the links between human mobility and sustainable development.

The mandala conceptualizes the various links in four domains. Domain 1 on *development affecting mobility* examines the impact of development on (prospective) migrants or mobility patterns. This includes how the lack of development prompts emigration, how development gains can attract immigration and that the lack of development can force people to opt for dangerous migration routes. Domain 2 on *mobility as development* treats the movement and its characteristics as the independent variable and migrants' development outcomes as dependent variables. It emphasizes the inherent potential of mobility to increase development outcomes for those who move. The flipside of mobility as development is Domain 3, which focuses on scenarios where vulnerable mobile populations are excluded from development opportunities. In the language of the SDGs, this puts them at risk of being 'left behind.' Domain 3 asks about the impact of mobility or of specific development impediments on the sustainable development outcomes of vulnerable mobile populations.

Lastly, Domain 4 on *migration and mobile populations impact development* focuses on the effect of contributions of emigrants and diasporas on the development of communities of origin or immigrants, refugees, and IDPs' impact on the communities of destination. The mobility mandala shows that sustainable development, as conceptualized by the SDGs, is linked in many ways to human mobility and it helps to address migration issues in a broad range of development and policy areas, such as healthcare, education, climate change, conflict, social welfare, economic growth, entrepreneurship, and agriculture. I hope that this will help both scholars and practitioners to develop policies and approaches that adequately reflect the needs and potentials of mobile populations.

As Director of the International Organization and UN Studies Specialization at Columbia University and as someone who has worked for a number of international organizations, how would you describe the impact that being both a practitioner and an academic has had on your work? What can practitioners learn from academics and vice versa?

Regrettably, in academia, especially in political science departments, there remains a certain bias against people with practical experience. It is sometimes assumed that individuals, who are labeled 'policy people,' can't engage in substantive research and only write 'short, unreflective memos.' On the other hand, practitioners sometimes fear that academics approach problems with grand theories and make lofty and unrealistic recommendations from their ivory tower. Having worked in both environments, I wholeheartedly disagree with such views. In fact, I believe that both spheres can – and should – work closely together.

As scholars, we need to ask ourselves about the utility of our research. Especially us social scientists need to have a good answer for the "so what" question. Herbert Gans once wrote that, rather than contributing to "the literature" and other disciplinary concerns, scholars should be relevant and deal with real world problems. I don't mean to say that all research needs to be policy-oriented. But academic research would benefit if it were informed more by the challenges people implementing programs on the ground encounter.

One limitation of the usefulness of academic research is the focus on theory-building and on proving or disproving certain scholarly theories. There is a small countermovement that highlights the importance of descriptive research, especially for new areas of work. Of course, theories can be valuable. But much of academia's obsession with theory can lead to neglecting important issues and to a focus on inquiries that are less meaningful for those engaged practically.

Academic research has a lot to offer to practitioners. Scholars can point out where practitioners ask the wrong questions. Scholars can dig deeper, spend more time, develop and apply richer methods and thus get more substantive answers to relevant questions than short-term assessments that are used as tools by practitioners. I was just appointed as faculty director for the new UN Partnership Initiative at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs which aims at infusing academic knowledge into processes at the various UN entities. In fact, I see an increasing number of collaborations between academic institutions and international organizations to create venues for these important exchanges.

What is the most important advice you could give to young scholars of International Relations?

International Relations as a discipline has a tendency to remain stuck in a classic canon of theories – realism, constructivism, etc. For the study of international organizations, this has led to insightful research on how different states position themselves on the international parquet in New York and Geneva. But many practical issues about non-state actors, the broader work of international bureaucracies (the so-called second UN), especially at the country level, interagency cooperation and competition, the accountability of such processes to affected persons and many other questions have fallen largely out of the purview of scholarly attention.

This also holds true for the way international treaties, soft law, and multi-stakeholder platforms shape the acceptance, dissemination, and local incorporation of norms. Much of our understanding remains rooted in legalistic perceptions of norm enforcement, whereas I believe that we need a more realistic and comprehensive theory of how various international activities and processes can influence policy outcomes at the national level. I know that job market considerations need to cater to the preferences of political science departments. But I hope that young scholars will take up more innovative projects and change our (sometimes a bit musty) understanding of IR.