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The Root Causes of Migration: Criticising the Approach and Finding a Way Forward

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Summary

The focus of this paper is a critique of the root causes approach to migration. More specifically it examines how the approach has been used to formulate policy at a European level and applies a critical appraisal of the root causes approach in general, to this policy, in particular the work of the High Level Working Group on Immigration and Asylum (HLWG). It is argued that a failure to successfully accommodate theories of migration undermines the approach in both theory and practice. A range of theories which could usefully be encompassed within the root causes approach are identified and elucidated.   One key area of concern within the root causes approach, rural to urban migration, is examined to provide material for a suggested way forward.

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Preface

<u>Why root causes?</u>
The contested nature of the root causes approach emerged from a reading of Zolberg et al.'s *Escape to Violence* (1989). It appeared that the approach claimed to have one aim, the improvement of conditions in the countries of origin, but was in fact resulting in a quite different outcome, an increase in control, deterrent and prevention mechanisms towards those seeking asylum or other 'unwanted' migrants (Martin & Taylor, 2001, p.95). Indeed, the very existence of root causes activity or an 'integrated approach' (EU, January 1999a, point 12) provided justification for the EU to strengthen its preventative measures.

Further reading revealed that some positions held by root causes proponents seemed inconsistent with a full understanding of migration processes. The role of rural-urban migration, an undifferentiated view of migration and a failure to incorporate segmented labour market theory provided justification for the activities and approaches of root causes proponents. These concerns initiated the topic as a dissertation but were augmented by the suggestion from my supervisor, Dr. Richard Black, that the High Level Working Group (HLWG) demonstrated the root causes approach in action, and so the topic was broadened to include analysis of this group.

<u>Methodology</u>
Discussion here of the theoretical elements of the root causes approach, and its historical and political context are informed by existing literature (see bibliography). The material covering EU policy and the HLWG is based on primary documentation from the EU and NGOs as outlined in the bibliography, and interviews with policy makers. The documents have been used to identify the activities of the group, to assess its success or failure by its own criteria and as sources for assessing the failure of the root causes approach, and the HLWG in particular, to incorporate an adequate understanding of migration processes. Interviews were designed to contextualise primary documentation, to add background information, to address criticisms of the project and to gain an insight, not so far apparent in existing literature, into the workings of the group. I am particularly indebted to Lars Lonnback and Maureen A. Barnett at the EU, Dr. Maria-Teresa Gil-Bazos and Lars Olsson at Amnesty International, Areti Siani at ECRE for sharing time, knowledge and documentation with me.

Introduction – The Root Causes of Migration

<u>Criticising the Approach and Finding a Way Forward</u>

The presidency conclusions from the Seville European Council, (EU, July 2002), summarise European thinking on a joint immigration and asylum policy which focuses on the need to 'combat illegal immigration' (EU, July 2002, p.7). There are nodding references to international obligations and the integration of immigrants (p.7 and p.8) but the main focus is on barriers to prevent migration via a 'penal framework' (p.9), a European border police force (p.9) and Immigration Liaison Officers (p.10). In addition to these home affairs instruments it is stated that 'an integrated, comprehensive and balanced approach to tackle the root causes of illegal immigration must remain the European Union's constant long-term objective' (EU, July 2002, p.10). However, apart from a passing mention of the benefits of economic development, the meat of this objective relies on readmission agreements and the threat of removing 'close relations' (p.11) between third countries and the EU. This paper will examine this 'root causes' approach, highlight the origins of the debate and the theory behind it to see how it evolved into the restrictive policies advocated by the EU today. It will also seek to find a more productive way forward.

Commentators on the root causes approach have identified criticisms of it which can be grouped into political, structural and empirical. Political criticisms look at the motivations of states, structural at how different world systems views affect the root causes approach and empirical criticisms focus on questioning the causes that have been identified, the effect that these causes have and the effect of actions to tackle causes. Once these different criticisms are established, the paper will argue that they can also be applied to the application of root causes within policy. It will review the development of root causes in European policy and then examine the work of the HLWG in the light of established criticisms.

After this critical assessment of the root causes approach in theory and in practice, the paper will turn to a more specific area of criticism. It will suggest that one reason for the shortcomings of the root causes approach is its failure to adequately conceptualise migration. By failing to understand and integrate well-established theories of migration, the failures of the root causes approach are inherent within it. The paper will look at several problematic aspects of the root causes understanding of migration including: a failure to see migration in its historical context, a failure to conceive of the two-way process that is migration, and a failure to understand the complexities, variety of experiences and multiple causes and effects of different contexts within which migration happens.

After establishing the limitations of the root causes in theory and practice, with regard to these three areas, the paper will suggest an alternative root causes approach that could use migration theory to constructively model an approach that reflects more realistically how movement of people can enhance international development objectives while preserving states' requirement to limit international migration towards the north.

1. Criticising the root causes approach

<u>The emergence of the approach</u>
The 'root causes' approach, also termed a 'comprehensive approach' (Thorburn, 1996, p. 120) focuses on identifying causes of forced migration and attempting to modify them through activities in the countries of origin. There are obvious merits in tackling causes of conflict and other causes of distress to people in developing countries but when it is motivated specifically by the desire to prevent migration this can be counter-productive. In addition the root causes approach emerged as a policy solution to migration issues and is not adequately supported by theory. It encompasses some misconceptions of the reality of migration which undermines its *raison d'être* as well as its strategies. This paper will draw out these issues and analyse some alternative approaches.

There is no consensus in this area about exactly what a root causes approach is, what the root causes are or how they affect the movement of people. One area, which requires some clarification, is how far this approach can distinguish or chooses to distinguish between different types of migration. Originally the approach was designed to tackle refugee flows but there is increasing consideration of all migration under the root causes approach, as developed countries have gone through the cycle of closing down migration opportunities, attempting to restrict all migration and now moving towards a stance in which migration is 'managed' (EU, Sept. 1998, p.2) but still extremely restricted, and the focus is on preventing illegal immigration, which conflates asylum seekers and labour migrants.

As policy makers became more concerned with the movement of asylum seekers, particularly towards developed countries, and distinguished between those seeking asylum and not granted it and 'genuine' refugees (Kaye, 1998, p.167) policy documents began to distinguish less clearly between refugees and other types of migrants (EU, Nov. 2000c). In a world where the political incentives for welcoming refugees are less clear-cut, the motivations for refugees to leave are increasingly scrutinised. The 1951 Convention definition of a refugee as someone who is persecuted[1] has been under pressure since the 1960s when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) extended the definition to a broader range of people. In developed countries the tendency has been to offer other types of 'humanitarian' or 'B' status resulting in fewer applicants being granted refugee status and allowing states the opportunity to stigmatise applicants as 'bogus' (Hassan, 2000, p.195, & see Kaye, 1998, p.167). With this distinction comes the assumption that a large proportion of asylum seekers are what is termed 'economic migrants' (Sztucki, 1999, p.70) or 'illegal'. In a Refugee Council poll of UK residents, the term most associated with media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers was "illegal immigrant", selected by 64% of respondents (Refugee Council, 2002).

Despite the development of these terms it has never been possible to divide migrants easily into those who are forced and those who move purely for economic reasons. Motives are always mixed and Wood outlines the complexity of decision making for migrants and asserts that the 'borderline between political refugees and those dissatisfied economically can indeed be blurred' (1994, p.608). Zolberg et al. identify examples of the collapse of weak states where the 'very character of root causes makes it impossible to distinguish between flight from violence and flight from hunger' (Zolberg et al., 1989, p. 257) and Bissell & Natsios stress 'economic, social and political' factors in both sending and receiving countries (2001, p.298 & 310).

In addition to the difficulty of isolating different types of migrants, the recent restrictions on migration and international movement in general mean that people who in the past may

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[1] According to the 1951 Convention article 1A, the definition of a refugee is one who 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it'.

have qualified as refugees but did not need to be part of the 'refugee regime' (Zolberg et al., 1989, p.18 & passim) because they were able to move under family reunion rules or labour migration programmes, are now forced into the asylum system. On the other side of the coin, people who want to move to work in developed countries may also use the asylum system in the absence of any other routes. This path may be exacerbated by the increasing use of 'agents' who provide the necessary documents and routes for people hoping to enter developed countries. In the light of these factors it is easy to see how the root causes approach has come to apply as much to migration, which is assumed to be economic as it is to that which is often called 'political' migration. Despite the complexity of motivations accompanying migrants, policy makers must be aware that there are some people, denied the safety of their own state, who need safeguards to ensure that they can reach asylum in a country that will protect them.

The convergence of asylum and migration in the policy context has a strong political element to it. The refugee regime has its roots in the post-World War Two situation and in the Cold War. During the Cold War there was a strong ideological incentive for states to accept refugees, which initially mainly came from communist countries and then tended to come from countries where one or other side had a strategic interest (Loescher, 1993, p.55).

After the oil-crisis of 1973 and economic retrenchment by powerful states, migration became less acceptable but states discovered it was not possible to close the door entirely. Family reunion meant that migration continued and continuing conflict and easier modes of travel meant that more asylum seekers were reaching developed countries (Zolberg et al., 1989, p.229). The end of the Cold War meant that refugees were no longer ideologically useful (Chimni, 1995, p.298) and this coincided with fears that uncontrolled East-West migration could result (Westin, 1999, p.35). These factors meant that migration and asylum increasingly became seen as problematic, whilst the end of the Cold War opened the door to political solutions.

During the Cold War the 'political paralysis of the bi-polar world' (Chimni, 1998, p. 360) had prevented any actions towards tackling the underlying causes of forced migration but towards the late 1980s this was no longer a restriction. During the 1980s and 1990s migration became a matter of 'high politics' (Thorburn, 1996, p.120,) and forced migration became linked to security issues. This is partly due to an erroneous 'emergency mentality' as identified by Zolberg (2001, p.1) which, in conjunction with the increased targeting and expelling of civilian populations as a tactic of intrastate conflicts (Loescher, 2001, p. 171), resulted in the increasing use of 'humanitarian interventions' to stave off further conflict and to prevent massive outflows of refugees (Loescher, 2001, p.172).

The post-Cold War political environment with its desire to control migration, rejection of claims of asylum seekers and the increasingly political role of immigration has created the context for the development of the root causes approach. Outlining the political and historical context for the emergence of the root causes approach reveals some of the key criticisms of the root causes approach. Here political criticisms will be outlined as well as some criticisms of the empirical content and those which identify flaws in the way the approach is constructed.

Political criticisms

The investment in military or 'humanitarian' intervention instead of conflict prevention or early warning systems (Loescher, 2001, p.172) is symptomatic of the political quandary of the root causes approach. Most developed states are concerned about migration but few have the political will to intervene in another state's affairs to the extent necessary to prevent refugee-producing situations. Instead, after flows of refugees are beginning or are inevitable 'preventive protection' (Frelick, 1993, p.7) or regional solutions such as 'safe havens' (Frelick, 1993, p.7) become part of a military solution. This regionalised approach was established in the early days of the UN's involvement with root causes. One of the reasons why focus was turned to the root causes of forced migration was the movement of people from Vietnam. International concern about this movement led to the development of a Comprehensive Plan of

Action (CPA) for Vietnam, which established regional solutions as a target of the root causes approach (Loescher, 1993, p.190 & Adelman, 1999, p.98). Regional solutions prevent states from having to accept responsibility for refugees seeking asylum with them and maintain the view that flows of migrants are the responsibility of the sending country.

The desire of states to devolve responsibility for forced migrants is well served by the root causes approach. The long-term nature of most of the issues covered by this approach conflicts with the immediate needs of migrants in the North and the South but it allows states to derogate their responsibility. Hathaway points out that states are happy to engage with root causes as they have 'few immediate consequences' and that 'agreements in principle and statements of intention are a small price to pay for a deflection of focus from the failure of the international community to come to grips with the protection needs of today's involuntary migrants' (Hathaway, 1991, p.117).

As well as these political criticisms, commentators have identified a number of criticisms about the empirical content of the root causes approach. Looking at these areas will provide material for comparison with the root causes approach in practice. The areas to look at are criticisms of the causes that have been identified, the effect that these causes have, the effect of actions to tackle causes, and then its structural approach.

<u>Empirical criticisms</u>
Many commentators have observed the difficulties of identifying underlying causes for highly complex situations (Zolberg et al., 1989, p. 260, Thorburn, 1996, p.123, Schmeidl, 2001, p.85). There are problems in terms of identifying cause and effect and some inherent contradictions within the conclusions drawn by advocates of the root causes approach. Assessments of the causes of refugee flows range from evaluations of different types of conflict (Zolberg et al., 1989, Weiner, 1996, Schmeidl, 2001) to unpicking multi-layered complex emergencies (Bissell & Natsios, 2001, p.301). The root causes are generally agreed to include conflict and oppression and its relation to 'economic development, governance and

human rights' (Castles & Loughna, 2002, p.18 and see Westin, 1999, p.31) and the solutions are seen with a very broad brush to be 'development and democratisation' (Zolberg, 2001, p.13). However there is no consensus on how to bring this about in a way that fulfils the requirements of the root causes proponents; namely without migration. One of the key elements that has been identified as a cause of refugee and mixed flows is economic underdevelopment. Its importance in this context is reflected in the use of the phrase 'stay-at-home growth' (Martin & Taylor, 2001, p.96). Schmeidl comments that 'more and more scholars have identified economic problems as a cause of refugee migration' (2001, p.82). Looking at differing views on this key 'root cause' will show a range of criticisms of the approach.

In the 1980's two major reports on refugee flows identified economic underdevelopment as a key root cause (Zolberg et al., 1989, p.258) and this is echoed in more recent policy papers. The Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 1994 says that in terms of 'dealing with root causes … economic disparities will generally represent the most significant pressure' (EU, 1994 p.13). However, Wood identifies that the factors influencing refugee flows are 'murky' and says that 'insight into the causes of forced migration is not enhanced by simplistic correlations with aggregate measures of national economic development' (Wood, 1994, p.611). As early as 1989 Zolberg et al. challenged the assumption of a straightforward association between economic underdevelopment and refugee flows by establishing that the poorest people rarely move, even when poverty is used as a tool of aggression, and when they do, they rarely move very far (1989, p. 260). The perpetuation of this correlation in policy and by commentators has forced scholars to make similar comments more recently. Schmeidl analyses countries that do, and do not, produce refugees and concludes that as not all poor countries produce refugees 'this disqualifies poverty as a direct and necessary push factor of refugee migration' (2001, p. 82).

Most commentators do acknowledge some, more complex, relationships between economic

development and forced migration. Schmeidl sees that poverty could be a 'trigger' (2001, p.82) for refugee movements and points out how geo-political changes at state level have happened more peaceably for wealthier states (2001, p.83). Castles & Loughna review the arguments about the role of underdevelopment, stressing the complexity of the relationship. They concentrate on the role that underdevelopment can play in conflict, when underdevelopment is a result of 'corruption and authoritarian rule' (2002, p.13).

Another criticism of this aspect of the root causes approach is that the process of economic development (as indeed of any change to societies) can itself lead to forced migration. One aspect of this is that improved circumstances may lead to emigration of those who were previously prevented from leaving by inadequate resources. This is known as the 'migration hump' (Martin & Taylor, 2001, p.105) and is matched by a 'refugee hump' (Zolberg, 2001, p.14) created by the process of democratisation. Economic development can also create forced migration if development perpetuates inequitable distribution. Zolberg et al. point out that policies for economic reform can contribute to 'uneven development' and that economic aid can have 'an uncertain or unexpected impact on the structure of social conflict' (1989, p. 262). Chimni looks at how the specific features of the international global economy can 'exacerbate ethnic tensions' (Chimni 1998, p.361). Meanwhile, Weiner stresses the political roots of forced movement and asserts that 'economic development may be neither necessary nor sufficient to remedy these political conditions' (1996, p.32), while higher incomes or a reduction in inequality could 'reduce conflict in some countries but actually intensify it in others' (1996, p.31).

A criticism of the roots causes approach which takes these objections a step further says that while economic and social change can drive migration, any attempt to stop migration can also hinder this change, and that an attempt to prevent population movements is 'the equivalent of trying to oppose social change' which is both 'impossible' and 'undesirable' (Zolberg et al., 1989, p. 262). Even conflicts have a role to play in certain circumstances and 'not all conflicts can

or should be prevented' (Weiss, 2001, p.210) as 'violent change may be a necessary path towards a more just social order' (Zolberg et al. 1989, p.263).

Structural criticisms
Conceptions of a just social order are also at the centre of a structural critique of the way that the root causes approach is applied. We have seen on page 8 how the root causes approach assumes responsibility for forced migration lies with the countries of origin (Loescher, 2001, p.173, Chimni, 2000, p.258). The approach concentrates on turning to the countries of origin to provide solutions for the conditions that are assumed to give rise to migration, without taking into account the influence of international or global conditions. Zolberg et al's book *Escape from Violence* is quite firmly placed in the geo-political conditions of the 1980s with the Cold War and apartheid South Africa dominating international relations, but it more widely establishes the role of external influences on refugee-producing regimes which 'have emerged under conditions shaped by external strategic and economic interests' (1989, p.264). More recently Zolberg has reiterated this point with reference to France and the U.S. in Indochina (Zolberg, 2001, p. 9). In a speech on Refugee Day 2002, the UK's Minister for the Department for International Development alluded to the exertion of external influences in the conflicts of developing countries when she said 'Countries suffering most from conflict are those with the richest resources – this is not an accident'[2].

Zolberg et al. criticise the root causes approach for failing to grasp the implications of its internalist viewpoint and for maintaining an apolitical stance because the 'causes of refugee flows are not apolitical' (1989, p.32). As well as the political structures of the world, which Zolberg at al. analysed within the specific historical conditions of the late cold-war years, they also identified global economic conditions. They pointed out that poor countries have no choice but to participate in the global economy on disadvantageous terms (1989, p. 231). More recently Chimni has criticised the internalist approach of root causes advocates by

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[2] Clare Short, *Refugees and Conflict*, lecture presented at the Royal Geographical Society for the International Rescue Committee, London, 2002.

critiquing 'global relations of domination' (Chimni, 2000, p.244) which render the development process inequitable and lead to the 'mass violation of human rights' (2000, p.251). He sees that the internalist approach exculpates those countries that are truly responsible for refugee flows caused by 'the geographical spread of capitalism and the politics of imperialism' (Chimni, 1998, p. 359) and therefore absolves them from responsibility. These structural criticisms make an important point about the contradictory nature of the root causes approach, which demands changes from countries of origin while perpetuating conditions, which encourage migration. This is encapsulated in the response of Abdelkrim Belguendouz commenting on the High Level Working Group Action Plan on Morocco at a conference in 2001. He said, 'if you don't want to allow Moroccan tomatoes to enter, well, you'll get Moroccan people'[3].

These criticisms of the root causes approach: the political (absence of political will, abrogation of responsibility for asylum), issues addressing the empirical content of the approach (questioning the causes that have been identified, the effect that these causes have and the effect of actions to tackle causes) and criticisms of its structural approach (the internalist/externalist debate) underline the premise of this paper. Most of the criticisms of the root causes approach have been based on theories of economics or conflict prevention. The root causes debate is, however based on the movement of people and as such should be evaluated in the light of migration theory. This paper will therefore also look at the emergence and development of the root causes debate to see where a failure to adequately account for theories of migration will lead to its failure. It will go on to look at how a re-conceptualisation could provide a beneficial rather than repressive root causes approach. Below, the application of the root causes approach in European policy is evaluated in the light of these criticisms.

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[3] Abdelkrim Belguendouz, University of Rabat, at 'Frontières et zones d'attente, une liberté de circulation sous contrôle', Palais du Luxembourg, 19 -20 October 2001, ANAFE.

2. Root causes in practice?

<u>The root causes approach in European policy</u>
The political and historical context for the emergence of the root causes approach to migration shows how certain circumstances, particularly the end of the Cold War, gave rise to this policy development. In Europe there were specific conditions which enhanced this movement and made the root causes approach of particular relevance. Within the context of the end of the Cold War we have seen how fear of East-West migration contributed to a restrictive approach to migration, and asylum in particular. Conflict in the Balkans and increased refugee flows to the developed countries of Western Europe exacerbated this tendency.

Alongside these historic developments, the European Community (EC) was engaged in developing a single market. Since the Single European Act of 1987 (via the Schengen Agreement of 1985) this had meant removing internal borders to facilitate free movement of Europe's citizens (Myers, 1996, p.5). The prospect of people being able to move between countries with few checks began to make the immigration policy of one country of direct relevance to the other European countries. The effect of this was to move immigration and asylum concerns from the realm of bilateral and intergovernmental fora such as the *Club de Vienne* or the Ad Hoc Immigration Group (Myers, 1996 p.4) gradually towards the remit of the EC. During this period increasingly restrictive immigration laws were introduced in European countries including stricter visa requirements for more countries, and carrier sanctions for companies found to be carrying people without the correct documents.

By 1994 little progress towards a unified policy had been made and the European Commission introduced the idea of a 'comprehensive' immigration policy in its 1994 Communication to the Council (EU, 1994). The 'comprehensive approach' covers many areas of the root causes approach 'including a focus on working with third countries' (EU, 1994, p.4). This document has 'subsequently become something of a reference text in the area' (Myers, 1996, p.15) and so merits some specific analysis.

<u>Communication from the Commission to the Council (COM 94)</u>
This document is essentially conservative in its scope, although still more forward looking than some of the discussion that came after it. The 'comprehensive approach' outlined by the 1994 document has three strands – 'action on migration pressure' through working with third countries, action on 'controlling immigration' to keep it 'manageable' and integration policies for 'legal migrants'. Underpinning the document is a belief that uncontrolled migration is responsible for public disorder (EU, 1994, p.4) and that this is exacerbated by unemployment in the countries of origin (EU, 1994, p10). Successful integration, it assumes, is dependent on 'control of migration flows' (EU, 1994, p.11). The policy approach is to match short-term control measures with 'long-term cooperation with countries and regions of origin' (p.11). These 'long-term' issues are addressed under the 'root causes' banner (p.13) and offer a salve to the main intention of restricting or controlling migration. Despite the complexity of the root causes issue, twice as much space is devoted to outlining policies for 'controlling migration flows' (p. 20) than to addressing root causes.

The EU's root causes approach, adopted by the High Level Working Group (HLWG), of integrating migration policies into development and economic policies with third countries, is established here. A principle of the HLWG is enshrined in this document; the suggestion that specific actions should be taken to control specific flows of migrants. This emphasises the root causes approach to the underlying causes of migration and stresses that concern is limited to ending migratory movements. As the section on the HLWG will show, this short-term approach sows the seeds of its own failure.

Despite addressing refugees and other types of migration within one document, the Commission failed to conceptualise the continuum between forced and 'economic' migration and in addition failed to see the links between this continuum and illegal migration. Each of these is treated as a separate group of migrants and therefore the document fails to see or acknowledge the links between restrictive asylum practices and illegal migration (although it does look at limited

labour migration opportunities in this context). It does not acknowledge that restricting the movement of 'illegal' migrants has a preventative effect on all migrants including refugees.

The 1994 communication identifies conflict as a cause of forced migration as well as two other causes, which are considerably more controversial: Demographic and ecological pressures. Work by Kibreab and Black has questioned the role of ecology within forced migration. Kibreab suggests the emergence of 'environmental' refugees is an attempt to de-politicise the causes of displacement (1997, p.21) while Black is concerned that writing on environmental refugees has more to do with 'bureaucratic agendas of international organizations and academics than with any real theoretical or empirical insight' (2001, p.14). On demographic issues Schmeidl specifically addresses the issue of population pressure and forced migration. She looks at both Weiner's approach of population pressure as an 'underlying cause' and at population pressure as an 'accelerator' (2001, p.82). However her quantitative analysis leads her to conclude 'none of these variables could significantly predict refugee migration once political factors were controlled for' (2001, p.83) and indeed she also finds that countries with higher population densities can produce less out-migration in situations of civil war (2001, p. 83). This debate about the 'causes' of migration is not engaged with in the 1994 EU document.

Despite these flaws there are some elements of this 1994 paper, which provide a more sophisticated view of migration processes, which could have contributed to the development of a root causes approach. One is that despite its failure to adequately distinguish the characteristics of migrants whether forced, economic or 'illegal' the paper does make some statements about the necessity of differentiating between different groups of migrants with different experiences as 'not all groups behave alike' (EU, 1994, p.18). The suggestion that these differences should be looked at seems a good one but unfortunately the agenda of the paper reveals itself in the technique suggested, which is 'profiling' (EU, 1994 p.18) a term more

commonly used with respect to criminals than to broad-based sociological research.

The other area, which seems to suggest some potential for innovative thinking within the root causes approach, even if belatedly and half-heartedly, is an acknowledgement that countries of origin have an important role to play in migration issues which affect their citizens. It raises the suggestion of looking at the patterns of movement within a country and how that relates to international migration. As this paper will show, if the EU could adapt its root causes approach to the extent that real dialogue with other countries and real understanding of migration processes could inform its activities, this concept could offer some chance of progress.

Despite the groundwork that was laid for a European migration and asylum strategy no progress was made on the back of the 1994 communication. The third pillar structure, and the difficulty of co-ordinating the differing approaches of states in an area that touches so directly on sovereignty, could be a reasonable explanation of the slow progress, but another explanation was put forward in a strategy paper on Immigration and Asylum by the Austrian presidency of the EU in 1998. This outlined the shortcomings in the Commission's communication in terms of 'no comprehensive political approach … no operational work programme … and no action plans' (EU, Sept. 1998, p.3). In addition, the strategy paper claims that developments in terms of rights for immigrants have been constrained by 'the incessant influx of illegal migrants and the effects of migration crises on demographic policy'. This paper will show how these assumptions led to the adoption of the particular root causes approach of the High Level Working Group which limits its effectiveness and results in a highly restrictive policy. The 1998 paper therefore merits some analysis.

Austrian Presidency's Strategy Paper on Migration and Asylum Policy 1998
The Austrian presidency's strategy paper was not uncontroversial. It was subject to much revision and complaints from a number of NGOs particularly regarding a proposed overhaul of the Geneva Convention which would have

moved from 'protection concepts based only on the rule of law to include politically oriented concepts' (p.16). However one of the trends it perpetuated was the conflation of all migration under the banner of 'illegal' immigration, which is said to be the main concern of 'political interest' (EU, Sept. 1998, p.6). Indeed this trend has continued with a Commission Communication on 'illegal' immigration in 2001, and a focus on combatting illegal migration under the heading of 'asylum and immigration' at the Seville Summit (EU, July, 2002).

The potential danger in categorising all migration as 'illegal' is revealed in the examples chosen by the Austrian presidency to illustrate its case. The assumption is made that there is an 'increasing influx of asylum seekers irrespective of the situation in the countries of origin' (p.5). However, studies by academics and commentators have shown that this is an incorrect assumption. Patterns of migration of asylum seekers are directly related to dangerous conditions in the countries of origin (see Bocker & Havinga, 1998; Castles & Loughna, 2002; and Schmeidl, 2001).

This erroneous conception of Europe's migration experience is perhaps framed by its anti-immigration stance, which detracts from the reality of the situation. This lack of perspective is tellingly revealed in the way the Bosnian war is described as a 'migration catastrophe' (EU, Sept. 1998, p.12) making the state-centric position of this paper patently clear. A better understanding of migration would show that many of the Bosnians quickly became settled in accommodation and found work through existing social networks, proving themselves economically useful in a way which denies the existence of a 'migration catastrophe' (Koser & Black, 1999, p.530). For the purposes of analysing the contribution of the 1998 paper to the EU's root causes approach it is clear that the alarmist view of migration as a result of the Bosnian war contributed to a desire for 'instruments of prevention and control' (EU, Sept. 1998, p. 12).

Another justification for creating restrictive migration policies is also based on a misunderstanding of migration processes. The 1998 paper picks up on the 1994 communication

from the Commission in terms of concerns about unemployment and the effect of migration on unemployment. However there is an understanding amongst scholars of migration and economics that 'immigration does not appear to affect aggregate unemployment rates adversely' (Skeldon, 1997a, p.82). In fact the presence of more people can create jobs and economic growth (Simon, 1992, p.289). Over time, through networks, certain migrants are channelled towards certain areas of work creating a segmented labour market (Skeldon, 1990, p.40). This means that immigrants often do jobs that the resident population refuses to do (Harris, 2002, p.3). The unsophisticated view of immigration and unemployment in this 1998 paper does not acknowledge the role of labour demand in migration where 'those seeking work travel only if there is work' (Harris, 2002, p.3).

Aside from the fact that the view of the 1998 paper contradicts that held by many commentators on migration it also seems to be internally inconsistent. The paper states that countering illegal immigration is a priority 'increasingly so in view of unemployment trends' but at the same time it is also concerned about 'economic pull factors' encouraging illegal migration (EU, Sept. 1998, p.10). Without a segmented labour market, unemployment would mean that economic pull factors were not strong, but conversely as we have seen, a segmented labour market means that immigration and unemployment have a more complex relationship than the one assumed here. This further example of the EU policymakers' limited understanding of migration processes points towards the emergence of a deeply flawed root causes approach dominated by the urge to reign in migration at any cost.

The final example of how flawed assumptions contribute directly to a failing root causes approach lies in the Austrian presidency's attitude to urbanisation and migration. The 1994 paper had raised the issue of internal migration within countries of origin as an area worth exploring. The 1998 paper from the Austrian presidency picks up on this idea but unfortunately does not pursue it constructively. Instead it adopts the restrictive approach of many root causes protagonists by condemning

rural-urban migration via a very limited understanding of this type of movement. The paper assumes that rural-urban migration is an unstoppable and inexplicable 'trend'. It assumes that rural-urban migration is a one-way, one-time event resulting in an 'explosion of unemployment in the third world' (EU, July 1998, p.8). In fact, Skeldon shows how migrants to cities often have higher rates of employment than non-migrants (1997b, p.9). This example shows how a flawed understanding led to the emergence of a particular type of root causes approach dominated by a concern to restrict all types of migration and to prevent movement not only from one region of the world to another but also within regions or even countries. The influence that these policies have had on the High Level Working Group is reviewed below.

The High Level Working Group
The 1998 strategy paper was debated in December 1998. As a result of this debate the Netherlands' suggestion of a cross-pillar task force (initially temporary) was adopted, to take up some of the issues discussed in the strategy paper (EU, January 1999a). This became the High Level Working Group (HLWG), established on 7th December 1999 (EU, January 1999a). The Austrian presidency's strategy paper was said to be a 'useful contribution' to the work of the HLWG (Statewatch, 1999) and it was noted that the Justice and Home Affairs Council suggested that account be taken of the Austrian strategy paper when preparing the brief for the HLWG. The intention and method of the HLWG is as follows:

'By a cross-pillar combination of measures, the working group is to help reduce the influx of asylum seekers and immigrants into the Member States of the European Union. Its main aim is to analyse and combat the reasons for flight taking account of the political and human rights situation' (EU January 1999, p.2).

This would be achieved through a number of action plans for countries where migrants originate. On the 25th and 26th January 1999 the European Council approved the mandate of the HLWG and the countries to be considered first. A 'final report' was to be submitted at Tampere in October 1999 (EU, Sept. 1999g). At Tampere, action plans were submitted and approved and the group was requested to report back on progress at the meeting of the European Council in December 2000 (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.3).

In the 'final' report of the HLWG, the group asserts that its remit 'has demonstrated that it is in the interest of both the citizens of the union and the citizens of the countries of origin and transit of asylum seekers and migrants to address root causes of migration and flight as well as consequences' (EU, Sept. 1999g, p.5). However, the strategy documents and policy developments leading to the emergence of the HLWG do not suggest that the interests of other countries are seriously considered and in the Nice report the problems of imposing the plans on the target countries are revealed (see p.23).

Table 1: Countries selected for Action Plans

Target country	EU country responsible
Afghanistan	Netherlands
Albania and the neighbouring region	Italy
Morocco	Spain
Sri Lanka	UK
Somalia	Sweden
Iraq	European Commission

Root causes in the Action Plans
The intended features of the Action Plans were to be 'comprehensive, maintained over the long term and … responsive to changes of situation' (EU, Sept. 1999g, p.6). There were three areas targeted for examination: 'foreign policy, development and economic assistance [and] migration and asylum' (EU, Sept. 1999g, p.6) and the methods selected were 'dialogue, cooperation and co-development' (EU, Sept. 1999g, p.6). This paper will assess critically how far the HLWG has been able to meet its own objectives as well as answer criticisms established by commentators on the root causes approach in general.

Each Action Plan has a standard structure. The conditions in each country are assessed in terms of the political situation, the economic situation and the human rights situation. There is a statistical section devoted to the numbers of their citizens in EU countries, in other countries, and the numbers of third country nationals

transiting the country, where relevant. The existing actions by the EU in the country or region are detailed in the areas of politics, economics, development cooperation, humanitarian aid and Justice and Home Affairs (mainly migration issues such as readmission agreements or visas, and crime-related activity). The existing measures and actions being taken by the EU are detailed and finally other actions required are outlined.

The Action Plan approach is itself deeply flawed. It assumes that the causes of migration are immutable whereas in fact, the political and economic situation in a country will be liable to continuous change and the causes of migration will change along with these or parallel to them. As soon as the plans were written they began to be out of date. Comments by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) on the plans suggested that they not be 'set in stone' (ECRE, Oct. 1999, p.2) but instead used as a starting point for further discussion. As the HLWG's mandate, set at Tampere, limited it to enacting the measures set out in the Action Plans, the likelihood of success has been limited from the start. Despite acknowledgement of various drawbacks to the Action Plans in the report on progress to the Council at Nice (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.13-15), the static nature of the plans was not identified. Indeed the suggestion was made that further action plans for other countries be drafted.

Political, economic and human rights situation
It is not within the scope of this paper to assess the comments made on the political, human rights or economic situations in each of the targeted countries, but a quick review is provided for context highlighting areas of debate and concern which reveal flaws in the HLWG's approach. The Action Plans have been evaluated and commented on by a number of international organisations and NGOs including UNHCR, ECRE and Amnesty International. Aside from critiques of the measures to be encouraged, ECRE says that the evaluation sections of the plans 'contain fairly good assessments and descriptions of the 6 relevant countries of origin' (ECRE, Oct. 1999). However this statement hides the numerous criticisms that ECRE does have of the HLWG in the areas of transparency, responsibility for asylum,

'regionalisation', information campaigns, readmission and return amongst others (ECRE, July 1999), which cannot be entirely de-linked from concerns about conditions in the countries of origin.

Amnesty International specifically reviewed the analysis of the human rights situations in these countries. It says that the human rights assessments 'in general may be defined as accurate' (Amnesty, 1999a, p.2) but does have some detailed and specific criticisms relating to individual countries. In regard to the Iraq plan, Amnesty comments on an imbalance in the report that leads to the erroneous impression that 'dismal economic prospects' (EU, Sept. 1999c, p.7) lead to migration from Iraq rather than 'the well-founded fear of political persecution' (Amnesty, 1999d, p.2). Similarly, Amnesty believes the economic situation in Afghanistan is given too much emphasis over the human rights situation, leading to a view that is 'too optimistic and too limited in its analysis of the human rights situation in Afghanistan' (Amnesty, 1999b, p.11). Overall it is concerned that the plans are imbalanced and 'do not provide for a strategy to address effectively such human rights abuses' (Amnesty, 1999a, p.3). These criticisms reinforce the concern that the root causes approach of the HLWG is biased towards the pursuit of restrictive and control programmes at the expense of activity to improve the situations in countries of origin.

In addition, the failure to adequately account for the situations in the countries covered by the Action Plans leads to potentially dangerous policies. The emphasis on readmission, return and reception in the region of origin risks refoulement in many of these countries. One of the main concerns in the Action Plan on Iraq is to make Turkey into a destination for asylum seekers, rather than a transit country for people moving to Western Europe. However, in the evaluation section of the report, the 'protection problems' (EU, Sept. 1999c, p.6) in Turkey are stressed. In the appendix provided by UNHCR this is confirmed, with a statement that Turkey would return asylum seekers who had been readmitted from other countries (EU, Sept. 1999c, Annex III p.4). As a result of these concerns, UNHCR's focus is the opposite of the

HLWG, with an emphasis on resettlement of refugees away from Turkey (EU, Sept. 1999c, Annex III p.4). Similarly UNHCR stresses in its Annex to the Albanian plan that Albania cannot be considered a safe third country for asylum seekers and therefore readmission should be considered carefully to avoid refoulement.

One of the preoccupations of the Moroccan Action Plan is to prevent migrants using Morocco as a route to reach the European Union. As a result there are a high number of restrictive policies including encouraging Morocco to use a rigorous visa policy particularly towards nationals of West African states (EU, Sept. 1999d, p.16) which reinforces the concern that 'Fortress Europe' is being pushed further out and could prevent refugees being able to seek asylum in safety. Internal contradictions in the Action Plan on Afghanistan also point directly to possible issues with human rights, particularly relevant during Taliban rule. Again there is an emphasis here on encouraging reception in the region, mainly in Pakistan and Iran where most Afghan refugees reside. However, at the same time as readmission agreements are being sought with Iran and voluntary return encouraged (EU, Sept. 1999a, p.25), there is also a project underway to address the issue of forced repatriation from Iran to Afghanistan (EU, Sept. 1999a, p.22), still relevant while EU states do not consider forced returns safe for Afghan asylum seekers. These contradictory policies suggest that if the EU returns rejected Afghan asylum seekers to Iran it could result in refoulement.

There are contradictions within the Action plans in terms of development issues as well as human rights. The benefits of migration for development are mentioned in passing, but in reality legal options for migration are so limited (for example seasonal agricultural workers in the UK, students, or skilled workers such as IT experts in Germany) that this is unlikely to be a viable option in the short to medium term. In fact the emphasis of the Action Plans on restriction of migration and asylum could have a directly negative impact on development as indicated within the Albanian plan. In the analysis of migration the plan states that 'it is commonly acknowledged that one person per each Albanian family is living abroad and contributes to the family maintenance. Albanian economy currently relies heavily on emigratory remittances' (EU, Sept. 1999b, p.12). It also acknowledges that this is likely to continue (EU, Sept. 1999b, p.30). Bearing this acknowledgement in mind it seems counter-productive to stress the importance of preventative measures such as increased visa requirements (p.37), and an emphasis on return, readmission (p.39, p.41) and an attempt at deterrence through information campaigns (p.39).

Activities of the HLWG

One of the main concerns with the root causes approach as encapsulated by the HLWG is that while some of the restrictive and control policies are focused, actionable and measurable, most policies on the political, economic and development side are vague, ill-defined and unmeasurable. This confirms the impression given in policy documents that the root causes approach is in fact only concerned with restricting migration at any cost rather than with alleviating the situation in countries of origin. In addition the very nature of these root causes policies encourages a restrictive approach in the interim period. The 1998 strategy paper says that the root causes approach 'is not a substitute for restrictions on immigration and border controls' (p.20) but the failure to engage with improving conditions in the countries of origin means that only the restrictive policies have any effect.

The approaches outlined in the sections of the Action Plans on foreign policy and development assistance are quite wide-ranging, reflecting the different situations in the various countries, with emphasis on diplomatic, economic or humanitarian efforts depending on the situation. However most of them cannot be described as 'actions' when they are as vague as 'stimulation of the democratic process' for Northern Iraq (EU, Sept. 1999c, p.16), 'measures to stimulate the respect for human rights and minorities' in Albania and the neighbouring region (EU, Sept. 1999b, p.35), or 'consider ways of supporting Somalis in achieving sustainable development of peace, stability and economic development', (EU, Sept. 1999e, p.24) amongst many others. By contrast, the prescriptions in the 'migration' section of the Action Plans are remarkably

consistent, despite the differing conditions. The 'migration' section of the Action Plans include voluntary repatriation, return of failed asylum seekers, measures to tackle 'illegal immigration racketeering' (EU, Sept. 1999e, p.27 and EU, Sept. 1999f, p.14), increased use of Airline Liaison Officers, training of officials, especially with regard to visas and false documents, and information campaigns. There are still some ill-defined policy suggestions such as the integration into society of citizens of these states legally residing in the EU and measures to improve reception and protection in the Action Plan countries and those neighbouring them but, as can been seen in the following assessment of progress, it is only the restrictive migration policies which have made any progress at all.

The HLWG has made very little progress in implementing any of the objectives of the Action Plans. It made a report to the European Council in Nice where it outlined the reasons for its slow progress including the difficulties of working across the different policy areas 'whose interests do not necessarily coincide' (EU, Nov. 2000a, p. 14), the difficulty of reconciling the priorities of 'national administrations' (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.14), and the difficulty of trying to divert resources from other departments' budgets rather than having a dedicated budget. In addition to these internal difficulties the HLWG has been the target of criticisms from commentators who have expressed concern about the weight given to restrictive migration policies and from the target countries themselves who are understandably concerned to be presented with plans dictating policies that will affect their internal, economic and foreign policy activities, with very little consultation (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.15). The Nice report suggests that these criticisms rest on 'misunderstandings' (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.15) and a 'sense of a lack of consultation', which can be overcome without changing the fundamentals of the HLWG approach but instead by improving communication.

The presentation of the achievements of the HLWG in 2000 (EU, Nov. 2000b) is as vague and ill-defined as its original aims. The measures carried out are not related directly to the Action Plans and there is no indication of how success or otherwise could be measured or assessed.

The actions are a combination of administrative elements such as meetings, spending from non-HLWG budgets such as ECHO (humanitarian) and MEDA (Mediterranean-Europe project) and actions carried out by individual states. Despite the concerns of the introductory document (EU, Nov. 2000a) to stress the balance between foreign affairs, economic and migration activity, most of the measures and actions are migration-related. In the Morocco section only four out of 19 measures are not directly migration-related, in the Afghanistan section only six out of 17 are not migration issues and in Iraq seven out of 14.

The emphasis of the HLWG on restrictive migration measures has been exacerbated by the introduction in 2001 of a budget line (B7-667) dedicated to enacting some of these migration-only measures (EU, Sept. 2001). The justification for this new budget is that although there are Community budget lines for the areas of development and economic assistance no 'appropriate budgetary allocation' (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.17) is available for migration issues. This justification does not acknowledge the difficulty of 'integrating objectives relating to migration into development policies' (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.14), despite the availability of funds, thereby risking further over-emphasis of the control and restriction elements of the HLWG's activities. In 2002 some efforts have been made to overcome this barrier by attempting to investigate links between migration and development. The Spanish presidency instigated a questionnaire and report process for member states on the issue (EU, Feb. 2002) but this has not yet resulted in any meaningful contribution from most member states[4].

One of the main difficulties for the HLWG in attempting to meet its objectives is that development practitioners, departments and NGOs have a different agenda from the HLWG. Their concern is with improving the conditions of the poorest in developing countries regardless of the outcomes for migration. On occasion this conflict comes out into the open in policy discussions, for instance in the discussion about punitive aid policies for countries that do not effectively tackle illegal immigration, which were

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[4] Interviews, Areti Siani, Head of Policy, ECRE, June 2002 and development policy advisor, June 2002.

aired before the Seville summit in June 2002. The development commissioner (Poul Neilson) was moved to declare that 'it makes no sense to link development assistance to a country's performance on migration' both because of the limited contribution aid makes to economies and because these sanctions would 'harm the poorer sections of society' (Guardian, 2002). These conflicts illustrate how the aims of the HLWG to insert migration into all aspects of EU external policy are frustrated.

Since the 2000 report to the Council at Nice the HLWG seems to have reduced its public exposure. Until July 2001 NGOs would meet with the HLWG twice every six months. This was an informal process and little information was exchanged beyond the fact that the HLWG was 'progressing'[5]. However, the Belgian presidency discontinued this process of consultation in July 2001 and NGOs have not met representatives of the HLWG for over a year. Budgetary activity in Europe is usually subject to close scrutiny by the Commission and the European Parliament but the budget line allocated to the HLWG is for what is described as 'preparatory actions' (EU, Sept. 2001). This means that for three years the available budget is limited (2001 - €10m, 2002 - €12.5m, 2003 – €15m, estimate) but it provides a mechanism which is not subject to the more formal measures of rigorous scrutiny[6].

This reluctance on the part of the HLWG to subject itself to public scrutiny has led to comments about its 'aura of secretiveness' (Nadig, 2001). Recently this has been exacerbated by considerations of the HLWG mandate. In particular, the problems created by the Action Plans being 'obsolete' (EU, March 2002, p.1) has raised questions of their effectiveness and rather than develop action plans for new countries it looks as if the HLWG is likely to enlarge its scope using analysis from the Commission Country strategy papers (EU, March 2002, p.1). The budget proposals for 2002 expand the remit of the HLWG from those countries identified by the Council meeting in January 1999 to other areas including 'People's

Republic of China, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and Northern Africa' (EU, March 2002, p.3). It also extends the activities of the HLWG from those measures outlined in the Action Plans to other measures including 'pre-frontier measures'. The remit of the HLWG is due to be formally debated by the General Council meeting in December 2002[7], but in the meantime it appears that the remit is being broadened on an ad hoc basis.

Measuring the HLWG against its own aims
The above review of the HLWG's emergence and activities, have revealed a number of flaws in how it aims to achieve its goals. Structurally the drawbacks are that it was created before the Amsterdam treaty came into force so its structure does not benefit from the first pillar institutions and it is not adequately scrutinised. It is driven by presidency initiatives, which change every six months and give it a short-term outlook. It is inadequately integrated with areas outside the Justice and Home Affairs pillar, which it aims to influence, and it has a very limited field of engagement with external organisations. No development agencies have been involved in its deliberations; only migration bodies and refugee organisations have been consulted. The Action Plan concept is flawed and the drafting of Action Plans with no participation from the target countries has caused problems of acceptance but also in terms of the content and emphasis of the reports (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.15).

The aims of the HLWG action plans were that they were: 'comprehensive, maintained over the long term and … responsive to changes of situation' (EU, Sept. 1999g, p.6), but we have seen how in fact they are limited in scope, have not been updated and have not been adapted to changes in circumstance. Of the three areas targeted for examination: 'foreign policy, development and economic assistance [and] migration and asylum' (EU, Sept. 1999g, p.6), emphasis has been firmly on migration measures to the extent of budgeting separately for these measures. Achievements in the other areas have been limited to recording activities by other organisations or by member states.

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[5] Interview, Dr. Maria-Teresa Gil-Bazo, Amnesty International, July 2002.
[6] Interview, Lars Lonnback, Immigration and Asylum Unit, Justice and Home Affairs, European Commission, June 2002.

[7] Interview, Lars Lonnback, Immigration and Asylum Unit, Justice and Home Affairs, European Commission, June 2002.

The ambition for 'dialogue, cooperation and co-development' (EU, Sept. 1999g, p.6) can also be seen to be over ambitious. The countries targeted by the HLWG have been presented with a *fait accomplis* and there has been a 'lack of consultation' (EU, Nov. 2000a, p.15). Countries targeted for action have been threatened with sanctions should they fail to comply. In discussions with Turkey (regarding the Iraq action plan), a report from the Spanish presidency states that Turkey 'had to be reminded of its candidate-country status' particularly with regard to potential 'funds and credits' (EU, Feb. 2002, p.4) which denies the HLWG claims to 'cooperation and co-development'. The HLWG has failed even the limited aims it set itself. As a tool of the root causes approach it also lays itself open to criticisms in more general terms.

The HLWG and criticisms of root causes
The mainstream criticisms of the root causes approach were outlined above (pp.10-14) and include the lack of political will to tackle the root causes issues, structural criticism of the internalist stance of the approach and empirical criticisms of the content of the approach. Here, the HLWG is measured against these criticisms.

There are two strong indicators that the HLWG's failings are at least partly related to issues of political will. Firstly the migration agenda of the HLWG undermines any attempt to make lasting changes to the conditions in countries of origin as we have seen from the action plans' shift of focus. Related to this, the agenda of the HLWG does not accord with that of other EU departments, particularly the development Directorate and as a result there is a clash of political will which, so far, the HLWG has not resolved and is unlikely to, due to the existence of national agendas for development. The foreign affairs element of the HLWG is more likely to include migration considerations in its dealings with other countries (for example readmission agreements) but the major changes that have happened in Kosovo or Afghanistan since late 1998 have not been driven by the HLWG and, although there is a migration element in each of these interventions they have been prompted by very specific circumstances. By comparison the Sri Lankan government

refused all international intervention in its internal conflict for years (EU, Sept. 1999f, p.7) and the EU did not have the will to intervene beyond diplomatic manoeuvres.

Internalist criticisms can certainly be, and have been, levelled at the HLWG. The examples above of the lack of consultation with the action plan countries are an obvious starting point. In addition, criticisms of the emphasis on regional solutions for asylum problems also point to an internalist approach. Most damningly ECRE points out that despite the emphasis on ensuring that countries in the regions of origin or transit countries can provide support for an asylum system and protection for refugees there is no reference to the responsibility of EU countries to provide asylum for refugees (ECRE, Oct. 1999, p.2). The issue of free trade as encapsulated by Belguendouz[8] and also discussed by Myers (1996, p.18) is at the heart of the root causes dichotomy for the EU. Economic development issues are highlighted as one of the priorities for tackling root causes, but the limited market for goods from some of the action plan countries (Myers, 1996, p.19) belies any semblance of good intentions.

The empirical criticisms of the root causes approach also coincide with some of the failings of the HLWG. Where the root causes approach is unable to agree on what the root causes of migration are, the HLWG has bypassed this discussion. There are assumptions about the root causes that the HLWG should tackle, only in the broadest of terms. The HLWG's mandate refers to the requirement of the Action Plans to provide an 'analysis of the causes of the influx' (EU, Jan. 1999b, p.4), but the Action Plans themselves deal with this aspect of their mandate in cursory terms. An average of one page is dedicated to 'Analysis of the causes of migration and flight' (EU, Sept. 1999d, p.7) despite the fact that they acknowledge that these issues are 'complex'. As we have seen above (pp.21-22) other commentators are concerned that the analysis of causes within the Action Plans is too heavily weighted towards economic factors, but how far the numerous

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[8] Abdelkrim Belguendouz, , University of Rabat, at 'Frontières et zones d'attente, une liberté de circulation sous contrôle', Palais du Luxembourg, 19 -20 October 2001, ANAFE, p.14

factors implicated in such a complex causal relationship can be unpicked is debateable, as the criticisms of the empirical content of the roots causes approach has shown. It is certain that the limited attention paid to these issues by the Action Plans cannot hope to accurately represent the causes of migration in such diverse countries.

This analysis of the HLWG shows that the EU's root causes policy has so far failed to engage with root causes either on its own terms or on the terms of those commentators who have criticised the root causes approach in general. The failure of the HLWG to enact its policies or to engage with a wide range of actors who could help it in its aims can be ascribed to failures of the underlying approach. In the last section of the paper I will examine the conceptual failings of the root causes approach which suggest that policy measures such as those of the HLWG will never be able to achieve their stated aims.

3. Is there a way forward for the root causes approach?

This final section of the paper will show how a failure to incorporate a theoretical understanding of migration processes has led to the difficulties of the root causes approach. It will also consider whether, if these flaws were addressed there would be a way in which addressing root causes could be used to make migration issues more of a choice and less of a necessity for those in developing countries. Could root causes become more in tune with other policy aims such as those of development organisations? Bearing in mind the requirement of states to control immigration, is there a way in which the root causes approach could use a better understanding of migration to inform immigration issues? These issues will be considered by addressing the conceptual basis for root causes, some more useful concepts that could be integrated into root causes and finally how migration itself could be used to improve the root causes approach.

<u>The sedentarist bias</u>
Policy and writing on the root causes approach is dominated by a 'sedentarist bias' (Malkki, 1995, p.509). This assumes that in their ideal states populations are sedentary, they do not move except as a result of economic, ecological or political upheaval. Associations are made between functioning and 'moral' (Skeldon, p.142, 1990) societies, which are sedentary, and dysfunctional and problematic societies, which are associated with people moving, particularly towards cities. Malkki elucidates this idea in a paper on return in which she describes a discourse which sees something dysfunctional about refugees being out of their country of origin. Conceptually this discourse sees states as separated into 'culture gardens' (Malkki, 1992, p.28) where people are naturally supposed to be. When people are displaced they are out of place or 'uprooted' (Malkki, 1992, p.25) and have to be put back in their right place to ensure 'moral and spiritual' as well as political, security (Malkki, 1992, p.30 & p.32). Bissell & Natsios in their paper on 'Development Assistance and International Migration' (2001) reveal a similar set of assumptions about migration in general which is typical of the root causes approach.

Bissell & Natsios (2001) position themselves as taking a critical stance towards the root causes approach. They are keen to unpick the complexities of migration and the intricate links between migration and development, particularly development aid, but taking a look at the attitudes they endorse and their terminology reveals an underlying sedentarist bias, which undermines their critical position. Bissell & Natsios voice the sedentarist assumption that 'people would prefer to stay in their ancestral homes, and that they emigrate due to intolerable conditions of one kind or another' (2001, p.311). They go on to contest this but only in terms of the multiple reasons why people do move. The paper does not engage with the assumption implicit in 'ancestral homes' that the natural existence for people is to stay at 'home' and it does not acknowledge the ineluctable history of movement. In line with Malkki's reasoning, Bissell & Natsios also use the language of pathology to indicate their bias arguing that the movement of people to cities is a 'symptom' (2001, p.311) and their opening paragraph outlines that they are engaging with the search for 'remedies'. They advocate development programmes to 'help people maintain their roots in their own cultures' (2001, p.318). In contrast, De Haan quotes Moch to show that migration itself can constitute 'part of the 'social glue' of subcultures' (1999, p.8.)

Present even within the work of those who would engage with the complexities of root causes, these assumptions are explicit in policy informed by the root causes approach and this discourse leads to certain inevitable outcomes. Many development policies 'target sedentary populations or may even have sedentarism as their goal' (Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002, p.29 and see De Haan's review of the *approche terroir*, 1999, p.3) while Malkki points out that this discourse validates certain mechanisms of control such as refugee camps (1995, p.512). In addition this assumption validates and underpins the preventative measures encapsulated in the root causes approach so that if movement itself is disruptive and damaging to societies, it must be repressed.

This is encapsulated within the root causes approach and demonstrated by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, calling on third countries to work with the EU 'to address the root causes of *destabilising* migration' (Prodi, 2002, my emphasis).

Misunderstanding migration
Concern with the rightness of stability and rootedness goes hand in hand with a limited understanding of movement and migration and a failure to conceptualise the root causes approach adequately. It allows the idea that all movement should and could be stopped to enter into the underlying concerns of the root causes approach. The obvious impossibility of this implicit aim undermines the whole approach and blinds practitioners and commentators to some possibly useful ways forward. There are a number of inaccuracies concealed within this aspect of the sedentarist concern. These include a failure to see migration in its historical context, a failure to conceive of the two-way process that is migration and a failure to understand the complexities, variety of experiences and multiple cause and effect of different contexts within which migration happens. In the context of this paper we are concerned with how these assumptions and misunderstandings contribute to the failings of the root causes approach as it stands. These concerns are now examined and put into context.

The first erroneous assumption of the sedentarist bias is that populations were once settled and did not participate in migration. This is referred to as the 'myth of the immobile peasant' (Skeldon, 1997a, p.7) which assumes that both pre-industrialisation Europeans and present day rural inhabitants of developing countries are not essentially mobile except in reaction to crisis. Skeldon highlights examples to refute this (1990, pp36-40, and 1997a, pp.7-8) and De Haan also illustrates the history of migration in Africa and Asia since before colonial times (1999, p.7-8). He also points out that there is evidence that population movement should be seen as 'the norm, rather than the exception' (1999, p.7) whether in Europe, pre-colonial developing countries or present day developing countries. Despite the assumption of root causes proponents (and others) migration

is not a crisis situation but a normal part of livelihood strategies. As Nyberg-Sorensen et al. conclude, 'evidence suggests that population mobility often is a central element in the livelihoods of many households in LDCs [Less Developed Countries]' (2002, p.28).

The second misunderstanding in the root causes conception of migration is that migration is a severing of links with a certain place. Bissell & Natsios refer to a migrant's 'exit' (2001, p.311) as if they are then removed from their place of origin entirely. This belief exacerbates the sense of migration as a bad thing, in this instance for both the regions of origin and destination. Regions of origin lose productive members of society and those trying to combat international migration in destination regions face difficulties because the severing of ties with a mythical moral and sedentary society makes people rootless and likely to seek further migration abroad. Loescher cites Papademetriou who argues that 'development weakens the individual's attachment to his traditional way of life'. This results in a move to a capital city where 'unable to find steady work … the internal migrant becomes a prime candidate for entering the international migratory flow' (Loescher, 1993, p.231). Some internal migrants might take this route but the majority do not. In reality most migrants do not sever links, they 'do not leave in order to start a new life elsewhere, but rather to better the one they already have back home' (Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002, p.25).

Migration is not a one-time and one-way event. Rather, it is more complex, and can be more fruitfully understood as the circulation of people, money and information between two or more places. Migrants themselves do not sever links with one place but have 'simultaneous engagement in countries [or places] of origin and destination' (Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002, p.18). Transnational communities and social networks maintain these links particularly to and between rural areas, towns and cities and between countries where there are fewer barriers to movement. The links between places of origin and destination are not fully appreciated by the root causes approach either in social or economic terms. In particular, the root causes' interest in economic motivations

and causes means that the issue of remittances is discussed but as we have seen in the issue of the Albanian Action Plan (above, p.23), not resolved.

Finally, the sedentarist bias, as expressed in the root causes approach, does not acknowledge multiple actors, multiple migration experiences and the multiple outcomes of these experiences. Instead migration is aggregated into a reaction to an economic, political or ecological crisis with certain social, economic and political outcomes. This is expressed in the EU Strategy document on Immigration and Asylum which refers to a 'tide of illegal immigration' (EU, July 1998, p.32) offering no differentiation between types of migrants, origins or circumstances, as does Prodi's comment on 'destabilising' migration cited above. These assumptions lead to an expectation that the outcomes of migration are likely to be negative for countries of destination, and negative for the places of origin.

Migration and development

The complexity of these variables is particularly relevant when looking at the relationship between migration and development which, as we have seen (above p.8), is at the heart of much of the root causes debate. De Haan reviews the conflicting opinions on the relationship between migration and development in four key areas: how development affects migration in areas of origin and destination, and how migration affects development in areas of origin and destination. He concludes that there is 'little consensus in the literature' (1999, p.22), a view echoed by Skeldon who says that whether migration is seen as positive or negative for development 'will depend very much on the context' (1997a, p.195), and Nyberg-Sorensen et al. who believe 'current thinking is still tentative and available evidence sketchy' (2002, p.40). The number of variables including differences in time, economics, issues of equity and distribution, gender relations, distances and the functioning of social networks between places make it difficult to draw conclusions across regions, different people and times.

Despite the complex relationships between migration and development it is important to draw out some generalisations in order to consider a useful way forward for the root causes approach. There is an understanding that 'policies that accept the wider mobility of the population are likely to accord with policies that will enhance the well-being of greater numbers of people' (Skeldon, 1997b, p.3 & p.15). However this is tempered by a number of other observations about the relationship between migration and development. One is that migration policies have different impacts on the poor and the better off, whilst another is that the effect of migration is likely to be 'consistent with populations' social and cultural values' and 'embedded in social relations' (De Haan, 1999, p.15). This can result in migration increasing inequality, because of the different opportunities available to different people (De Haan, 1999, p.27 & Nyberg-Sorensen et al., 2002, p.26).

There is some debate about whether it is generally the poor who move (De Haan, 1999, p.26-7). While there are empirical studies that show the poorest do move (De Haan, 1999, p.27), the weight of evidence seems to suggest otherwise. Skeldon claims that 'all the evidence suggests that it is not the poorest who move' and suggests that there is a 'level of poverty below which migration is not possible' (1997b, p.5). Above this level, the poor who do move will move less far and less frequently than the wealthier migrants (Skeldon 1997b, p.7). There is some evidence that despite potential inequalities the economic benefits of migration can be greater for the poor than the better off (De Haan, 1999, p.24) and in accordance with that 'policies that reduce migration [will] hurt the poor more than the rich' (Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002, p.20). Therefore reducing migration can conflict with poverty related development aims (such as the International Development Target to reduce by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015).

One of the ways in which policies to reduce migration will hurt the poor more than the rich is by increasing barriers which are costly to overcome, whether it be the cost of bribing officials in China (De Haan p.30) or paying agents to facilitate travel across borders. The root causes approach, and the HLWG in particular, do not acknowledge this relationship. The Action Plan for Sri Lanka is a case in point.

The Action Plan acknowledges that barriers to flight prevent the poorest from leaving (EU, Sept. 1999f, p.7) but at the same time action points within the Development and Economic Cooperation sections focus on targeting 'the poorest', a trend confirmed by the Nice report (EU, Nov. 2000b) which details actions being taken to enact the Action Plans. This conflicts with the HLWG's aim to reduce migration to the EU and is likely to be the effect of development priorities having a higher profile in the Sri Lankan Action Plan drafted by the UK and which incorporated input from DFID (The Department for International Development).

The above issues identify where the root causes approach fails to incorporate an adequate understanding of migration issues but they also point to areas where migration theory could inform a more useful version of the root causes approach. Looking at the issues raised by root causes proponents' abhorrence of rural to urban migration will elucidate how this could happen and what might be a more effective way forward for the root causes approach, embracing a more holistic understanding of migration issues.

<u>The role of urban migration in improving the root causes approach</u>
The sedentarist bias of the root causes approach reveals itself in concerns, not exclusively with international migration, but with internal migration as well. Bissell & Natsios reveal that their concern is not only with 'international' migration but with all movement, citing 'urbanization' as a 'symptom of the destruction of a stable, integrated social and economic system' (2001, p.311). This anxiety about movement to the cities is characteristic of the sedentarist bias. In Papademetriou's assertion, quoted earlier, that development and migration weaken attachment to traditional ways of life, there is no engagement with the questions raised by the reference to a 'traditional way of life', especially those concerned with the role of migration within a 'traditional' society.

Papademetriou's stance is typical of those who see movement as severing previously inseparable ties. The EU strategy document of 1998 also identifies rural-urban migration as a destructive and destablilising force leading inexorably to unemployment causing internal migrants to drift into international migration (EU, Sept. 1998 p.8). Governments also often see rural to urban migration as a threat to stability (De Haan, 1999, p.4 and Harris, 1991, p.55) as the traditional view of rural-urban migration is of a 'flood' of migrants destabilising the political, social and economic equilibrium of the city (Skeldon, 1990, p.152 and see Kaplan, 1994). Governments often want to slow migration to the cities or stop it altogether but these policies have not been successful (Harris, 1991, p.58; De Haan, 1999, p.4; Skeldon, 1997b, p.14 & Sommers 2000, p.1).

Despite the fact that most movement is between rural areas (De Haan, 1999, p.5; Skeldon 1997a, p.8) this type of migration is not of concern to root causes commentators in the same way as rural-urban migration. To some extent this could be because of the concerns and interests of governments who see rural-urban migrants as imposing a cost on the settled population and as not politically useful (Lipton in De Haan, 1999, p.33). In addition it preserves the link to the land, which sedentarist commentators see as vital for social cohesion.

There has been a great deal of debate about the role of cities as centres of development and during the 1970s and 1980s an anti-city or pro-rural view of development emerged. This was premised on a range of ideas including the fact that the poor are found disproportionately in rural areas (Skeldon, 1997a, p.165), a more nuanced understanding of development and how it affects different groups of people, criticisms of the trickle-down theory of development (Potter, 1995, p.16) and a differentiated view of development based on a more bottom-up model of development (Gardner & Lewis, 1996, p.22) and focussed on basic needs (Gardner & Lewis, 1996, p.7). This had emerged to some extent as a reaction to what was seen as 'urban-bias' in development policy (Lipton, 1977, passim) unjustified because of the failure of trickle down policies, the rate of poverty in rural areas and caused by the international, political and administrative influence of cities.

Commentators on rural-urban migration tend to take a more inclusive view of the relations between rural and urban populations. Skeldon

believes that the 'transfer of population from rural to urban areas seems to be an integral part of any process of development – not one poor country is highly urbanised' (Skeldon 1997a, p. 2) although there is 'nothing inevitable about urbanisation in all parts of the world' (Skeldon 1997a, p.197) it does appear inevitable in those areas where rapid development is occurring. In addition it is impossible to consider rural and urban environments separately as 'there is continual interaction between urban and rural and any attempt to delimit them into separate sectors will be artificial' (Skeldon, 1997a, p.54). Theories of circulation and networks stress the links between places of origin and destination or 'simultaneous engagement in [places] of origin and destination' (Nyberg-Sorensen et al., 2002, p.18) including flows of remittances, information and which may or may not include return. This can also be true of urban refugees as well as other types of migrants. Refugees sometimes embody all the fears of migration in terms of exacerbating urban poverty and presenting security risks (Sommers, 2000, p.2-3) but they tend to reflect other patterns of movement within the country, and for some parts of the world that is seen as a movement towards urban areas (Sommers, 2000, p.4). However, refugees and other migrants alike continue to send remittances to their country of origin (Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002, p.26). For example, Bissell & Natsios outline the seasonal movements of refugees from Cambodian and Liberian camps to their homes and back (Bissell and Natsios, 2001, p. 307).

As we have seen, the opportunity to migrate improves the livelihoods of the poor but they are not able to move as frequently or as far as the comparatively better off (Skeldon 1997b, p.7). As such, the role of rural-urban migration suggests itself as a valuable area of investigation for those concerned with the root causes of international migration. If improving the circumstances of the poorest people is one of the aims of root causes perhaps the migration of the poorest should be examined for useful lessons. Ways should be sought to make it easier for the poorest to take advantage of migration and to draw them into 'local and regional circuits of migration' in order to increase their options and choices (Skeldon 1997b p.15).

Theoretically, the root causes approach has been flawed by its sedentarist approach to migration. In practice, the HLWG has not been close enough to development or to migration theory to understand the role of migration, particularly rural-urban migration. It has not been focussed enough to develop coherent policies towards cities and their role in migration and its understanding of migration is not good enough to address these issues in a productive way. If the root causes approach could encompass a better understanding in these areas the rural-urban story could provide a way in which the movement of people could enhance international development objectives while preserving states' requirement to limit international migration towards the north.

Conclusion - A way forward?

Threaded throughout this paper has been the suggestion that the failures of the root causes approach can be attributed to a number of theoretical and practical shortcomings. We have seen how mainstream criticisms of the root causes approach have identified political, empirical and structural criticisms of the root causes approach and policy attempts to address the root causes have been seen in this light. In addition, the root causes failure to account adequately for the complexity of migration itself has been elucidated and a possible area of development outlined.

Ultimately the root causes approach needs to be overhauled if it hopes to achieve benefits for the countries of origin and to fulfil the requirements of developed states for restricted migration. Initially developed states need to understand better the role of migration in development and as a result of this some aspects of migration should actively be enhanced for the poorest, in order to tackle root causes more efficiently.

One important area where this enhancement of migration could take place is to look at the circulation of migrants. This implies not only physical circulation but transnationalism in all its forms including the flow of remittances and the operation of social networks. One way to increase the benefits of circulation is to make barriers to migration permeable, as rendering migration 'illegal' enforces one-way migration or limits the contribution migrants can make to their home societies by making movement risky. Similarly, where circulation can be less risky, between cities and rural areas, efforts should be made to increase the profitability of migration for the poorest and to encourage schemes which share the benefits more equitably and without exacerbating conflict in times of war (Nyberg-Sorensen et al., 2002, p30).

The benefit of remittances is one of the most hotly contested areas in terms of their contribution to development and inequality (De Haan reviews the arguments, 1999 pp22-26). Some international development agencies are working to leverage the impact of remittances through formalisation and regulation, savings and micro-credit institutions. However much of the remittance flow comes irregularly and informally (De Haan, 1999, p.23) so may bypass these institutions. Kibreab describes how urban refugees with relatives overseas migrated to Khartoum to facilitate the delivery of remittances (1996, p.161). A way to leverage the benefit of remittances is to enable non-migrants to provide services to migrants, in order to spread the benefits beyond the immediate group (Skeldon 1997b, p.7). The relationship between aid and remittances must also be considered as remittances may 'replace, supplement or even undermine aid' (Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002, p.33) and there is little experience of cooperation between the two areas.

The complexity of connections and diversity of cause and effect in different situations around the world might lend itself to an 'action plan' approach similar to the one taken by the HLWG in the EU but with a number of caveats. Initially it would be vital to consider how the countries should be selected, not driven by migration concerns, but taking into account a number of factors including development objectives. Secondly any 'action plans' should not be static paper documents but dynamic interactions between the parties involved. In addition they should be thoroughly researched rather than created in isolation from experience on the ground. This implies they should not be created in EU fora but with the genuine participation of countries of origin with an understanding of the implications of external as well as internal factors.

Bearing these suggestions in mind, it is worth considering, in conclusion, how they would fit in with initial conceptions of the root causes approach. This approach is a long way from the HLWG model, which is driven by home affairs and political considerations. This new approach would be driven by development and foreign affairs considerations and would be informed by a more complete understanding of migration. However it is not entirely unrelated to some of the original root causes ambitions. In the 1980's when the UN debated the root causes approach its concerns were human rights, the rule of law, civil society and more equitable trade relations (Zolberg, 1989, pp259-260). If root causes can be refocused to give migrants

more choice over whether to move or not and tackle forced migration rather than purely preventing all migration it is likely to be more effective and more equitable.

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