

# Accommodating the Life Plans of Temporary Migrants<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Ottonelli and Torresi claim to present an “ideal” theory of temporary migration. Yet the Rawlsian distinction between “ideal” and “non-ideal” theory is difficult to apply in the context of migration, and the migrants that they consider are making choices under considerable constraint. They are vulnerable both to loss of social status and to the failure of their life plans. Liberal justice, however, does not require the state actively to accommodate all life plans. It need only ensure that the rights of temporary migrants are properly protected, not that their plans will succeed. Ottonelli and Torresi are also wrong to think that the host state must assume responsibility for migrants’ families, and that the “exit options” available to temporary migrants must include the right to remain permanently. Responsibility for the success of life plans must be shared between migrant and state.

**Keywords:** accommodation, exit options, families, ideal theory, temporary migration, vulnerability.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

To the best of my knowledge, Ottonelli and Torresi’s book *The Right Not to Stay* (2022) is the first full-length study of the normative issues raised by temporary migration, and that in itself is cause for celebration. It also looks at the phenomenon from a new angle, viewing temporary migration as a life project that can in the right circumstances be voluntarily embraced. This stands as a salutary corrective to the widely-held belief that people only engage in it for want of better alternatives—either they are escaping a desperate situation in their home country, or they choose temporary migration because their preferred option of permanent migration is not on

<sup>1</sup> I should like to thank the journal’s referee for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

offer, or both of these things are true. Ottonelli and Torresi claim that this switch of perspective fundamentally challenges received views about what liberal states owe to temporary migrants. They argue that these states should go to much greater lengths than they currently do to accommodate the life plans of those who choose to join them for a limited period. My aim in this commentary is to assess the strength of this argument for enhanced accommodation, and to examine two of the specific policies that they recommend for this purpose.

## 2. IDEAL AND NON-IDEAL THEORY

Ottonelli and Torresi go to some lengths to explain that they regard temporary migration as a topic that is appropriately treated as part of “ideal theory”, in contrast to the prevailing philosophical literature on migration in general, which often treats it as a subject for “non-ideal theory” (4).<sup>2</sup> This contrast between ideal and non-ideal theory can be somewhat confusing, and part of the confusion is attributable to the person who introduced the distinction, John Rawls.<sup>3</sup> Rawls said that his own theory of social justice—the two principles and so forth—should be regarded as an exercise in “ideal theory”, thereby making room for two forms of “non-ideal theory” to be developed subsequently to provide guidance in circumstances where the ideal had not been achieved (Rawls 1971: 245-7). One such circumstance was individual non-compliance: a society *could* achieve social justice if its members behaved as the principles required, but for one reason or another—corruption, prejudice, the power of vested interests, etc.—many of them failed to do so. The other circumstance was unfavorable material conditions that made it impossible fully to implement the principles. However, it is important to keep in mind that, for Rawls, “ideal theory” was also realistic to the extent that it took account of well-established facts about human psychology, social laws, and so forth. The aim, as he put it in his later work, was to depict a “realistic utopia” (Rawls 1999: 5-23).

Ottonelli and Torresi suggest that Rawls exemplifies the tendency among philosophers to treat immigration as purely a topic for non-ideal theory, by virtue of his decision to dismiss immigration at the beginning of *The Law of Peoples* as one of the topics that his discussion of international relations as a realistic utopia will leave aside (the others are unjust war and weapons of mass destruction) (Rawls 1999: 8-9). The suggestion is that

<sup>2</sup> Valeria Ottonelli and Tiziana Torresi, “Précis of *The Right Not to Stay*”, this volume. All quoted passages, unless otherwise specified, are from this text.

<sup>3</sup> For helpful attempts at clarification, see Valentini (2012) and Simmons (2010).

although Rawls actually wrote almost nothing about immigration, had he chosen to do so, he would have addressed it as a case of non-ideal theory.

What Rawls actually says is that in the ideal world that he envisages—“the Society of liberal and decent Peoples”—several of the causes that drive migration today, such as the persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, will have disappeared, and as a result “the problem of immigration” will have been eliminated “as a serious problem” (Rawls 1999: 9). But what does he mean by that? He is not suggesting, presumably, that international migration will cease to occur in the ideal world of *The Law of Peoples*. States will still need to decide how, if at all, to regulate it, and in one brief footnote later in the book he suggests that there are valid reasons for awarding them the general right to control inward migration.<sup>4</sup> So the “problem” that has been eliminated is not the general issue of immigration control, but the specific form that that issue takes in circumstances where migration is to a large extent driven by persecution, poverty and other injustices.

It appears, therefore, that to remain consistent with his own methodological injunctions, Rawls should have presented the political philosophy of immigration as having two parts, namely an “ideal” component made up of principles to govern immigration in a world that was fully just, and a “non-ideal” component made up of principles to govern immigration in the seriously unjust world that we actually inhabit. Moreover, the ideal part should come first because it is needed to guide the construction of non-ideal theory (Rawls assumes that we cannot know what justice requires in non-ideal circumstances without knowing what justice requires when those circumstances have been overcome).

On reflection, however, this way of proceeding may seem problematic. To develop an ideal theory of immigration, we would need first to present a general theory of global justice, and that of course is going to be somewhat controversial (Rawls’s own somewhat minimalist theory has been widely criticized). But in addition, so long as we think that a normative theory of immigration must take some account of the *social consequences* of migration, for both the societies that the migrants are entering and those they are leaving, we will need to speculate about the type of migration that is likely to occur in a just world—how many people would want to move, from and to where they would move, and what reasons they would have for moving. This is on the assumption that states will continue to have some interest in the flow of migrants across their borders, perhaps for the reasons that Rawls cites in his footnote, or for reasons having to do with the

<sup>4</sup> See Rawls (1999: 39, fn. 48). Interestingly, he here cites (approvingly) Michael Walzer’s view that immigration control may be needed to “protect a people’s political culture and its constitutional principles”. See Walzer (1983: ch. 2).

successful functioning of democracy, which, as Bauböck (2011) has argued, would be undermined by “hypermobility” across borders. In earlier work (Miller 2016: 16-17), I engaged in such speculation and inferred that the volume of migration was likely to be much smaller than at present, but on further reflection that may have been a mistake. Although in a plausible just world the biggest push factors that drive migration in ours—persecution, poverty and so forth—will be absent, many of the pull factors—jobs, culture, climate and so forth—are likely to remain, and, in addition, far more people will have the resources to make migration a feasible option for them. So it’s at least possible that the volume of (potential) migration will be as great, and the reasons to control it as strong, in the just world as they are today. In the light of this uncertainty, an “ideal” theory of immigration will be difficult to construct.

Returning now to Ottonelli and Torresi, what lies behind their insistence that temporary migration should not be regarded only as a topic for non-ideal theory? The point they want to make is that temporary migration can be, and often is, chosen by migrants as their most preferred option, and not merely accepted for want of any better alternatives. At the same time, they are clear that their focus is on temporary migration *as it occurs in the world today*, and they are fully aware that it takes place under conditions that expose temporary migrants to serious risks of harm and exploitation. The recommendations that emerge from their theory are aimed at protecting migrants against such risks. I believe that this is exactly the right focus for their research. But since we can imagine a just world in which no such risks were present, their account might from that perspective be described as an exercise in “non-ideal” theory. What this shows, I think, is that applying the ideal/non-ideal distinction to theories of migration is unhelpful, and should be scrapped. What is important instead is to specify from the beginning the assumptions you are making about the world to which the theory will apply.

### 3. WHO ARE TEMPORARY MIGRANTS AND WHY ARE THEY VULNERABLE?

The relevance of this point emerges when we ask: who, for Ottonelli and Torresi, counts as a temporary migrant? According to their official definition, the term applies to anyone who moves abroad for a period of time in order to work and either accumulate money to send home or acquire knowledge and skills for later use. In practice, however, their focus is on a subclass of temporary migrants, such as those featured in the “paradigmatic examples” suggested in their book: Ukrainians working in construction in

Poland, Romanian care workers in northern Europe, Mexican farm workers in the US (2). These are all relatively low-skilled workers moving to richer societies, and this is relevant because it is workers such as these who are most likely to suffer a condition of “vulnerability and marginality” (3). The obvious contrast here is with skilled professionals who move from one country to another, either to gain experience or because the salaries are higher over there, and who may actually enjoy quite high status in the receiving society. These are the people usually referred to as *expatriates*, and the difference between an expatriate and the kind of temporary migrant that Ottonelli and Torresi are concerned with has to do with factors such as race, class, and nationality. Thus they are not in fact focusing their attention on the people who most clearly embrace temporary migration as a freely chosen life plan—the “ideal” temporary migrants, so to speak—but on those whose presence raises normative concerns for societies that claim to be committed to liberal principles of social justice and human rights. This selective focus can certainly be justified, but it indicates a possible source of tension between the more positive picture of temporary migration as a freely chosen life project that the book generally promotes, and the more negative picture of the condition of the particular types of migrant featured in the “paradigmatic examples”. The people who best match the positive picture are the expatriates; the people whose predicament creates a problem for liberal principles are the relatively deprived temporary migrants.

So, focusing now on the latter, what justifies Ottonelli and Torresi’s claim that “because of the vulnerable position in which temporary migrants place themselves, their projects undermine in important ways the ideal of a liberal egalitarian society” (3)? They give two reasons. One is that the institutional arrangements made by liberal societies expose the migrants’ life plans to “very high risks of failure”. This gives us one sense in which the migrants might be described as vulnerable: the life plans they have set for themselves may be thwarted by circumstance. The other sense is that they are vulnerable to being treated as social inferiors: “they are exposed to the sorts of abuses and harms that derive from not being placed on the same footing as the people they are interacting with on an everyday basis” (3).

I will focus my attention on vulnerability in the first sense, but not because I think that migrants cannot be vulnerable in the second—obviously they can. However, I am not convinced that the problem here arises directly from their having temporary status. There is a wider problem that all immigrants may face, namely being disparaged on grounds of race, or more generally for being a non-native. If someone is going to abuse

immigrants on racist or nativist grounds, then their temporary or permanent status is unlikely to be what's at issue, not least because the abuser is unlikely to know what that status is. Moreover we might well imagine a nativist who is more indignant about the presence of newcomers who are planning to stay permanently, thereby in his eyes diluting the native stock. As for the broader question of the diminished social status that temporary migrants may suffer in the host society, Ottonelli and Torresi respond to this concern, correctly in my view, by pointing out that inequalities in standing and social position do not automatically translate into a loss of self-respect. This is because

the social bases of self-respect for those undertaking a temporary migration project are not located in the receiving society, but are instead to be found partly at home and partly in the virtual social space created by their geographical and temporal displacement. (3)

So the main problem is that temporary migration projects may fail—that they often do not lead to “happy endings”, as the authors put it (3). The assumption the book makes is that liberal states have a responsibility to protect migrants from such failures. The concept that is employed for this purpose is “accommodation”. Ottonelli and Torresi claim that “Liberalism is committed to a “principle of accommodation”, which enjoins us to build political institutions in such a way that they can accommodate people's life plans and let people pursue their conception of the good through their own actions and decisions ” (6) (I read “political institutions” here in a broad sense to include all of what Rawlsians would call the basic structure of society, including laws and social policies). But what does it mean to accommodate a life plan? And whose plans need to be accommodated? These are going to be crucial questions for the present discussion.

#### 4. ACCOMMODATION, LIBERALISM AND TEMPORARY MIGRANTS

Let's start with the duty to accommodate the life plans of citizens. The language of “accommodation” was introduced primarily in order to respond to the special claims of religious minorities whose practices were being burdened by facially neutral laws and policies. People belonging to such groups were to be given legal exemptions, or policies were to be enacted with the aim of making it easier for them to comply with religious obligations. Although these departures from strict liberal equality weren't

uncontroversial,<sup>5</sup> they were generally thought to be defensible. But notice that this fell far short of a general duty to “accommodate” all life plans, if that meant adjusting law and policy to make them more likely to succeed. The accommodation of religious minorities responded to something specific about religious practice itself, namely its obligatory character (for those belonging to the religion in question). For example, if a religion requires women to dress modestly, this is a requirement that must be complied with by its adherents, on pain of being sanctioned by their co-religionists. So a liberal state committed to the principle of equality of opportunity must take steps to ensure that women are not penalized by, for example, being sacked by their employers for wearing trousers or a headscarf.<sup>6</sup>

The point is, this duty to accommodate does not extend to life plans in general, contrary to what Ottonelli and Torresi sometimes suggest.<sup>7</sup> A liberal society provides its members with a set of general freedoms, opportunities, and resources, and then leaves it up to each individual to develop a life plan that is consistent with the possibilities open to them. As a result, some life plans will inevitably be frustrated, by lack of resources or the unwillingness of others to cooperate. My plan might be to earn money for half of each year and spend the other half studying bird life on the island of South Georgia. This is a perfectly good plan in itself, but it relies on finding an employer willing to hire me on a half-year basis, and it would not be reasonable for the state to force an employer to do so on the grounds that otherwise my life plan is unviable. So although I agree with Ottonelli and Torresi that there are other cases besides those involving religious minorities in which an accommodation claim should be granted—they point to accommodations made to help working parents, for example—I dissent from their assumption that the principle of accommodation must apply to all life plans. When accommodations are made, they have to be justified by pointing to the specific and unfair disadvantage that a certain

<sup>5</sup> For an especially acerbic critique, see Barry (2001: esp. ch. 2). Among the advocates of accommodation who drew Barry’s fire were Will Kymlicka (1995), Bhikhu Parekh (1997) and Iris Marion Young (1990).

<sup>6</sup> I have defended this view about what makes religion special, as far as accommodation goes, against Barry’s critique in Miller (2002).

<sup>7</sup> Discussing the work of Seana Shiffrin, they say that “we depart from Shiffrin’s account to the extent that she seems to assume that only specific categories of people, or only certain kinds of life plans, are in need of accommodation. We are assuming instead that the principle of accommodation holds generally, for *all* life plans” (135).

group of people would suffer if the accommodation were not made.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps Ottonelli and Torresi would say in reply here that temporary migrants do suffer such a disadvantage by virtue of the higher level of risk to their life plans that temporary status creates. But I don't think that the fact that the life plan you have embarked upon stands a relatively high risk of failing is by itself grounds for an accommodation. Think of teenagers aspiring to be professional actors, rock stars or Premier League footballers. Those are life plans with statistically a very low chance of success. But beyond offering career advice, we don't think that the state needs to do anything to increase the likelihood of the plans succeeding. Perhaps it will be said that in these cases the failure rate is high because the goal itself is such that only very few can achieve it, whereas in the case of temporary migration the risk of failure stems in part from the institutional background, for example the fact that only time-limited visas may be on offer, ruling out the possibility of plans that develop in such a way that the migration needs to become permanent. Does this then mean that the background conditions must be altered?

This brings us directly to the question: how far, as a matter of justice, do states need to go to ensure that the life plans of temporary migrants, whatever they may happen to be, are successful? I assume—and I don't think that Ottonelli and Torresi would disagree—that states are not under any preexisting obligations to those who will become temporary migrants, over and above the general human rights obligations that they owe to everyone. To drive the point home, note that it is at the discretion of receiving states whether to have a temporary migration program at all: they could instead decide only to accept refugees and those intending to move on a permanent basis. In practice, of course, rich liberal states are very likely to welcome temporary migrants, for economic reasons primarily. But they will want to do so on mutually advantageous terms. What “advantage” means for the migrants themselves is relatively clear: the package of rights and opportunities that they are being offered must make it worthwhile for them to migrate. For the receiving state, the matter is a little more complicated. They will want to ensure that there is a net economic gain from the program, so the package cannot be so generous to the migrants that it costs more in welfare services and so forth than it generates in tax revenues. But since we are considering states seeking to comply with liberal principles of justice, attention must also be paid to the

<sup>8</sup> Ideally, perhaps one would fill this out with an account of when justice requires accommodation of life plans of a particular type, but it seems likely that this will be hard to provide. As Seana Shiffrin (2004) points out, different reasons appear to apply in different cases: for example, sometimes accommodation is given to plans that create important public goods, but this rationale does not apply elsewhere.



distributive consequences of temporary migration programs. In particular, it would be an undesirable effect of such programs if they were to increase economic inequality with no gain to the worst off, violating the Rawlsian difference principle. Whether this is likely to happen is a question for economists to investigate, but it is fairly easy to see why it might: among the gainers from temporary migration will be (already rich) employers seeking a cheap supply of labor.<sup>9</sup> So the bargain struck with temporary migrants must at least be *justice-preserving* for the host society.<sup>10</sup>

These, then, are the normative constraints under which receiving states lie when deciding what rights to offer to temporary migrants. They do have an interest in making temporary migration a “success”, judged by how well it enables the migrants to fulfil their life plans, because word will get back to the sending societies, and they want to be able to attract “good” migrants in the future. But what are they actually required to do as a matter of justice? First, since temporary migrants while they are present fall under the jurisdiction of the receiving state, they are owed protection of their human rights, including rights to health care and so forth. I take it as axiomatic that a liberal state—indeed any legitimate state—must provide such protection unconditionally to everyone on its territory. Here, I agree with Ottonelli and Torresi that we need to distinguish between what they call “basic civil rights” that must be guaranteed for everyone and the more specific rights related to welfare and conditions of work, where what is owed to temporary migrants may legitimately diverge from what is owed to citizens. Of course, some of the rights in the latter category, such as those having to do with safety at work, must be universally protected, but in other areas it is reasonable for the bundle of rights the state provides to reflect the different needs and interests of those who are permanent members of the society, as against those who are joining it for a couple of years.

I won’t here try to address the set of issues that Ottonelli and Torresi consider under the label of “social dumping”, i.e. the risk that temporary migration programs with divergent and usually lesser legal requirements

<sup>9</sup> I thank the journal’s referee for reminding me that not all those who stand to gain from temporary migration are wealthy—they typically include small farmers who rely on seasonable labor for crop-picking.

<sup>10</sup> To clarify, I am claiming that temporary migration programs should be set up in such a way that their effect is not to increase social injustice within the receiving society. In response, it might be argued that a small increase in social injustice is a price worth paying if the programs contribute to *global* justice by alleviating poverty in the sending societies, via remittances and so forth. I think an argument of this sort holds in the case of refugees and those fleeing extreme poverty, but not for the temporary migrants whom Ottonelli and Torresi have chiefly in mind—those moving for reasons of economic advantage from societies that are relatively but not absolutely poor.

will have the effect of undermining the protections hitherto enjoyed by local workers, though they are clearly right to see it as a worry (10). Instead, I would like to emphasize one particular obligation that states owe to migrant workers, namely to monitor the contracts that they are offered at the point of arrival and then to ensure that these contracts are adhered to. Such a policy might be seen as somewhat paternalistic and therefore as conflicting with Ottonelli and Torresi's emphasis on the agency of temporary migrants, but if so, I think that some degree of paternalism can be justified. It responds to the fact that migrants are likely to be poorly placed to assess the terms and conditions they are being offered, and therefore liable to exploitation. They may not know much about the kind of work involved, or about the living conditions that they will have to accept (for example, being housed in trailers in the case of agricultural workers). Equally, if the terms of the contract are not honored, they are not in a good position to enforce it. What is the source of the state's obligation here, given what I said about the limits to the obligations it owes to outsiders? Why does it need to protect non-citizens from signing exploitative contracts? A liberal state committed to justice has a duty to regulate private bodies within its jurisdiction to ensure that they do not commit wrongs or cause harms of certain kinds, and this includes wrongs or harms inflicted on outsiders. For example, there is a duty to prevent a company from dumping waste outside of the state's territory. So even if a migrant is going voluntarily to sign a work contract that she believes to be advantageous to herself, the state may need to intervene if it judges the contract to be potentially exploitative, or to give her insufficient protection against certain harms.

## 5. FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXIT OPTIONS

Having made that general point, which I believe they would support, I am going to disagree with the positions that Ottonelli and Torresi take on two more specific questions in this area, where they seek to shift responsibility from the migrant to the receiving state. The first is quite narrow and concerns the family responsibilities of temporary migrants, particularly women, towards the children they leave at home. Ottonelli and Torresi are worried that the children may be emotionally, if not physically, deprived because of the absence of their parent, and they claim that the migrants have an interest in there being a system "for preventing forms of neglect and intervening in the cases in which people are not adequately taken care of" (9). They are also worried that migrants may be exposed to "financial and sentimental blackmail" by those who have taken on the role of

substitute carers. They therefore suggest that

Countries of immigration, which avail themselves of the work of temporary migrants and are responsible for the conditions under which they live and work during their stay, should take care of the arrangements that ensure that these migrants' parental and family rights are fulfilled.(9)

I find these suggestions quite problematic. Ottonelli and Torresi don't explicitly propose that social workers should be sent out to Romania, say, to ensure that the left-behind children of temporary migrants are being properly looked after, but they do propose transfer payments which would presumably be used to pay Romanian social workers for the same purpose. But this would push up the cost of temporary migration programs, making them less attractive to the receiving state, and therefore in all probability reducing the number of places available.<sup>11</sup> Why isn't it the migrant's responsibility to ensure that suitable child-care arrangements are in place before applying to the program? Recall that throughout this discussion we are being asked to consider voluntary, not forced, migration. Ottonelli and Torresi's question is what liberal states owe to temporary migrants who choose to fulfil their life plans by working abroad for a period. If their life plans also include raising a family, then that has to be factored in as a possible constraint. In this area, migrants are not at an epistemic disadvantage, as I have claimed they are likely to be in the matter of work contracts. They ought to know who is a reliable substitute caretaker for their children, and if they are uncertain about that, then it would be wrong for them to migrate.

The broader question I want to pursue is about the availability of what Ottonelli and Torresi call "exit options" for temporary migrants. These constitute one of the four conditions that must be fulfilled if the decision to migrate on a temporary basis is to count as a voluntary choice (5). Having an exit option means not just having the chance to return home if things don't work out, but having the chance to change one's immigration status from temporary to permanent. This requirement would therefore exclude temporary migration programs with strict time limits such that return is required at the end of the program, which is the form that many of them currently take (see Ruhs 2013; Carens 2008).

The effect, however, would be to radically transform temporary migration programs in a way that might not be desirable either for the migrants or for the receiving state. For the migrants, what would otherwise

<sup>11</sup> The thesis that there is likely to be a trade-off between the size of the package of welfare rights offered to migrants, and the number of migrants, particularly low-skilled workers, that states are willing to admit is developed at length in Ruhs (2013).

be a relatively clear-cut plan to work abroad to raise money or acquire skills and then return home, becomes something closer to testing the water with a view to possibly becoming a permanent resident. This changes their incentives: for example, they now have an interest in becoming socially integrated, since they are seeking to find out how they would feel about staying on permanently and they need some evidence. Although it might at first seem that it is always in someone's interests to have extra options added to their opportunity set, in some cases it can have the effect of making existing options less valuable.<sup>12</sup> However the bigger change will be on the side of the host state, which has now to regard any migrant admitted on a temporary basis as a prospective long-term immigrant. The likelihood is that receiving states will be much more reluctant to admit low-skilled migrants, in particular, if they are obliged to provide them with the option of transferring to permanent status.

In this light, we need to ask why having such an exit option is a necessary condition for a migration decision to be voluntary. After all, people sign fixed-term labor contracts all the time, and although in some cases they might prefer tenured employment if it were on offer, we don't assume that these signing-up decisions are less than fully voluntary. Ottonelli and Torresi explain the exit option requirement by referring to "the infamous contracts of indentured servitude that replaced slave labor in America and the Colonies after the abolition of chattel slavery" (5), but the issues in that case were surely quite different. The relevant worry that Ottonelli and Torresi raise in the case of temporary migration is that it might become too costly for migrants to return home, because they "have been uprooted from their culture, lost connection with the sending society, or have lost the capacity to procure for themselves the means for a decent life once back home" (5). These possibilities seem rather far-fetched to me in the case of migrants moving abroad for one or two years, but in any case they are among the factors that migrants can reasonably be expected to weigh up when making the decision to migrate in the first place. The decision certainly carries some risks, but so too does the decision facing a young person from a small and relatively isolated rural community who has been offered a university place in a distant large city, and who if he takes it up may never again be at home in the place he left. Yet this potentially life-changing decision is one that we nonetheless trust an 18-year-old to make.

In short, I do not see why an exit option in the form that Ottonelli and Torresi require should be seen as essential for temporary migrants, although exit options of other kinds—the right to change one's employer, the right to cut the program short if the migrant becomes very unhappy—clearly are.

<sup>12</sup> The various reasons why this may come about are explored in Dworkin (1982).

## 6. CONCLUSION

The general line I have been pressing in these comments is that there has to be a division of responsibility between the migrant and the host state; so although the latter has some responsibility for ensuring that the former's plans come to fruition by protecting her against exploitation and so forth, equally the person who is contemplating migrating has to make a realistic assessment of how things are going to work out for them, including the possible downsides. I think this is consistent with the spirit of Ottonelli and Torresi's book, with the emphasis it places on migrants' agency and choice, which I commended at the beginning. As they argue, we need to recognize what is specifically valuable about temporary migration and not treat it merely as the poor relation of permanent migration. If the state is going to have a temporary migration program, it should be designed so as to allow that specific value to be realized. But it doesn't have to featherbed the migrants; it remains up to them to decide whether the rules of the game are such that it makes sense for them to play it.

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