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ARTICLE



'More open borders and deep structural transformation'

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ABSTRACT

Building upon recent work on epistemic varieties of liberalism, *avant-garde* political agency and the theory and practice of activism, I claim that a liberal defence of more open borders does not presuppose either indifference to the problem of the deep structural sources of poverty in poorer countries, or the absence of an account of those structures' transformation. Rather, it is claimed that in addition to the remittance of money and other economic goods to alleviate the symptoms of poverty, more open borders facilitate the remittance of norms and values in terms of which individuals and activist communities in poorer countries may transform the deep structures and institutions that are poverty's sources. This liberal account of more open borders and deep structural transformation also makes possible the non-coercive discharge of obligations of global justice on the part of wealthier states to the world's poor, when poorer nations are either unable or unwilling to discharge them themselves.

KEYWORDS migration; brain-drain; activism; liberalism; deep structure

Introduction

The question of the economic consequences of migration for the residents of poorer countries has received considerable recent attention.¹ Yet, there are at least two reasons why restricting discussion of the desirability of migration to economic consequences would be unsatisfactory. First, the voluminous empirical literature on brain-drain and remittances is ambiguous with respect to the costs and benefits of migration for those migrants leave behind in their countries of origin. As has been widely noted, and despite work that shows their benefits for poverty alleviation, the jury is still out as to whether immigrant remittances either cancel out or at least counterbalance the economic costs of brain-drain (Brock & Blake, 2015, p. 43, 159; Brock, 2016, p. 180; Blake, 2016a; Oberman, 2016b, pp. 106–107).

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Importantly for present purposes, there is another reason for expanding the debate about the consequences of migration for those left behind beyond economic considerations and it is one that emerges from a well-known objection of liberalism in debates about distributive justice. This is the deep structure objection where liberalism is held to be incapable in principle of attending to the problem of deep structural inequality because of its normative focus upon the individual. Precisely, that is, because it is only concerned with defending the rights and liberties of individuals to pursue their ends, liberalism is normatively blind to the aggregate results of their doing so, especially where these adversely affect the liberties, opportunities and life chances of others. In debates about migration and justice, the deep structure objection serves as the basis for a slightly different criticism of what we will call the permissive or more open borders stance that I will defend. But before seeing why it is necessary to see what kind of a stance the more open borders stance is. First, this stance acknowledges that there may be *other* considerations – for example, national security and the control of highly contagious lethal diseases – that ought to dissuade us from defending *fully* open borders where there are no restrictions upon movement whatsoever.² My position, therefore, is not a wholly permissive one and accepts a rôle for the state in determining who crosses international boundaries. Secondly, the term ‘more open borders’ is intended to capture the related idea that this stance is but one of several that may appear along what we may call a spectrum of permissiveness with regard to migration. Occupying a spot near to the fully open borders stance, it may thus be contrasted with less permissive stances such as those defended, from a diversity of normative standpoints (including liberal standpoints) and for different reasons by Blake (2016a, 2016b, 2017) Brock (2009; Brock & Blake, 2015), Miller (2016), Pevnick (2011) Wellman (2008; 2011; 2016) and Ypi (2008, 2012). A more open borders stance, then, is just one that liberals and, indeed, those working in other traditions, may defend.

How, then, does the deep structure objection present a special challenge to a liberal defence of more open borders? Here it is claimed that even if they are beneficial with respect to poverty’s *symptoms*, more open borders are not only be blind to the deep structural *causes* of poverty in poorer states because they would permit individuals to migrate without regard for the consequences of this for their country of origin’s economic well-being or institutions. They are complicit in the *perpetuation* of those structures precisely because they appear indifferent to the question of how those structures may be transformed, for instance via policy devices such as immigration restrictions (Miller, 2016) or qualified emigration restrictions and compulsory service programmes (Brock & Blake, 2015, pp. 48–51, 73–79; Ypi, 2008).

In this paper, I will respond to the deep structure objection and claim that there is a good reason to defend more open borders in the interests of those left behind not just on economic but on political and cultural grounds.³ More specifically, and even if there are at least some grounds for restricting

migration, I will claim that the deep structure objection is not one of them. In the section that follows I will outline three variants of the deep structure objection that have appeared in debates about migration justice. In section 3 I will then build a liberal response that draws upon two distinct literatures: the theory and practice of political activism (Wright, 2010; Ypi, 2012) and the epistemic approach to liberalism (Tebble, 2016). The culmination of this will be the claim, in section 4, that more open borders facilitate the international remittance of the norms and values required to transform the deep structures that cause poverty in poorer states. Finally, after responding to objections in section 5, in section 6 I will consider the extent to which the arguments presented here provide compelling reasons for those who are sceptical of more open borders to endorse them nonetheless, and what implications, if any, they may have for deep structure critiques of liberalism in general.

Liberalism, deep structure and migration

One of the notable earlier incarnations of deep structure objection to liberalism is to be found in the work of Wood (1972), Macpherson (1973), Wolff (1977), Nielsen (1978) and Simpson (1980) on distributive justice. For these authors, capitalist relations of production are responsible for, but ultimately incapable of adequately addressing, deep structural inequality because of their liberal individualist normative focus. That is, by focusing on the liberty of the individual to exploit rights to property, liberalism is silent with regard to the unequal results of their doing so. Subsequent to this, feminist theorists (Okin, 1989; Pateman, 1988) extended the logic of the deep structure objection to debates about the inequalities perpetuated by gendered family relations and, most notably, by the public/private distinction. Again, the central insight is that liberalism's individualist focus means that it is conceptually blind to the underlying processes that led to the gendered division of labour and systematically diminished opportunities and life chances for women and girls. Combining many of these insights, Iris Marion Young (1990, pp. 18–30, 2009) brought the underlying logic of the deep structure objection to bear with regard to liberalism's blindness to the effects of systematic processes of discrimination, domination and oppression upon members of marginalised groups.

In debate about migration and justice, there are at least three versions of the deep structure objection to a permissive stance towards migration. For David Miller (2007) and Thomas Pogge (1997) the remittance-based case for more open borders is inadequate as a response to poverty because it fails to attend to those systematic features of poorer state's institutions, such as entrenched corruption, that account for poverty and arrested rates of development.⁴ Thus, even if they go some way to addressing the *symptoms* of poverty, remittances and the more open borders that they require do

little to address its underlying deep structural *causes*. Addressing this issue from a different angle Peter Higgins (2008, pp. 532–533) approaches the question of deep structure and migration through the lens of broadly identitarian concerns. When one factors in the gendered, racialised and class-based economic structures and processes that not only explain *why* the poorest are poor but *who* the poorest typically are, it stands to reason that more open borders are not only likely to fail to address the underlying causes of poverty and economic inequality, they may *reinforce* and perpetuate them by entrenching the privilege of those with the resources to take advantage of the liberty to migrate and send remittances home.⁵

There is a third sense in which the deep structure objection is reflected in recent critiques. As Gillian Brock (Brock & Blake, 2015, pp. 38–41; Brock, 2016, 2017, p. 157, 6) and Lea Ypi (Ypi, 2008, 2012) have claimed, the benefits flowing from emigration – typically the remittances that immigrants send home – are insufficient to compensate for the costs that brain-drain imposes upon the development of poorer countries' institutions. More specifically, they claim that proponents of more open borders and immigrant remittances fail to consider the question of how a society's institutions are to be improved if citizens with valuable skills are incentivised to leave by the lure of higher wages and better opportunities. This is not to say, of course, that Brock does not accept, in keeping with the empirical literature, that remittances are both large (Brock & Blake, 2015, p. 42) and of at least some economic benefit, either directly or indirectly (Brock & Blake, 2015, p. 44). Yet, she claims that there is also a compelling sense in which, even if true, this misses a more fundamental point, for there is no obvious sense in which, absent an account of how they 'have good *institution-building* effects ... remittances can be the main vehicle for transforming poor developing counties into the kinds of places that can provide reasonably decent life prospects for all citizens' (Brock & Blake, 2015, p. 44, emphasis added). 'People build institutions', she (Brock & Blake, 2015, p. 39) reminds us, 'and the skilled people who leave are potentially important institution builders'. Similarly, Ypi (2008, p. 409) claims that '[t]he principles according to which ... restrictions upon emigration may be placed must take into account how much the productive contribution of prospective emigrants affects the institutions of the source state.' Thus, even if more open borders are uniquely placed to encourage poverty alleviation via remittances, they do not address the underlying structural processes that act as poverty's drivers and the impact that the exodus of the most talented and best educated may have on a sending society's institutions, particularly those that would strengthen its prospects for deep structural transformation and development. Without an answer to these objections, and regardless of the findings of empirical social science either for or against remittances, the case for more open borders is at best an incomplete one.

The problems posed for the justification of more open borders do not end with their defenders being condemned for failing to address the problem of deep structure. Precisely because they make exit from poorer states possible, more open borders serve merely as political safety-valves for indifferent governments to rid themselves of restive populations and sources of popular resistance that may lead to social and political reform over the long term. This concern is highlighted by Kieran Oberman for whom more open borders should only be a policy option of last resort. One of the two central rights appealed to by Oberman (2015, pp. 243–247, 2016a) is the right to stay in one's country and not be compelled to cross international borders to fulfil one's basic needs. It is in this connection that he finds more open borders wanting, for in acting as safety valves for the coercive pressure placed upon the poor to leave their home country, they are complicit in undermining the right to stay. 'When rich states rely on migration to address poverty, instead of searching for alternatives,' Oberman (2015, pp. 249) argues, 'they fail in this regard'. Not only, then, must liberals in favour of more open borders respond to the claim that they are blind to deep structure. They must also deal with the question, of how poorer states' deep structures and institutions may be transformed.

Prelude to a liberal response: Erik Olin wright and interstitial transformation

As we have seen, there are, then, two related aspects of the deep structure objection to which liberal defenders of more open borders need to respond; one pertaining to the *positive* question of social ontology and liberalism's capacity to recognise deep structure as a problem, the other to the *normative* question of the preconditions for deep structural transformation and institutional reform. With regard to the first, one way to see how liberalism may not be as myopic as its critics suggest is to invoke Erik Olin Wright's notion of the interstitial transformation of capitalist relations of production. In *Envisioning Real Utopias* (Wright, 2010, p. 323) Wright conceives of social and political change taking place either from the bottom-up, via the enactment of alternative social relations in the gaps or 'interstices' of 'an organization, of a society, or even of global capitalism,' or via a top-down process, conceived either in terms of the seizure of the state (for communists) or of reformist electoral coalitions (for social democrats). In the case of the former deep structural transformation occurs in the interstices of the state and the market precisely because capitalist power relations and principles of social organisation 'do not govern all of the activities occurring within' the system (Wright, 2010, p. 323). Precisely, that is, because individuals enjoy at least some degree of liberty they may bring about social change without interference. Significantly for present purposes, within this bottom-up or endogenous category of transformation

Wright also distinguishes between what we may call self-conscious interstitial transformation – that is, interstitial *strategies* exemplified by movements such as Occupy Wall Street or Femen – and unintended or invisible hand interstitial transformative *processes*. In contrast to the self-conscious formation of activist strategies of the former that involve ‘the deliberate development of interstitial activities for the purpose of fundamental transformation of the system as a whole’ (Wright, 2010, p. 323), and where the ideals to be strived for in the activist space are a result of deliberation, the transformation resultant from interstitial *processes* is an *unintended* consequence of a myriad of discrete decisions taken by individual actors. Individual actors, therefore, can be said to participate in the transformation of deep structure, even if often only accidentally so.⁶

To be sure, and, as this suggests, it would be advisable to proceed with a degree of ideological caution when utilising Wright to build a *liberal* response to the deep structure objection. His discussion, after all, takes place within the context of an enquiry into the possibility of the transformation of capitalist relations of production, something with which one may reasonably expect the liberal approach defended here would have little sympathy. This normative difference notwithstanding, Wright’s account of interstitial processes in particular is noteworthy for the common invisible-hand logic of transformation that it shares with liberal accounts of markets. As Wright (2010, p. 324) explains by way of reference to the transformation of feudal relations of production, ‘the urban artisans and merchants in feudal society whose interstitial activities fostered new kinds of [capitalist] relations did not have a project of destroying feudal class relations and forging a new kind of society.’ Rather, the changes they effected were ‘the unintended by-products of their activities, not a strategy as such’ (Wright, 2010, p. 324). Thus, despite a very different normative starting point, Wright’s approach to the transformation of relations of production is a promising one, precisely because of the rôle that it suggests individuals acting either alone or in concert within a framework of (liberal) rights and liberties play in it.

Transformative activism and the problem of après-garde political agency

Thus far we have invoked the work of Wright to argue that liberalism is not blind to deep structure. There is, however, another more profound conceptual rather than normative risk in seeking to make common cause with him when conceiving of deep structural transformation in liberal terms. Precisely because his is a two-pronged *endogenous* account of structural transformation, it is unclear how a coherent candidate conception of a better future to be strategically agitated for in the activist space could be formulated

without direct experience of its specifics. Importantly, what Wright (Wright, 2010, p. 321) calls this problem of 'the history of the future' is also manifested in David Miller's (2013) critique of Lea Ypi's work on *avant-garde* conceptions of political agency and global justice, so it will be worthwhile considering it as we build our liberal response.

In *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (Ypi, 2012) Ypi she sets out a vision of political transformation in which a vanguard of committed activists, critical of the *status quo*, play a central rôle in defining the transformative ideals that ought to be realised in practice. The problem with Ypi's approach for Miller, however, is that it is unclear how these ideals can be agreed upon and agitated for if one has no clear idea of the future that one wishes to bring about. This difficulty of 'pre-figurative politics' (Levitas, 2013) – where activists must first imagine and *only then* enact the ideals they wish to realise – shows how self-conscious strategic transformation must be preceded by imagining what a better world would look like. Thus, regardless of how unhappy we may be with dominant structures and processes, *ex ante* judgments about which future may serve as an appropriate vision for interstitial transformative activism and *avant-garde* political agency in the present are very difficult if not impossible to make. Of course, such judgments can be made *ex post*, once the history of what was once the future has been written. 'If we know which way the army has marched,' Miller explains (2013, p. 94), 'then we can rewind the historical clock and identify the individuals and groups who were out in front pointing the way,' as the cases of women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery show. However, such retrospective judgments are of little use in the *present* conditions within which activist communities must organise, given that there may be a myriad of groups who wish to effect social change of one kind or another. As Miller (2013, p. 95) claims, what we desire in such a situation is 'to be able to say *now*, with respect to contemporaries, which are instances of *avant-garde* practice and which aren't'. This, of course, is no easy matter without getting the relationship between *avant-garde* political agency and the principles we are supposed to develop 'back to front' (Miller, 2013, pp. 95–96).⁷ We may say, therefore, that for Miller the problem with *avant-garde* political agency is that it rests upon an epistemic illusion. Ypi's activists for global justice are, at best, the top-down exogenous bearers of *après-garde* political agency.

In response, one could claim that Miller's critique misses its target. Activists *can* get an idea of the ideals to be strategically realised by learning from one another. On this reading, civil society and the interstices between it and the state become *zones of activist experimentation* where different groups seek to realise their goals and communicate the results of their endeavours to one another. But it is here where another difficulty presents itself that pertains not only to Ypi's top-down account of transformation, but

also to our concern to utilise Wright's approach to develop a bottom-up account of deep structural transformation in poorer states. Unlike the case within wealthier states, where rights to protest and engage in other kinds of activity that secure activist experimentation are typically protected and culturally entrenched, in poorer states, this may not be the case. In such cases, the question therefore arises as to how, in addition to those values and ideals that have already been settled upon, it would be possible to learn which others to adopt in the absence of direct exposure to them? It seems that like Ypi, Wright's model of interstitial transformation, and with it the prospects of an account of liberal transformation in poorer states, fails because it begs the question of the source of transformative ideals.

Epistemic liberalism, structural transformation and the bypassing of the state

Such a conclusion, however, would be premature, for more open borders help us to address Miller's concerns and the question of how transformative values and ideals are communicated to those who have no direct experience of them by *internationalising* Wright's conception of interstitial transformation. On this reading, Wright's interstices – where the history of the future may at least in part come to be written – are no longer understood only as the underexploited gaps between civil society and the state *within* poorer societies. Rather, they may also be understood as gaps in the *international* governance architecture that may be exploited by liberalisation of migration policy that makes possible the interstitial *bypassing* of the state from *outside* its borders in the interests of deep structural transformation. Central here is the notion of differences in political culture between states, where these are understood not as unfortunate facts of life but as *resources* that, when exploited by what we may call political entrepreneurs, make possible the transformation of the lived presents of those in wealthier states into prefigurative future of those in poorer states.

How, then, does the epistemic liberal standpoint enable us to work up an account of more open borders facilitating the international remittance of the norms and values required for envisioning and agitating for deep structural transformation in poorer states? Relevant in this connection is epistemic liberalism's origins as an economic theory that explains the consequences of the operation of markets for the coordination of knowledge.⁸ Central to this standpoint is the relationship between economic liberty and the communication of the knowledge of the conditions which we must take into account in order to pursue our individual and collective ends successfully. Thus, when the price of a good or resource rises its consumers are informed of the consequences of a change in conditions of which they would otherwise have no knowledge, but which they need to know about in order to adjust their own actions accordingly. Most importantly for present purposes, for exponents of this view, it is only when

we are left at liberty to buy and sell rights to property that the prices upon which we rely to coordinate our activities arise. Moreover, and as we shall see when we respond to some possible objections to our argument, it is not the claim of epistemic liberals that *only* if we commit to liberty will prosperity follow, or that a specific preferred distribution of resources will come about. Rather, it is to claim that a normative commitment to liberty will make it *more likely* that these outcomes will follow because it is more likely that economic coordination will take place.

Crucially, these epistemic considerations are not just pertinent to questions of the communication of economic knowledge. The underlying logic of the epistemic liberal account of economic coordination also serves as a foundation of an account of how another kind of liberty – liberty of movement – stimulates the remittance of norms, ideals and other intangible goods across international borders. The advantages of liberty in this respect are discussed by Hillel Rapoport (2017, p. 128) in his response to Brock's argument for qualified migration controls as a means of combating brain-drain. He notes that in addition to sending remittances to countries of origin that aid in poverty alleviation, immigrants also participate in the formation of 'diaspora networks that serve as bridges between host and home countries' and whose benefits manifest in several ways.⁹

The first epistemic advantage of diaspora networks is 'information channel-[s]' (Rapoport, 2017, p. 129). Here it is the cultural commonality between migrants and those they leave behind that results in a reduction of transaction costs between countries of origin and host countries. But there are other advantages to diaspora networks that offer the chance to internationalise Wright's conception of interstitial strategies. As Rapoport (2017, pp. 128–129) has made clear, in addition to the setting up of economic networks that facilitate the transmission of new technological and other forms of knowledge, diaspora communities may self-consciously organise to achieve specific political goals via sympathetic intermediaries in countries of origin.¹⁰ Experiences acquired in wealthier states in this sense provide a foundation upon which diaspora communities may come not only to see that corruption and discrimination, for example, do not have to remain unchallengeable aspects of the political order of their countries of origin. Precisely because they find themselves *outside* the structures that are the target of their activism, this experience can be acted upon in a variety of ways to bring about institutional reform and deep structural transformation through the self-conscious *strategic* exertion of political influence that often accompanies their relative wealth. Importantly for our wider case, the remittance of such interstitial strategies is dependent upon the degree to which borders are more rather than less open.

So much, then, for more open borders and interstitial strategies. How may they be serviceable to Wright's interstitial *processes* of norm remittance to poorer states in furtherance of deep structural transformation? In the

economic realm, this invisible-hand knowledge transfer process occurs through what Rapoport (2017, p. 129) calls 'knowledge diffusion channel[s]' where 'migrants transfer knowledge, including technological knowledge ... from the host to the home economy' (2017, p. 128). Indeed, we can say that the flow of technologies across borders occurs in tandem with the flow of goods, particularly when the benefits of reverse engineering and technological repurposing are taken into account. Here when a good is sent across borders the idea that inspired it and a significant chunk of the know-how embedded in the production process that led to its manufacture (most obviously in the materials used and the manner in which they are combined) is also sent without this being the express intention of the sender.

Importantly, the flow of such intangible goods is not limited to technological and production process knowledge. Most notably for present purposes, and again citing numerous empirical studies, Rapoport (2017, p. 129) also includes 'social norms, preferences and values (e.g. preferences for lower fertility or for democracy)' on the list. Thus, in keeping with Wright's account, the transformative process that liberty of movement across international borders facilitates is an invisible-hand one insofar as it is more often than not the case that it is a result of the actions of individuals who intend no such result. Just as they do not have generalised economic benefits for unknown others in mind when sending remittances, immigrants do not think either about transforming the deep structures or the institutions of the states they leave behind, or about remitting norms, values and other intangible goods to activists to make this possible. Like the artisans and merchants of Wright's (2010, p. 324) example, who 'were simply engaged in profit-seeking activities, adapting to the opportunities and possibilities of the society in which they lived,' immigrants typically just want to improve their own (economic) lot and that of those closest to them, with any structurally transformative effects being a cumulative and unintended result of their discrete decisions.

It is clear that in addition to being understood as members of strategically self-organising diaspora communities, the epistemic liberal standpoint makes conceptual room for a reading of immigrants as accidental political entrepreneurs. Here the cross-border interstitial process of transformation is a cumulative result of communication between immigrants and family and friends back home, either through periodic visits or, ever-increasingly, via the internet and social media. Under such circumstances, immigrants do not necessarily self-consciously encourage those left behind to engage in transformative activism (although some may). Rather, those left behind have their expectations of their states transformed both via the communication to them of the lived experiences of their loved ones abroad and by viewing them as examples worthy of emulation.

Significantly, it is the interstitial *process* of norm remittance that feeds into the formulation of self-conscious interstitial *strategies* insofar as the discrete changes in attitudes brought about by contact with expatriates lends itself to the cultivation of interstitial activist communities that subsequently agitate for change. The relationship between interstitial processes and interstitial strategies thus represents an epistemic interface between accidental but nonetheless vital *dissemination* of transformative ideals and their wider self-conscious *adoption*. Central here is the rôle of activist communities in countries of origin that learn of newly remitted norms and values. Upon doing so they may subsequently self-consciously adopt them to realise their own ‘political experiments of living’ – where different forms of governance and relations of authority within them are concretely realised. Thus, in response to the deep structural and institutional concerns of sceptics of more open borders, we can imagine such communities adopting recently disseminated norms of racial justice, gender equality, or of institutional transparency and accountability to re-imagine the organisation of their own activist spaces. Furthermore, it is in virtue of this self-conscious adoption of norms whose origin is in interstitial processes that such activist communities may subsequently hold their own re-imagined structures of authority up as alternative forms of governance and authority for society at large, including for their own states. Most significantly, however, it is only to the extent that borders are more open that the norm remittance required for the internationalisation of interstitial deep structural transformation can take place.

Empirical social science, pattern prediction and the politics of likelihood

Thus far we have established that in invoking the work of Wright liberal defenders of more open borders are able to offer an account of endogenous transformation, via interstitial norm remittance, of the structures and institutions that are at the root of poverty in poorer states. To be sure, one may concede that our argument represents a powerful conceptual possibility, yet still remain unconvinced by it for at least two sets of reasons that relate to the empirical and ethical aspects of the argument. First, what evidence is there to show that norm remittance and deep structural transformation under a more open borders regime is anything more than theoretical conjecture? In contrast to the remittance-based economic variant of this argument, where transaction paper trails are abundant, there is no corresponding evidence for the remittance of norms and political values. Beyond this empirical concern, there is also the question of the ethical standing of the more open borders argument. How, that is, will such a process be *guaranteed* to issue in transformative

outcomes of the appropriate kind? It would be no argument for more open borders if their likely effect were to be neutral or even harmful for the prospects of deep structural transformation or institutional reform, or if they ended up fortifying values that undermined the prospects of liberal democracy. Third, why should one assume, somewhat patronisingly, that transformation can only occur in a unidirectional manner from wealthier to poorer states and, fourth, are we not assuming a culturally imperialistic stance with regard to the kind of values that we may hope and expect to be remitted, no matter how attractive they may be to those of us in wealthier states? Who, after all, gets to decide which norms and values are the appropriate ones?

With respect to the first and second objections, and as work on the microanalysis of diaspora involvement in the politics of countries of origin has shown (Levitt, 1998; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011; Newland, 2004, pp. 14–23), norm remittance by immigrants is more than a mere conceptual possibility in the case of both strategic and invisible hand transformation. More specifically, with regards to the *strategic* communication of liberal democratic norms, Dedieu, Chauvert, Gubert, and Mesplé-Somps (2012) have found that a majority of those expatriate Senegalese in France and the United States who were surveyed actively encouraged relatives back home to register to vote and similar conclusions have been reached in the studies of Shain and Barth (2003) and Hladnik (2009). Similarly, with respect to invisible-hand *processes* both Coyne and Williamson (2012) and Rauch (2001) have provided empirical evidence to support the claim that a more open stance leads to improvements in governance.¹¹ Moreover, and taking the example of the country with the highest rate of emigration from Africa as an example, Batista and Vicente (2011) have shown that households in Cape Verde with a migrant were more likely to take part in lobbying for better governance.¹² With regard to the remittance of norms and democratic reform both Spilimbergo (2009) and Docquier, Lodigiani, Rapoport, and Schiff (2011) have found that emigration to wealthier democratic states encourages democratisation in countries of origin. Moreover, studies have also shown not only empirically verifiable increased election turnouts amongst populations who live near immigrant returnees from developed democracies, but that this is due not to explicit strategic instruction from the latter but rather to a process of *imitation* of them by the former.¹³ Perhaps most significantly, this imitation was undertaken by those often considered hardest to reach by activists; namely returnees' less well-educated neighbours (Chauvet & Mercier, 2014; Mahmoud, Rapoport, Steinmayr, & Trebesch, 2013).

Of course, it could be objected that, even if true, this amounts to very little evidence and that we therefore have little reason to adopt a more open borders stance. If there really were such a connection, surely one would see

evidence for it that is both voluminous and widespread? Yet, this objection rests upon a misunderstanding of the rôle of empirical evidence in our argument. To see why we need to invoke epistemic liberal Friedrich Hayek's (Hayek, 1967a, p. 35, 1967b) distinction between tendencies or 'pattern predictions' – 'which will appear if certain general conditions are satisfied' – and 'predictions of specific phenomena' or outcomes. As this distinction suggests pattern predictions are hypothetical characterisations of what is *likely* to occur given certain conditions but which make no predictive claims about specific cases or, crucially, about whether such conditions do or will hold.¹⁴ In the case of more open borders we cannot claim which specific norms will be remitted, or the extent to which they will be remitted, as this would be dependent upon a host of other factors including the cultural disposition of immigrants, the background norms and values of the society into which they enter and the receptivity to new ideas of those they have left behind but with whom they maintain ties (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011). Rather, the claim is that if individuals are permitted to cross international borders, norm remittance will be the likely outcome. Far, then, from undermining the confidence one may have in our argument for a necessary connection between more open borders and the remittance of norms, *in a world of relatively closed borders from which the evidence for norm remittance is currently taken* a relative paucity of evidence is precisely what our epistemic standpoint would suggest. The important conceptual point, therefore, is not that more open borders will issue in specific kinds of norm remittance, deep structural transformation and institutional reform in the interests of poverty alleviation. It is that we have epistemically grounded reasons to believe that *not* adopting more open borders is likely to *diminish* the prospects of all three.

The notion of pattern prediction is also significant with regard to the second objection. As Levitt (1998, pp. 941–943) and Newland (2004, pp. 19–20) have also pointed out, there is of course no *guarantee* that the norms and values for whose transmission we have claimed more open borders are necessary will be those which will stimulate deep structural transformation and institutional reform, or for that matter be ones with which liberal democrats would necessarily be happy. Unlike the economic case, where the evidence for the connection between more open borders and poverty alleviation is strong, this does not appear to be the case with norm remittance and specifically *liberal democratic* outcomes. Yet, the claim that liberal democratic outcomes are not guaranteed should not be particularly worrisome for our defence of more open borders. Our claim is that it is more *likely* that liberal democratic norms will be transferred to the extent that migrants are permitted to enter liberal democratic societies and, by contrast, less likely to the extent that they are not. (One would, after all, hardly send migrants to a totalitarian state to increase the likelihood of the transfer of liberal democratic norms back home.) Thus, even if liberal

democratic outcomes are not guaranteed, this does not provide compelling grounds for rejecting the stance defended here. Similarly to the question of empirical evidence, we have ample conceptual reason to conclude that the extent to which wealthier states do *not* adopt more open borders will be extent to which the prospects of liberal democratic transformation in the interests of poverty alleviation will be *diminished*, not that having more open borders will *guarantee* it.

For similar reasons I do not wish to claim, with regard to the third and fourth objections, that deep structural transformation can *only* occur through a one-way culturally imperialist process of norm remittance from wealthier, and presumably 'advanced', states to poorer, 'less' advanced, ones. Rather, the norms and values remitted via more open borders are what we may call *candidate* norms and values. These may, or may not, be taken up, either alone or in combination with others, first by immigrants and subsequently by their friends and family back home and activist communities in the light of their own understandings of what is of value. Most significantly, the objection about who gets to decide upon values, norms and transformative ideals betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the epistemic argument. The whole point of that argument, invoking as we have seen Wright's notion of interstitial processes, is that there is an important sense in which, as a bottom-up process, the epistemic liberal account is implicitly anti-imperialistic because *nobody* gets to decide. Rather, to the extent that it can be characterised as such, the 'decision' about appropriate ideals is one that is an emergent result of the actions of countless immigrants.¹⁵ Thus, and again in the spirit of the distinction between the prediction of specific outcomes and general or 'pattern' predictions, the claim is that more open borders are likely to stimulate the remittance of *additional* values that activist communities may subsequently choose to adopt but to which, crucially, they would otherwise not have access without more open borders, not that these are the only values that should be adopted.

Deep structural transformation and less open borders

We claimed at the outset of this enquiry that the more open borders position can be located along a spectrum of permissiveness with regard to movement across international borders that goes as far as an open- or no borders stance. Before concluding, therefore, and to ascertain the desirability of our normative stance, it will be useful to critically contrast it with two rival viewpoints that, in different ways and with different concerns in mind, reject it.

We may agree with Miller when he argues that it would be a mistake to think of poverty alleviation as being only about the needs of the world's poorest being met by the rich. Doing this, he (Miller, 2007, p. 260)

insightfully reminds us, ‘focuses our attention away from the institutional changes that might eventually serve to end or at least radically diminish world poverty’.¹⁶ Yet, the question of which institutional reforms are required presents a significant problem for his view when understood in the light of his critique of *avant-garde* political agency. Importantly, this problem emerges regardless of what kind of state we imagine the state of a poorer country to be with regard to institutional reform, for in both cases Miller’s claim that Ypi’s conception of *avant-garde* agency offers no account of how we may *identify* which principles in virtue of which deep structural and institutional reform may be undertaken also applies to him.

In the first instance, those in positions of power within poorer countries may not for reasons of self-interest be interested in identifying them, so it may be down to activist communities to force their hand. Yet, as was the case with his critique of Ypi, it is unclear from where they would draw the principles and values from. Indeed, their capacity to draw upon such resources from beyond their borders would be diminished to the extent that Miller rejects more rather than less open borders. It is here, moreover, where Miller’s scepticism of more open borders presents another problem, for if it is the case that poorer states do not wish to enact reform it may be the case that wealthier countries would have to step in. Yet, even if they are motivated to do so, wealthier states will also be faced with a similar problem of identification, if at the same time they endorse Miller’s scepticism about immigration and thus makes the remittance of transformative norms less likely. Even, then, if one should concur with Miller’s objection to Ypi, his scepticism about immigration means that his own position is susceptible to it because it begs the question of how one may identify the norms appropriate for deep structural transformation and institutional reform given the specific contexts of poorer countries.

Of course, Miller may reply here that we *can* identify which principles and values are appropriate. We need to look no further than the post-WWII history of the Western liberal democracies in order to see what these norms are and how successful they have been at raising living standards. Moreover, richer states would not have to liberalise immigration policy in order to remit these principles abroad. Rather, they could engage in diplomacy and appeal to moral principle to persuade poorer states to attend to the deep structural causes of poverty within their borders. Of course, it may be the case that appeals to moral principle prove ineffective. Yet even here this does not necessitate more open borders, for wealthier states could appeal to self-interest – that it is in the long-term economic or political interest of a poorer state to change its ways.

Yet, if the government of a poorer state is indifferent to these arguments – perhaps because elites and office holders within it stand to lose too much by adopting a policy of reform – then change will gain no

impetus. Poverty's sources, it seems, are beyond the reach of wealthier states where the indifference of local actors acts as an obstacle to it. Under such circumstances one may resort to more coercive tools of persuasion; economic and other kinds of sanctions being particularly well-known examples. Again, however, those with power in poorer states may still consider sanctions a price well worth paying if it means that the *status quo* is left unchallenged, as was the case for example in Rhodesia. As a last resort, wealthier states could entertain the use of military intervention to effect regime change. Yet, beyond the potentially grave human and material costs of this for wealthier states – as the experience of the Iraq War shows – resorting to direct intervention is likely to be self-defeating insofar as it would result at least over the short to medium term in increased rather than decreased poverty, as well as profound social disruption in the poorer states that are subject to it.

In contrast to Miller, Brock does not have to contend with the challenge that indifferent elites present and, therefore, with the problems attendant to the exogenous imposition of norms. Indeed, as a measure designed to encourage institutional development at home her defence of qualified emigration controls and compulsory service programmes is emblematic of a poorer state that has the best of intentions. This notwithstanding, there are at least two reasons to greet her proposal with scepticism. First, the brain-drain objection upon which her arguments for these measures rest underdetermines the transformative effects that we have seen accompany more open borders. Even if more open borders issue in an outflow of skilled individuals, not only would their monetary remittances offset the *economic* costs of this, their remittance of norms and values in the other direction – what we may call reverse brain-drain – would be an additional offsetting phenomenon. It was for such reasons, for instance, that the Nkrumah government started a scheme of subsidised airfares to encourage Ghanaian youth to visit the UK in the 1960s 'to get an idea of where he wanted to take his country' (Easterly & Nyarko, 2008, p. 2). Thus, rather than undermining institution building, more open borders are likely to facilitate the remittance of the values that encourage it.

Secondly, emigration restrictions are not only unnecessary because liberty of movement can function in this endogenously transformative way. Precisely because they indirectly restrict cross-border norm remittance from wealthier to poorer states, emigration restrictions also ultimately *lessen* the prospects for the kind of effective *strategic* activism that leads to deep structural transformation. This notwithstanding, our final assessment of Brock must itself be qualified because her proposal applies only to those individuals who obtain their skills via *state* funded education and training. Nevertheless, and even if such restrictions are a part of the contractual obligations that individuals enter into when choosing a state-funded education, we have persuasive epistemic reasons to suggest that there may be little reason to endorse them.

The rôle of the state

It is at this juncture where one may advance the claim that the error of proponents of restrictions upon migration on the basis of the deep structure objection is that they reduce deep structural transformation to a political project, rather than as a process that may come about as a result of the exercise of the liberty to cross international boundaries. Yet, to do so would be a mistake for the argument made here should not be construed as part of a wider set of arguments about the desirability of anarchy. Whilst the deep structural transformation that more open borders make possible is an endogenous process that in many fundamental respects bypasses the state, the political decision to secure the rights and liberties that makes it possible is not (Levitt, 1998, p. 944). In this most general sense, therefore, and as our earlier depiction of the normative terrain of migration justice as a spectrum of permissibility of movement suggested, the more open borders stance defended here belongs in the same statist stable as its less permissive cousins, liberal or otherwise.

Moreover, our argument shows that the error of the critics may be more than the misrecognition of liberalism's capacity to deal with questions of deep structure. It may be the case that deep structural transformation is a *predictable* result of the application of liberal principles across a range of issues with which political philosophers may be concerned. Regrettably, whether this liberal account of deep structural transformation can be applied to address profoundly significant questions pertaining to economic inequality and capitalist relations of production, to gender relations and the family as a site of injustice, or to cultural imperialism, discrimination and the socio-economic positioning of members of marginalised groups is a question that must be postponed until another occasion.

Conclusion

In building a response to the deep structure objection to more open borders that draws upon work on *avant-garde* political agency, the theory and practice of political activism and the epistemic approach to liberalism, I have defended more open borders on the grounds of their transformative effects upon the conditions that cause poverty in poorer states. Here new ideas concerning good governance and the benefits of living under it are transferred in a diversity of ways across borders, but only insofar as individuals are permitted to enter countries where such values and institutions are already entrenched.

More specifically, we have seen that the deep structural and institutional changes required to transform the conditions that prompt individuals in poorer states to seek better lives elsewhere cannot be conjured up *ex nihilo* either by poorer states themselves, where they are willing to do so, or by concerned but distant wealthier states. Far from being complicit in the

perpetuation of deep structural injustice or in the diminishment of the prospects for institutional development, therefore, more open borders represent an endogenous, context-sensitive and non-coercive means of effecting deep structural transformation and institutional reform. Whilst there may be at least some good reasons for restricting the movement of people across international borders, deep structural concerns and worries about the effects of brain-drain upon institution building are not among them. For this reason, justice requires more open borders.

Notes

- 1 See especially Brock and Blake (2015), as well as collected responses to their book in *The South African Journal of Philosophy*, (36:1, Brock, 2017) and *Ethics and Global Politics* (9:1, Brock, 2016).
- 2 For a defence of (fully) open borders from a migrant-centred perspective see King (2016). See also Kukathas (2010).
- 3 Space does not permit us to consider the impact of more open borders upon deep structure within migrant *receiving* countries.
- 4 See also Brock (Brock, 2017, p. 157).
- 5 Brock (Brock, 2017, p. 15) also lists some other pitfalls of remittances which space does not permit us to explore here, such as government underinvestment in beneficial services, remittance dependency, non-provision of public goods such as health and education.
- 6 It is also with this epistemic understanding in mind that I have advanced an argument for freedom of movement between states grounded in the intended, and crucially unintended, poverty-alleviating effects of immigrant remittances. On this see Tebble (2019).
- 7 Miller's argument against Ypi recalls objections raised by epistemic liberals to the notion of perfect equilibrium in economic theory where the supply of goods and services meets demand and markets consequently clear. For Hayek (1948) the problem with perfect equilibrium, when applied not as an *explanation* of the operation of markets under *ideal* conditions but as an evaluative standpoint from which to judge their *non-ideal* performance, is its tendency to assume away the question of how agents are able to coordinate their activities to make this happen in the absence of full knowledge of the conditions relevant to doing so. Thus, rather than explain how agents come to know of those conditions beyond their own locality to which they must refer if they are to clear markets – but of which, crucially, they know nothing – perfect equilibrium assumes this question away in positing a state of affairs in which markets have *already* cleared. Similarly, the problem for *avant-garde* political agency is that it assumes knowledge of the transformative values and ideals that ought to be realised in the absence of an *explanation* of how activist communities come to avail themselves of it.
- 8 For an overview see Tebble (2013).
- 9 To be sure Brock (Brock, 2017, p. 157) acknowledges this when noting that 'those who migrate can facilitate new trading or other opportunities for citizens in countries of origin.'

- 10 See also Betts and Jones (2016), Brock (2017, p. 157), Burgess (2012) and Koslowski (2005).
- 11 See also Ivlevs and King (2017) and Tyburski (2012).
- 12 See also Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2010) and Easterly and Nyarko (Easterly & Nyarko, 2008, pp. 25–26).
- 13 Brock (2017, p. 157) also acknowledges the benefits of immigrant returnees, but limits these to money and other benefits such as skills and ideas that are serviceable to economic development and not to the transformation of institutions and structures.
- 14 In debate about the performance of markets where Hayek first made this distinction the claim is that if we permit individuals to buy and sell rights to property, we can be sure that prices for goods, resources and factors of production will emerge. Importantly, however, and owing to the complexities of modern economies, we cannot predict what these prices will be.
- 15 For an argument about the ways in which individuals drive a wider complex adaptive process of cultural change *within* states when they enjoy the liberty to act upon their beliefs and conceptions of the good see Tebble (2016).
- 16 Indeed, providing development assistance may have a *negative* impact (Djankov, Montalvo, & Reynal-Querol, 2008; Young & Sheehan, 2014).

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