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Migrations, Brain Drain and Global Justice: what Role for Corporations?

Among corporate social responsibility's concerns, the issues posed by international migrations have never been taken into proper consideration. However, institutions and researchers are now starting focusing their attention on corporations' responsibilities regarding migrant workers' rights. Indeed, as migrants are unanimously considered a “vulnerable group”, they are demonstrably more exposed to risks of exploitation and discrimination. Thus, corporations are to be held accountable for the fulfillment of their negative obligations to respect human rights and to guarantee appropriate labour standards. Yet, while it is crucial to further explore such topics and raise awareness about them, there is at least another aspect regarding the relationship between migrations and corporations that deserves attention: the “brain drain” phenomenon. By “brain drain”, we mean the migration of skilled migrants to developed countries. In the framework of an updated and expanded definition of corporate social responsibility, upholding that corporations increasingly have a political role in concurring to the elaboration of public policies together with governments and other private actors, the brain drain issues would involve corporations' positive obligations. Actually, brain drain is one of the major issues in global justice debates, and it is undisputable that corporations – be they multinational or not – do have a stake in the mobility of human capital worldwide. Nevertheless, it appears that neither research on corporate social responsibility has ever dealt with skilled migration-related issues, nor development studies and migration studies on brain drain have analysed private sector's responsibilities in this field and the potential initiatives it could undertake. What the present contribution will try to put forward is a hypothesis of study, providing an attempt to bridge these two areas of research, with the aim to identify the role that corporations could play to foster development by concentrating on human capital.