

Labour migration as extractivist capitalism and imperialism

Henry Veltmeyer, Universidad Autonoma de Zacatecas, the Critical Development Studies (CDS) network

Abstract

The paper deals with migration as imperialism, the latter viewed as a means of ensuring for the system a vital human resource for capitalist development. The paper is fundamentally concerned with labour migration along a south-north axis of global development, with a central focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. But the dynamics involved are global and are played out in diverse regional contexts.

For several decades, wealthy capitalist states and international development agencies have encouraged labour migration from the Global South to the Global North. The argument advanced in this context is that migrant remittances represent the most promising means of national development for poor and undeveloped countries. But in fact, international labour migration, most of which takes place on a south-north axis, represents the most recent form of economic imperialism and global domination. Rather than providing developing countries in the global south with a development pathway, international labour migration serves primarily as a mechanism of capital accumulation, providing recipient countries in the global north a vital productive resource while deepening economic exploitation, depriving developing countries of their most valuable resource for sustainable human development, and in the process significantly expanding economic inequalities between poor and rich nations.

Biography

Henry Veltmeyer is Professor Emeritus in Global Development Studies at Saint Mary's University and Senior Research Professor of Development Studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, Mexico. He also holds the status of Emeritus National Researcher with the Mexican Research Council of Humanities, Science and Technology, and is a Senior Research Fellow with CALAS (the Centre of Latin American Advanced Research). He is author, coauthor and editor of over 40 books on issues of Latin American and world development, including *The Essential Guide to Critical Development Studies* (2021) and *From Extractivism to Sustainability: Scenarios and Lessons from Latin America* (2023).