Editorial

Jeffrey H. Cohen

Cash flows from destinations to sending homes may capture a core feature of remittance practices, yet, like the act of migrating, the flows do not take place in a vacuum. Rather they are part of a complex and dynamic system linking movers and non-movers. While the complex dynamism of remittance practices can be a challenge, as the articles included in this volume of Remittance Reviews note, understanding is within our reach.

Taken as a representation of cutting-edge work, the articles included in our issue note that remittances practices are almost always about more than cash flows and play out at the micro, meso and macro-levels. In fact, defined in relation to the lives of movers, our issue serves to deconstruct the bounded world of migrants as they face increasing limits placed by the state (see Velasquez-Hoque on Ecuadorian migrants settled in the UK; Zegeye on the adoption of agricultural technology in Ethiopia; and Gnangnon on wages and remittances in high-income countries), by development (Allelyanatha on youth and remittances in rural Nigeria) and perhaps most importantly in this moment the Covid-19 pandemic (Makun and Jayaraman’s modeling remittance flows in India and in response to the pandemic).

Remittance practices are never easy to predict. Movers make confounding decisions, change their minds and are confronted by shifting laws, exploitative transfer systems, and traditions that can make it difficult (if not impossible) to effectively follow through on their aspirations (see for example, the work by KOMAD summarized in Ratha, Kim, Plaza, & Seshan, 2021). Furthermore, their choices often include much more than money and play out over the long-term and in relation to other forces that include family needs and dynamics, labor opportunities and education, age and more. Yet, it is critical that we do not close ourselves to these factors, rather we must embrace them and at the same time, look past them if our goal is to model outcomes and create a framework that supports

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References