Preface

During the last few decades the world has experienced an unprecedented level of cross-border migration. Arguably, we live in an ‘age of migration’ that is characterized by extensive spatial mobility of people, a development that runs parallel to international tourism or journey-from-home-to-work movements. Such developments are caused by an open space economy, by modern ICT developments, by the introduction of cheap and efficient transport systems, and by a combination of competition and global linkages. Migration has to be positioned against the background of the above structural megatrends, but also has its own intrinsic features that make it distinct from other mobility trends. International migration movements nowadays often mean a shift to different countries, economic systems and institutions. They may lead to enrichment in socio-economic and cultural terms for either the sending countries, or the receiving countries, or both. They may also lead to more efficiently operating local and national labour markets and hence increase local and national welfare.

But this sunny picture is often overshadowed by dark clouds, as the value of migration is often disputed, while migrants’ behaviour and impacts in the host countries are often criticized or the source of heated debates. Consequently, there is a clear need for a solid, evidence-based scientific analysis of the pros and cons of cross-border migration in a receiving country at both national and local level.

This present volume seeks to offer a variety of new tools and applications for ‘tracing and tracking’ the socio-economic consequences of international migration. It does so by offering both broad reviews and various empirical studies. All these contributions mirror the scientific importance and policy relevance of so-called ‘migration impact assessment’ (MIA).

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