

The Migration Studies Best Article Awards, 2015–2018

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The annual Migration Studies Best Article Award was launched not long after the journal was founded in 2013. The span of six years since that founding has been one of intense activity for everyone involved. As a result of sustained effort by the in-house team at Oxford University Press along with the editorial team, the journal has been assigned an official Impact Factor: a key credential that lets authors trust the journal with their best work going forward. *Migration Studies* has also been included in the OUP collection that is marketed in bulk at discount rates to libraries around the world, which has substantially increased the journal's readership. In addition, since launching *Migration Studies* has processed about a thousand submissions from 80 or so countries and has published roughly a hundred articles. In the background to this activity, the seven members of the founding editorial team have among us made around a dozen international moves, directed at least six international migration research centres, and helped bring ten children into the world. Many things have fallen off the tasklists in this period, and keeping up to date with the *Migration Studies* Awards has unfortunately been one of them. In this issue we are making up for lost time by announcing a backlog of award winners for the period 2015–2018.

2015 Migration Studies Best Article Award: 'Modeling internal migration flows in sub-Saharan Africa using census microdata', by Andres J. Garcia, Deepa K. Pindolia, Kenneth K. Lopiano and Andrew J. Tatem.

It is already a cliché to complain that migration from the global South to the global North is the tip of an iceberg, consisting mostly of migration *within* the developing world. Often the challenges facing Southern states include lack of capacity to produce valid and reliable migration scholarship, and so we know too little about migration in these regions. The 2015 winner is an outstanding exception to the rule. The article not only harmonizes microdata from the censuses of ten sub-Saharan African states with further geospatial sources of data, but also develops statistical models predicting migration based on key social, demographic, economic, and environmental dynamics. Robust by any standard, these models explain up to 87 percent of internal migration flows and can support planning for a range of socio-demographic purposes – which is all the more important in a context where such high quality research is hard to come by.

2016 Migration Studies Best Article Award: 'From lifestyle migration to lifestyle in migration: Categories, concepts and ways of thinking', by Michaela Benson and Karen O'Reilly.

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With global headlines currently fixated on migration crises and displacement for reasons of survival, researchers too often overlook the way mobility is woven deeply into human lifecycle and lifestyle dynamics. We selected this article partly because of its outstanding contribution to placing these elements of the human migration experience at the forefront of scholarship. We also selected it because it makes the more subtle argument that we need to better understand the evolution and methodological underpinnings of analytical categories like ‘lifestyle migration’ in order to use them properly in research. This is an important point, not least because migration studies is often criticised for over-reliance on unquestioned policy categories and dichotomies – forced vs free, economic vs humanitarian, regular vs irregular, high- vs low-skilled and so on – that may either make something out of nothing, or treat something as nothing. To make their point, the authors show how the notion of lifestyle emerges from a combination of both material, economic considerations and ideational dimensions of life, including imagination and aspiration. They show how, if reconstructed, the concept of lifestyle in migration can foreground both choice and consumption in discussions about migration, and provide a more nuanced image of that archetypal character, ‘the migrant’.

2017 Migration Studies Best Article Award: ‘Re-thinking the politics of migration: On the uses and challenges of regime perspectives for migration research’, by Kenneth Horvath, Anna Amelina and Karin Peters.

This is the introductory article to a special issue on migration regimes in an age of turbulence, in the wake of a great recession driven by crises in global finance. Any historian’s autopsy of this decade, like any of the 1930s, will identify angst about controlling migration and diversity as a major symptom. As we track globalisation in retreat, and witness new regimes of control as they emerge, shift and thicken at every level of migration governance, scholars need to pause and take stock of how regime theory can prepare us. This article, and the guest-edited collection its authors have led, offer a novel and insightful application of regime theory to migration research. The authors make a clear and compelling argument for keeping an open mind to the multiple tools for unpacking complex political configurations related to migration. At a time when migration has become a cardinal issue, it is all the more necessary to employ analytical tools that allow us to understand such processes in a structured yet pragmatic way.

2018 Migration Studies Best Article Award: ‘Examining the role of border closure and post-colonial ties in Caribbean migration’, by Marie Laurence Flahaux and Simona Vezzoli.

This article, part of a much broader project, offers an outstanding contribution to our understanding of the way migration regimes may affect the volume, composition and direction of migration flows. The authors astutely compare the divergent migration frameworks put in place after independence in the Anglo, Dutch, French and US Caribbean to understand their effects in the long run. Not only does the article draw on robust comparative work to extract generalizable results, it also mines in-depth knowledge of the Caribbean historical context to interpret findings and explain observed exceptions. The article also speaks directly to longstanding theoretical debates, at the core of migration scholarship, about the efficacy or failure of migration policies. This too-rare combination of quantitative competence, historical knowledge, and theoretical relevance amply justifies the 2018 award.

Our thanks

The editorial team would like to express sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the journal in this period. First and foremost, we sing the praises of Elizabeth Green, who keeps things on the rails not only for *Migration Studies* but also for the *Journal of Refugee Studies*. All members of the in-house team at OUP, including marketing and production team members and most of all the incomparable Vanessa Lacey, who was central to founding the journal as its Publishing Editor, have been consummate professionals. Countless reviewers have worked, free of charge, for hundreds of hours on the pages of this journal. The editors have neglected their family duties to print these words for you. The authors, more than all of us, deserve thanks for the contribution they make to current and future debates in migration studies.