

THE AGE OF MIGRATION

International Population
Movements in the Modern
World

Sixth Edition

Hein de Haas
Stephen Castles
and
Mark J. Miller

2 Categories of Migration

Categories are essential tools for understanding migration. They help us to make sense of complex social processes, to see patterns and to compare. However, the uncritical use of categories can also be a source of confusion and distortion. Common misperceptions about migration start with the language and categories that politicians, media and researchers use to describe different types of migration and migrants. A particular problem is the uncritical adoption of legal and policy categories to describe migration. These categories are not always meaningful, and can stand in the way of achieving a better understanding of migration processes. Language matters. After all, categories and terms shape the way we perceive the world around us. For instance, it matters whether the same group of people is described as ‘illegal aliens’, ‘irregular migrants’ or ‘undocumented workers’.

It is important to make a distinction between (1) analytical categories mainly by researchers and some policy makers, (2) administrative categories used by governments and states, and (3) discursive categories mainly used by politicians and media. Often, the distinction is not clear, and this is an important source of confusion. In many ways, states have shaped the way people talk about migration. This is evident in the term migration itself. Migration can be defined as a *change of residency across administrative borders*. Whether these borders are municipalities, provinces, departments, federal or national states, the feature of migration is that people move across such borders to live in another administrative unit. The key issue is that states draw such borders, and that the ways in which states and their judicial institutions define and categorize migration matters a great deal to the daily lives of migrants, the rights they can obtain as well as their participation in the social and economic life of destination societies.

This is why attempts to define what is a migrant from an ‘objective’ or non-state perspective are somehow elusive, as the very concept of migration largely reflects the need of modern administrative systems to define who is resident, who has to pay taxes, who has the right to remain, and, last but not least, who can become a citizen. Because the crossing of (internal and international) administrative borders has real implications for people’s lives, it therefore seems sensible to use this as a basis for defining migration. It matters a lot whether migrants cross international borders or not, or whether migrants have a visa or residence permit or not.

Yet our understanding of migration becomes obstructed if we uncritically view migration solely through political state-defined categories, without evaluating their value in migrants’ daily lives, perceptions and plans. For instance, governments often persist in framing lower-skilled immigrants as guestworker or ‘temporary workers’ even if they have been living and working in destination countries for several decades. Categories of migrants can implicitly convey judgements linked to nationality, race, profession and class, as well as motives, trustworthiness, rights and the overall ‘desirability’ of migrants. For instance, in Europe lower-skilled workers are seen as ‘migrant workers’, but higher-skilled workers often designated as ‘expats’. Although higher-skilled workers are migrants, many observers, and also higher-skilled workers themselves, may resist the migrant label.

In the same vein, it matters whether politicians and media designate people fleeing war-torn countries as ‘refugees’ and ‘asylum seekers’, or, alternatively, as ‘illegal migrants’, potential ‘terrorists’, ‘criminals’ or even ‘rapists’.

Besides categories describing migrants, caution is also warranted with regard to the categories used to describe and analyse migration *processes*. In recent years, there has been a tendency to cast migration from Africa to Europe – in an alleged response to poverty, violence, population growth and climate change – in terms of ‘flows’, ‘waves’ and ‘tides’ (see also Christian Aid 2007). This has fuelled perceptions that this phenomenon is taking on the proportions of an exodus, that have, however, no basis in evidence. Governments and organizations can use categories to reframe migration for political purposes. An example is the rebranding of the hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees and other migrants living in Egypt as ‘transit migrants’ (Roman 2006). Such a process of relabelling is inherently political, because it implies that *de facto* settlers are only there temporarily and that they are somehow expected to leave.

These examples show the extent to which migration categories can become subject to political games. Neither language nor categories are neutral, and therefore deserve to be assessed critically with regard to their usefulness to describe migrants and migration processes. The ways such discursive categories shape our understanding in implicit but extremely powerful ways matters greatly for the ways governments treat migrants, but the appropriate and critical use of categories is also essential to achieve a better, non-ideological understanding of migration processes. To this purpose, the remainder of this chapter will review common categories of migrants and migration, and assess their usefulness for understanding of migration processes. The purpose is not to come to a final ‘choice’ of terminology, but to understand advantages and disadvantages of different categories, and to define key terms as much as possible (Figure 2.1).

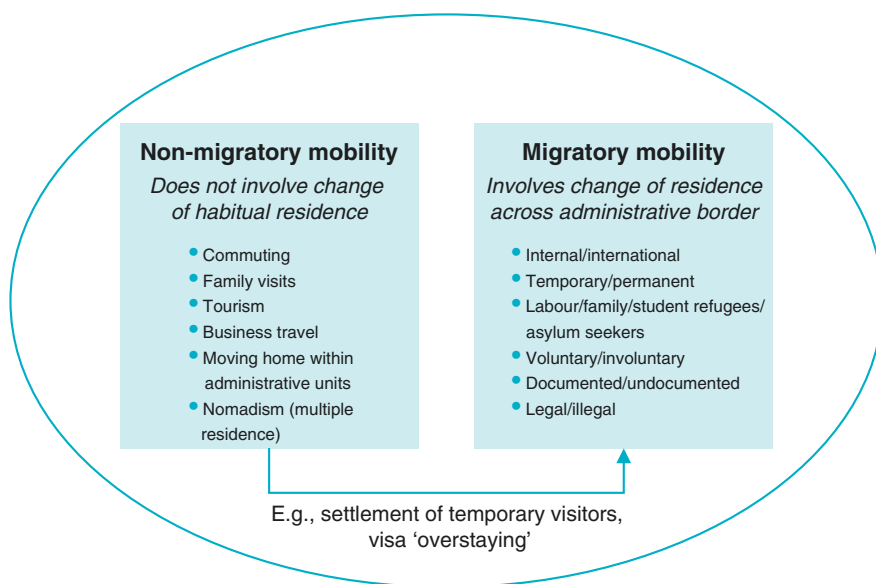


Figure 2.1 Different forms of migratory and non-migratory human mobility

Defining migration and human mobility

Migration has only become a meaningful term since humanity switched from the itinerant and nomadic lifestyles of hunter-gatherers to agrarian lifestyles starting around 12,500–10,000 years ago in various world regions including Mesopotamia, Ethiopia, West Africa, Mesoamerica and New Guinea. The domestication of plants and the ‘invention of agriculture’ allowed people to settle down permanently in a process also known as *sedentarization*. Before this process, people had no fixed residence as hunter-gatherer lifestyles were inherently mobile. It was only when people started to settle down in permanent settlements that the concept of migration became relevant, as migration implies a change in residence.

The invention of agriculture (also known as the ‘Neolithic Revolution’) also allowed the emergence of states, which had a vital interest in controlling resident populations for political, military and economic purposes, particularly to extract benefits from populations through taxation, slavery and other forms of bonded labour and to prevent rebellion. For instance, the Roman Empire saw a strategic interest in censuses to control and tax people. For modern national states with their fixed borders, controlling population and defining migration has become even more important, partly because of the increased social, economic and political rights associated with modern citizenship.

It is important to differentiate between *migratory* and *non-migratory* mobility in the context of sedentary lifestyles and modern statehood (see [Figure 2.1](#)). *Human mobility* refers to all forms of human movement outside of their direct living place and social environment (house, village or neighbourhood), irrespective of the distance and time-period implied, or whether this involves the crossing of administrative borders. Non-migratory and migratory mobility are subsets of human mobility. *Migratory mobility* equals *migration* and involves the change of residence across administrative borders. The movement within the same neighbourhood, town or municipality thus does not qualify as migration from an administrative point of view, although from a sociological point of view we should not ignore that, for the people involved, even the change of a block or street may have great sociological or cultural impact, for instance if it means living amongst a different ethnic, religious or class group. In Northern Ireland, it can mean a change from a Catholic to a Protestant environment, or in the case of Belgium, from a French- to a Flemish-speaking environment.

Non-migratory mobility comprises all forms of mobility that do not qualify as migration. Major categories include commuting, shopping and tourism, family visits (including by migrants) and business-related mobility. The distinction between migratory and non-migratory mobility is essential in understanding how industrialization and globalization have affected human mobility. While global levels of migration (as a proportion of the world population) have not significantly increased over recent decades, non-migratory mobility, most notably commuting, tourism and business travel, have increased rapidly. Improved infrastructure and transport have enlarged the distances over which people can commute on a daily basis. As a form of non-migratory mobility, commuting has thus potentially decreased the need to migrate (see Zelinsky 1971). Also, the outsourcing of industries and services to low-wage countries may increase the need for various kind of business trips but have potentially decreased the demand for low-skilled migrant workers.

In practice, governments, statistical agencies and relevant international organizations such as the United Nations Population Division (which compiles global migration data)

Source: Getty Images/Dan Kitwood



Photo 2.1 A view of the 'Peace Wall' separating the Catholic and Protestant communities in March 2017, Belfast, United Kingdom

use various definitions of migration. The main difference relates to the amount of time a migrant has to spend in the new destination to count as a migrant. Most governments put this limit somewhere between 3 and 12 months. For instance, tourist visas in many countries, including in the European Schengen zone, are valid for a maximum period of three months. If people want to stay longer, they usually have to apply for a visa extension or a residence permit, after which their status changes to migrants. In situations where it is difficult to obtain a visa extension or a residence or work permit, some *de facto* migrants may prefer to prolong their stay as tourists, through a so-called *visa run* of leaving and re-entering their *de facto* country of residence, often on the same day.

In countries using population registers, such as in much of continental Europe, people are often counted as migrants the moment or a few months after they register as such. In countries that mainly rely on censuses to keep track of their populations, such as the UK and the US, the administrative visibility of migrants often takes longer to materialize. However, most governments will consider people migrants if they have stayed for longer than one year.

Despite differences in measurement and time criteria applied, from a conceptual point of view the defining features of migration are the (1) change in residence and the (2) crossing of an administrative border. This border can be an internal border, such as between municipalities, counties, provinces or states, or international, between states. When migrants move within countries, they are called *internal migrants* or, alternatively, the term *domestic migrants* is used. If migration involves the crossing of a border between states, it is usually seen as *international migration*. The UN Population Division defines an

international migrant as ‘any person who changes his or her country of usual residence’, irrespective of the reason for migration or the legal status of migrants. It also makes a distinction between *short-term* or *temporary migration*, covering movements with a duration between 3 and 12 months, and *long-term* or *permanent migration*, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more. However, different governments attribute very different meanings to permanent and temporary migration.

Objectively speaking, a migrant is a person who is living in another country, state, province or municipality than where she or he was born. This includes students, ‘expats’ and other higher-skilled workers. Therefore, terms like second or third generation ‘migrants’ to officially designate the descendants of migrants, which is fairly common in Western Europe for instance, sound like a contradiction in terms. After all, these groups are natives, and often citizens, of destination countries. The uncritical use of such terms can be part of *othering* discourses that marks these groups as not fully part of destination societies based on race, appearance, religion or other aspects of ethnicity.

As [Chapter 4](#) will argue, such ‘other-definition’ of migrant-origin groups by dominant groups of destination countries can encourage the formation of ethnic minorities, to the point that also these minorities also continue to define themselves as ‘migrants’. The continued designation of migrants’ offspring as ‘migrants’ or otherwise distinct ethnic groups is not necessarily always negative. One can also argue that a lack of designation, identification and measurement of ethnic minority groups implies a refusal by governments to recognize their existence and identity, their experiences of discrimination, racism and exclusion, and their rights to emancipation. This has for instance been an issue in France, where dominant republican ideologies (see [Chapter 4](#)) preclude the collection of statistics for migrant groups once they have attained French citizenship.

In classical immigration countries such as the US, the usage of second generation migrants can be seen as a personal affront by descendants of migrants. At the same time, immigrants, their descendants and ethnic minorities in the US can take a lot of pride in ‘hyphenated identities’ (such as ‘Mexican-American’, ‘Filipino-American’ or ‘African-American’), whilst this is rarely seen as conflicting with citizenship and their self-identification as fully belonging to the American nation. In other countries, descendants of migrants may proudly call themselves ‘migrants’ as a form of conscious self-identification with emancipation struggles. These examples exemplify the large extent to which migration terminology is seldom neutral, but intertwined with ideology, politics and struggles for recognition.

Internal and international migration

The distinction between internal and international migration seems clear, but can be blurred in practice. For instance, migration within large and ethnically diverse countries such as Brazil, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India or China can involve a much more radical change in terms of language, culture and lifestyle than migration between, say, the UK and the US, Morocco and Algeria, Azerbaijan and Iran, or Ukraine and Russia. Also, international migration is not necessarily more difficult than internal migration in terms of needing permits and visa. International migration is nominally free between states of regional blocs such as the European Union (EU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Australia and New Zealand. Several states including India, China, Nigeria and the former Soviet Union have subjected internal migration to controls or permit systems (Torpey 2007).

This does not mean that the distinction between internal and international migration is not useful. On average, the crossing of an international border involves higher costs and a bigger change in culture and social environments, as well as higher psychosocial strains put upon migrants in terms of suffering from separation from their loved ones and the difficulty of adapting to a new climate, diet, customs, bureaucratic systems, language and culture and the feeling of being uprooted this often involves. However, it is important to be aware that the distinction between the two can be blurred in both legal and social terms.

Concrete experiences of internal and international migrants are not necessarily different and some forms of migration do not fit easily in either category. It is for instance a tricky question whether to consider intra-EU migrants as internal or international. In fact, they seem to constitute an in-between category. The arbitrariness of the distinction between internal and international migration is also shown by the migrants' transfer of status when borders are created or shifted. For instance, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Ukrainians in Russia and Russians in Ukraine became international migrants overnight without moving at all.

That is why increases in the total number of international migrants may not reflect increasing human mobility, but rather a redefinition of people's legal status from internal to international migrants. The number of independent countries has increased from about 74 in 1946 to 195 in 2018, mainly as a result of decolonization and the concomitant disintegration of European empires including the Soviet Union, as well as the further splitting up of countries such as Yugoslavia and Sudan. The increase in global migrant numbers may therefore seem partially artificial. On the other hand, such redefinition of status and the associated loss of citizenship can have very real consequences in terms of rights and experiences of people, such as the discrimination Russians living in former Soviet republics have experienced in periods of post-Soviet nationalistic fervour (see [Chapter 6](#)). Such 'othering' can equally target non-migrant ethnic and religious minorities who do not fit in the new nationalistic mould.

Another reason why it is often so difficult to make a sharp distinction between internal and international migration is that both are manifestations of the same more general processes of social transformation and economic development. For instance, industrialization and economic growth typically go hand in hand with rural-to-urban migration. While most rural-to-urban migration is usually contained within the borders of one country, a smaller or substantial part may spill over international borders, particularly if countries are small in population and size, and bigger cities are located in other countries. This partly explains why large, populous countries such as China, India, Nigeria, Brazil and the United States have relatively low rates of emigration expressed in proportions of their populations. Ambitious people living in smaller countries like Moldova and Lesotho or in island states like Cape Verde, Samoa and Tonga are more likely to have to leave their country to achieve their life goals.

Moreover, internal and international migration are often functionally related. For instance, international migration can be preceded by internal, rural-to-urban migration, as in towns and cities where people may save money, obtain the knowledge and get the aspirations allowing them to move abroad. International migration can also lead to internal migration. For instance, in Morocco, international migrants invested *remittances* in small enterprises located in towns and cities rather than in their village of origin, which can lead to resettlement of their families in urban areas (Berriane 1997; see also King and Skeldon 2010). International migration can also trigger *replacement migration*, with the

jobs left by emigrants in cities being filled up by internal rural-to-urban migrants, or by migrants from poorer countries.

Given these conceptual and functional links, it is unfortunate that research and debates on international and internal migration have evolved largely in isolation of each other. There is much to be gained from connecting, comparing and integrating research on migration within and across borders. For instance, research comparing internal migration in large countries such as Brazil, China, India and the US could generate key insights into how migration evolves in the absence of border restrictions. Rigid categorizations based on legal definitions can stand in the way of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and drivers of migration processes which transcends such conceptual borders.

Temporary and permanent migration

Governments often make a distinction between temporary and permanent migration. This can be part of political discourses that try to assuage public worries about high immigration. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s politicians in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium often stressed that Mediterranean *guestworkers* were temporary workers who would return after a few years. Largely in the same vein, leaders of Gulf states also stress that immigration is only temporary, even though migration is often gaining a more long-term character than they officially proclaim. Also governments of traditional immigration countries such as Australia and the US have expanded their temporary immigration programmes, even though a substantial proportion of migrants end up staying through the various pathways to permanency offered to migrants who are able to find a job.

Processes of labelling particular forms of migration as ‘temporary’ and ‘permanent’ are partly political and ideological in nature. First of all, different states and their judicial systems attach different meanings to these labels. In countries that ran immigration programmes based on permanent inflows of entire families – such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand in the post-Second World War decades – most migrations that do not fit into that definition are seen as temporary. In most European countries, temporary migration is generally associated with workers coming on temporary contracts generally lasting a few months to a few years. In fact, most countries in the world lack permanent immigration programmes, with the notable exception of policies that states grant permanent residency or instant citizenship to ‘co-ethnics’ upon their arrival as part of nation-building policies – such as Jews in Israel, *Aussiedler* (ethnic Germans living in the former Soviet Union) in Germany, and ethnic Turks in Turkey.

The distinction between temporary and more permanent forms of migration primarily reflects the preoccupation of states with protecting their sovereignty in selectively granting rights to particular groups of ‘deserving’ migrants, particularly as regards the right to work, social services and citizenship. While this desire is innate to nation states and modern democracies, efforts to ‘predestine’ migrants are often at odds with the more complex and fluid realities on the ground, in which migrants whose stay was thought to be temporary end up staying permanently, and migrants who came to stay permanently return after a few years. Because circumstances change, migrants’ plans change as well. This highlights the need to conceptualize migration as a *process* rather than a one-off move between place or country A and B, in which people may move back and forth between A and B, or make a secondary move to place C.

It is therefore difficult to know whether and at which point a migration is temporary or permanent, as there can be a wide gap between intentions of governments as well as migrants and eventual outcomes. However, the political and ideological framing of migrants as 'temporary' or 'refugees' can have very real consequences. For instance, refugees are frequently seen as temporary migrants, as guests, who are supposed to return once conflict has ended, even if such refugee populations have lived in their adopted homelands for decades, new generations have grown up and their return has become very unlikely. However, in other cases refugees are welcome as heroes, particularly if they fled hostile regimes, and their right to stay is generally not questioned, such as the Vietnamese 'boat people' who were seen as fleeing communism and were granted asylum in the West, or Cubans fleeing to the US under the Castro regime. This again exemplifies that terminology is often not neutral and subject to political framing.

Origin and destination

'Host' and 'home' countries

Another set of migration categories are pairs that pertain to the countries, regions or places migrants come from and go to, most notably 'home–host', 'sending–receiving' and 'origin–destination'. An uncritical use of these terms frequently creates biases in the analysis of migration processes. First, the common 'home–host' terminology can reflect guestworker visions according to which migrants are 'guests', who are welcomed (or tolerated), but are also expected to leave, and, thus, cannot claim rights. On the one hand, 'host' has a positive connotation of hospitality and the duty to treat guests well. On the other hand, if migrants stay longer, the position of 'guest' can become a problem if it implies long-term denial of rights linked to the idea that migrants should go 'home'.

The 'home'–'host' dichotomy becomes particularly problematic if it reveals ideas or ideologies in which the notion of 'home' is unequivocal and unchangeable. Such worldviews are problematic because of their essentialist nature. *Essentialism* is the idea that every social unit has a number of fixed characteristics that are inextricably linked to its identity. This is problematic for understanding a social *process* like migration because in reality people's characteristics such as knowledge, ideas, skills as well as identities, perceptions and aspirations typically change over time. Numerous studies have shown that migrants' (and non-migrants' alike) identities and concomitant feelings of belonging and home are socially constructed, and tend to change over life courses (De Bree *et al.* 2010; Ghorashi 2005). Moreover, migrants often foster multiple, transnational belongings that defy the idea of a singular belonging to one nation or state.

This challenges essentialist ideas that there are natural links between people, culture and territory (de Bree 2007; Pedersen 2003). In other words, what initially was experienced as the host country, often becomes the new home country over time, and many migrants can feel at home in different places at the same time. The home–host terminology can therefore come down to a top-down imposition of identities on migrants without investigating their own changing intentions, experiences and feelings. Under certain circumstances, such framing can become part of discriminatory practices and racist discourses which frame migrants and their descendants as people whose 'home' is somewhere else and can therefore be deprived of human rights or deported.

'Sending' and 'receiving' countries

Although seemingly less moralistic and essentialist than the home-host dichotomy, the 'sending-receiving' dichotomy can be problematic because of the assumed passivity of migrants. The suggestion that migrants are 'sent' by their governments conveys the implicit denial of people's *agency*. Human agency can be defined as people's capacity to make their own choices and to impose these choices on the world. Although human agency is always limited by structural constraints, such as access to resources, time and policy constraints, the vast majority of migrants and their families exercise some level of agency in making migration decisions and organizing and paying for their journeys. For instance, efforts to recruit migrant labour would fail if people were not willing to sign up. Even in the case of refugee migration, people need some level of agency in terms of access to resources in order to be able to migrate.

The common use of 'sending-receiving' and also 'home-host' terminology reveal a perception of the world in which states can and should organize and decide on who can leave and come. It also reflects the moral ideal or 'orderly' migration advocated by governments and organizations like the IOM. However, this bias generally ignores the perspective and experiences of migrants themselves. On the other hand, the notion of 'sending' and 'receiving' states cannot be altogether dismissed if we consider the important role governments have often played in shaping migration patterns. There are many historical antecedents to this, such as the way in which governments of European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and the Netherlands often took a very active role in planned emigration policies until the 1960s. This involved the establishment of special offices that played an active role in selecting and assisting prospective migrants to the Americas, Australia and New Zealand. The Gulf states and Israel have also played a central role in the planning and regulation of migration. In recent decades, governments of countries like the Philippines, Ethiopia and Mexico have often played an active role in selecting and preparing emigrants as part of national development strategies. Such organized migration often happened in the context of recruitment agreements that 'sending' states have signed with 'receiving' countries.

However, in these cases people's agency plays an important role too. Also in the case of official recruitment and assisted emigration, people often try to circumvent bureaucratic rules and controls through migrating spontaneously, generally through chain migration in which previously migrated friends and family played an important role in helping with acquiring documents, buying travel tickets, identifying, paying smugglers, and finding work and housing upon arrival. Employers often see such spontaneous migration and recruitment through networks of family and friends as an efficient and flexible way to quickly react to fluctuations in labour demand. Governments therefore often either support or turn a blind eye to such practices. The terminology of 'sending' and 'receiving' countries therefore reflects a state bias that can conceal how migration is a partly autonomous social process through the agency that migrants deploy.

The other potential problem of this terminology is that it can reinforce dichotomous world views according to which the world is divided into 'receiving' (generally imagined to be situated in the 'global North') and 'sending' states (generally imagined to be situated in the 'global South'). Such views are simplistic because much migration occurs within world regions, between and among lower- and middle-income countries. Many countries have significant levels of emigration and immigration, a reality which does not fit within

simple binary schemes. While from the perspective of migrants, certain countries can indeed be considered as ‘host’ or ‘home’ or ‘sending’ or ‘receiving’, it is more problematic to adopt a worldview that crunches entire countries into a neat (post-colonial) world order between ‘sending South’ and a ‘receiving North’ (see Bakewell 2009).

‘Origin’ and ‘destination’ countries

At first sight, the ‘origin-destination’ country dichotomy seems less problematic. The other advantage is that we can also apply it to places, areas and regions, and not only countries. There is thus a less strong state bias in this terminology. However, the term ‘origin’ can also have essentialist overtones, because of the implicit assumption that each person has a single, unchangeable ‘origin’. Although most migrants will probably see their country in which they were born and grew up as their ‘origin’ (or ‘home’) country, other migrants and minorities will base their constructed ‘origin’ and ‘home’ countries in much more ancestral terms, such as this is the case amongst many Jewish, Armenian and Lebanese (see Cohen 1997; Leichtman 2005). Although ‘destination’ sounds more straightforward as a category, field studies have clearly shown that destinations often change *en route*. For instance, some migrants from sub-Saharan countries who initially saw Morocco as a ‘transit country’ choose to settle in Morocco as second-best option after they failed or did not venture to cross the Mediterranean (de Haas 2008).

This exemplifies that all terms come with their problems and biases. This does not mean that we should not use these terms – on the contrary, we need categories to make sense of the social world around us and create some order in our thinking. Rather, it shows the importance to always remain critical with regards to the applicability and appropriateness of terminology.

Migration motives: Labour, family, study, business

Another set of migration categories relate to the motive for migrating. This is usually matched by a legal entry channel as part of migration regimes. The most common of these are *labour*, *family*, *student* and *business* or *investor migrants*. Importantly, while such categories are useful to know people’s *prime* motive for migrating, they are often less useful to analyse the main cause of migration, which we need to find in more structural processes of development and change. For instance, knowing that many Indonesians move to Malaysia, or Mexicans to the US, to work does not tell us anything about the socio-economic processes that created a demand for migrant labour or the circumstances that led to people leaving. A second complication is that migrants often have multiple motives for migrating, and that these may also change over time. For instance, many family migrants end up working, and an increasing number of governments try to retain student migrants by giving them special job seeker visas.

Labour migration, which is also known as economic migration, is the most important prime cause of migration. For labour migration, a frequent distinction is made between low- and high-skilled migrants. Such dichotomous distinctions can be deceiving, as in reality migrants can be found across all skill levels. Second, the term ‘low-skilled’ seems to devalue all sorts of manual and service labour that still requires considerable skills and physical abilities, and that often come with major responsibilities, for instance in care

work for children, the sick and the elderly. Third, the jobs that migrants take often do not match their education and skills because of difficulties to get diplomas and skills recognized, language problems and discrimination. This phenomenon, which is also known as *brain waste* (although this term is problematic in its own terms because of its utilitarian overtones) can cause migrants to work under their educational levels.

Family migration is often a direct consequence of the decision of labour migrants to settle, which can set in motion further *chain migration* with social networks reducing the costs and risks of migration. In some cases, there is a gap between the legal entry channel and the main migration motive. This often happens when there is a demand for migrant labour but no sufficient legal migration channels to match such demand. People may then start to use other legal channels for migration, such as the family or asylum channels, even though their prime migration motive may be work. Such mismatch between labour market dynamics and legal migration channels may also encourage irregular migration. Family migration is often a popular legal entry category, as it is difficult for governments, particularly of democratic states, to deny migrants the right to live with family members for humanitarian and legal reasons. A further distinction can be made between primary and secondary family reunion. In the case of *primary family reunion*, a migrant is joined by spouses and children living in origin countries. In the case of *secondary family reunion*, migration follows new unions between migrants' offspring and spouses in origin countries.

Forced migration: Refugees and asylum seekers

A special legal migration category applies to people fleeing violence and oppression. According to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a *refugee* is a person who,

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

The term refugee is distinct from, but often confused with, asylum seeker. An *asylum seeker* is a person who has applied for refugee status and is still awaiting a decision on her or his recognition as a refugee. Such refugee status determination processes are usually carried out by destination country governments, although in other cases – particularly where state institutions are weak – these procedures are carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA). The UNHCR was established in 1950 in the aftermath of the Second World War to help millions of European refugees and displaced people to find a new home. Since then, its mission has expanded to operations around the world. Most countries in the world have signed the UN refugee convention and often enshrined important elements of it in national law (see [Chapter 10](#)).

According to the UN Refugee Convention, it is a fundamental right of people to cross international borders to seek protection from violence and persecution. People thus have the right to leave their country and cross borders in search of protection.

Terms like ‘illegal asylum seekers’, which are sometimes used in political and media discourses – can therefore not be applied to asylum seekers. An essential part of international refugee law is therefore the principle of *non-refoulement*, which protects asylum seekers from return to countries where they may fear persecution. Return is only possible if refugee status determination procedures have established that an asylum request is not founded.

The UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and its 1979 Handbook provide a universal refugee definition and incorporate the basic rights and obligations of refugees. They also lay down principles for, but do not regulate the actual determination of refugee status. This is why procedures and recognition rates vary hugely across countries. The majority of refugees in the world have not been recognized on an individual level, but on a so-called *prima facie* basis, in which groups of people receive refugee status on the basis of apparent, objective circumstances in the origin country. A *prima facie* approach is common in the large-scale arrival of refugee groups where individual status determination is impractical or impossible.

The legal basis on which refugees gain access to residency status is a humanitarian one and is enshrined into international humanitarian law. This is a very different legal basis compared to other migrant categories, the regulation of which is the sole prerogative of sovereign states or regional unions such as the EU. Several activists and scholars therefore oppose the application of the term migrant to refugees. They do so to emphasize the different legal basis of refugee protection and to avoid confusion between these categories, out of fear that such conflation of terms would undermine the case for refugee protection, particularly through the inaccurate portrayal of refugees as ‘illegal migrants’ in media and politics.

This book will consider refugees as a particular category of migrants, with a particular sets of rights. Besides the fact that refugees are objectively migrants, another reason for doing so is that, over time, many refugees end up working, setting up businesses, reuniting their families at the destinations and starting to form communities just as other migrants do. Refugee migration is thus a manifestation of human mobility that is related to, but distinct from, other forms of migration. Acknowledgement of this reality does not necessarily undermine refugees’ right to protection. However, this highlights again that migration terminology is often subject to political games and power struggles, and the care that is required in the conscious choice of particular categories.

In more recent decades, a special category of *internally displaced persons* (IDPs) has gained increasing recognition as a group of ‘internal refugees’ in need of protection. According to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, IDPs are

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

This definition does not give any special rights to IDPs because, in principle, they have the same rights and guarantees as other citizens of their country. Contrary to the UN Refugee Convention, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are not legally binding,

although they have received increased recognition, particularly within the African Union through the 2009 Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

Refugee migration is often cast as *forced migration* while other forms of migration are generally seen as ‘voluntary’. However, virtually all migrants face some level of constraints limiting their agency, such as access to money and border restrictions. At the same time, refugees fleeing persecution and violence still need some agency in the form of access to resources *in order to be able to flee*. That is why the most vulnerable populations are often unable to leave if economic crises, droughts, or famine occur, while others may become immobilized by conflict (Lubkemann 2008).

Migration is thus forced when staying is not an option. As such, the forced character of their migration does not therefore preclude that refugees have agency. Refugees exercise their agency as far as possible in the face of appalling circumstances, for instance in making decisions about where to go. The fact that refugees deploy considerable resources in order to be able to flee, and that international migrants are therefore generally not among the poorest, contrasts with political and moralistic discourses that unilaterally portray refugees as victims. Refugees are forced migrants because they have no choice to stay at their homes. The distinction between forced and voluntary migration is primarily driven by the (legitimate) interest of states in classifying migrants and to make decisions about who deserves refugee protection. The label ‘forced migrant’ therefore also applies to people who are forced to leave their homes because of development projects such as roads, dams and factories (see below).

Illegal, unauthorized, irregular, undocumented

Another range of categories reflects attempts to characterize the legal status of individual migrants and, at the more conceptual level, forms of migration. The most familiar one is the distinction between legal and illegal migration. The distinction between *illegal entry* and *illegal stay* is essential. Although public debates tend to be focused on illegal entry, the biggest source of illegal stay is migrants who entered legally but who have *overstayed* the duration of their visa or residence permit. This is the main reason why building walls and fences alone will not stop situations of illegality.

This category of illegality, which reflects governmental views, had been criticized on legal and social-scientific grounds. According to classical jurisprudence, a person cannot be illegal (see Kubal 2013). Acts can be illegal. People cannot. The related moral argument is that ‘nobody is illegal’, that it is unacceptable to characterize human beings as ‘illegal’. Humanitarian organizations defending the rights of migrants therefore typically reject this label (Collyer and de Haas 2012; Jordan and Düvell 2002; Van Liempt 2007). The category of ‘illegality’ can become dangerously broad, and is often stretched to those who intend to make an asylum claim, but have not yet done so (see also Kubal 2013).

There are also social-scientific reasons for criticizing the use of the ‘illegal’ category to describe migrants. First, what governments see as ‘illegal’ is not necessarily a socially ‘illicit’ form of behaviour, and may be tolerated or even encouraged in migrants’ origin communities (Van Liempt 2007). Another critique is that the legal/illegal distinction is not as clear-cut as it seems. Irregular entry or overstaying visas are often put under the same umbrella as much more ambiguous situations. For instance, in many countries,

immigrants without residency rights can access legal employment, can obtain documents such as drivers' licences, and pay taxes, with governments often turning a blind eye towards their legal or semi-legal employment. In some countries, governments even acknowledge this ambiguity by registering undocumented migrants, such with the *padrón municipal* (municipal register) in Spain or 'pink cards' in Thailand (Mendoza 2018). Migrants often occupy various in-between statuses between full legality and full illegality. They therefore often find themselves in legal limbo zones (Kubal 2013; Ruhs and Anderson 2010). In addition, their status often shifts over time, with migrants moving in and out of situations of illegality.

However, the counter-argument is that the legal status of migrants does matter to their lives and decisions, and the term should therefore not be avoided but rather used more carefully (Black 2003; Collyer and de Haas 2012). In general, the term seems more problematic in reference to individual people. Referring to individual *people* as 'illegal' seems neither accurate, nor desirable, nor analytically useful. However, the term *illegal migration* can therefore still be used to refer to a migratory phenomenon at the more general level. As a phenomenon, illegal migration from Mexico to the US does exist as long as people cross borders without permission. However, it seems less appropriate to impose the label onto individual people as a fixed category.

To overcome problems with the term 'illegal', researchers and journalists have used alternative terms, such as 'irregular', 'undocumented' and 'unauthorized' migration. These terms are useful, but can have their own problems. With regards to *irregular migration*, one could argue that in several cases, such as migration from Mexico to the US, or from Zimbabwe to South Africa, irregular migration has become the norm rather than the exception. On the other hand, if we interpret 'irregular' as migration taking place outside the regulatory norms of states, it can still be an appropriate term, although it should thus not be applied to asylum seekers.

The categories of *unauthorized migration* and *undocumented migrant* (derived from the French *sans papiers*, which means 'without papers') seem more objective and, importantly, value-neutral terms. On the other hand, these terms also cannot entirely avoid some of the problems as encountered with 'illegal migration'. 'Unauthorized' reveals a state bias, and can be more easily applied to the phenomenon of migration in general than for individual migrant (as a human being, a person cannot be unauthorized, but their movement or stay can), for which reason the term *undocumented* seems to be preferable. On the other hand, migrants without a document permitting their entry or stay often do possess a range of documents such as drivers' licences, registration documents, insurance documents and tax files. In many countries, migrants can work legally and pay taxes even though their stay is unauthorized. This exemplifies that there are no 'perfect' categories, and that each category comes with its own advantages and disadvantages. The most important lesson is to be always critical and careful in the use of categories.

Smuggling and trafficking

In political and media representations, irregular migration is often associated with smuggling and trafficking. However, it is important to be careful, as asylum seekers who use smugglers to cross borders cannot be classified as illegal migrants: according to international and national law they have the legal right to seek protection, and in this sense their

migration is 'regular'. The terms of smuggling and trafficking are often confounded, but need to be clearly distinguished as they mean quite different things. *Smuggling* refers to the use of paid or unpaid *migration intermediaries* to cross borders without authorization. According to the UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, migrant smuggling is defined as

the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or permanent resident.

However, this definition is too narrow, as smuggling can also happen voluntarily out of humanitarian motives. One example are the resistance movements smuggling Jews out of Nazi occupied territory during the Second World War. Research has shown that smugglers can also be friends, family or former migrants, who usually, but not always, receive payment for their migration assistance (Van Liempt 2007). Smuggling is essentially a form of service provision, which flourishes when borders are tightly controlled but causes of migration, such as labour demand in destination countries and conflict in origin countries, persist. Clients of smugglers include not only economic migrants, but also refugees unable to make an asylum claim because restrictive border rules prevent them from entering countries of potential asylum (Gibney 2000).

If dependence on smugglers and other migration facilitators becomes very high, this can evolve in exploitative forms of migration which are also known as trafficking. The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines *human trafficking* as

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Human trafficking involves a strong element of exploitation, which sets it apart from smuggling. Smuggling is consensual and resembles a business transaction, or can be a voluntary service, and involves the movement across borders. As the definition shows, human trafficking is not necessarily related to migration. Smuggling is frequently mislabelled as trafficking, giving the misleading impression of migrants being forced on journeys, while in fact they engage into a business transaction.

It is safe to say that vast majority of illegal border crossings involve smuggling, not trafficking. It is sometimes difficult to make a sharp distinction between smuggling and trafficking, as elements of exploitation and abuse may emerge during transit or at destination, even if migrants' original decisions to move were voluntary. But even in many trafficking situations, there is often some degree of consent and knowledge on the part of the migrants. Initial consent does not invalidate a trafficking claim, as smuggling can lead to trafficking over time.

The risks and exploitation experienced by migrants who hire smugglers to cross borders does not mean they are trafficked. Border enforcement has resulted in an increasing death toll as smugglers use longer and more dangerous routes. However, research has shown that migrants are willing to take significant risks to reach their destination (Mbaye 2014). By disrupting the *modus operandi* and traditional routes of smugglers, increased border enforcement has contributed to rising fees and increased the risks of crossing borders. Underscoring the blurred line between smuggling and trafficking, insolvent migrants have, upon arrival, been forced into a condition of debt bondage until they reimburse the smuggler. Although they left as voluntarily migrants using smugglers, people can *become* trafficking victims along the journey or during their stay.

Anderson and Andrijasevic (2008) argued that the lack of definitional clarity and the constant slippage and confusion between terms like ‘trafficking’, ‘illegal immigration’ and ‘forced prostitution’ divert attention from the role of the state in tolerating and contributing to poor work and vulnerable workers, and that the language of trafficking and the portrayal of people involved as victims of criminals is part of attempts to depoliticize migration and struggles over rights and citizenship. The existence of trafficking and other forms of exploitation does not preclude the fact that victims of trafficking have agency and see long-term benefits of staying in exploitative patronage relations – this can for instance explain why Nigerian sex workers in Italy who are ‘liberated’ by authorities and deported back to Nigeria, often return in order to finish their contracts (see Carling 2006).

The difficult – and inconvenient – reality is that many migrants voluntarily engage in exploitative relations with employers, smugglers and other ‘intermediaries’ because they usually see a long-term benefit in such a relation. For instance, over the past centuries, many Europeans and Asians would only agree to become indentured workers based on the knowledge that they would be free once they had served their contracts or paid off their migration debts (see Chapter 5). The existence of a certain level of consent amongst bonded labourers does not justify exploitation, nor does exploitation preclude a certain level of consent and agency. As with other categories, it does not mean that we cannot use such terms, but that they should always be carefully defined and that we should be suspicious of ideological and simplistic uses of such terms.

Climate refugees: The construction of a migration threat

As the cases of ‘illegal migration’ and ‘trafficking’ illustrate, the deliberate or uncritical use of particular categories by politicians and media can have a distorting effect on perceptions of migration phenomena. Often such categories are embedded in discourses that give misleading representation of the magnitude, nature and causes of migration processes. This is illustrated by recent discourses that portray climate change as a major cause of massive ‘South–North’ movement of climate refugees. While these discourses sound intuitive, and have gained the status of ‘truth’ in many circles, they are in fact highly deceiving (Foresight 2011; Gemenne 2011, see Box 2.1).

Concerns about climate change-induced migration have emerged in the context of debates on global warming and the inability of states to take effective action to mitigate it through. Global warming is the most pressing issue facing humanity, and the lack of willingness of states and the international community to address it effectively – particularly through reducing of carbon emissions – is a valid source of major public concern and protest.

Box 2.1 Climate change and migration

Research evidence challenges the popular idea that climate change will lead to mass migration. A major study involving scientists from around the world (Black *et al.* 2011; Foresight 2011) showed that most estimates of huge numbers of environmental/climate change migrants are methodologically flawed (see particularly Gemenne 2011). Migration is a multi-causal phenomenon, which precludes the drawing of direct links with (climate- and non climate-related) environmental change (Foresight 2011).

First, migration is likely to continue regardless of the environment, because it is driven by powerful economic, political and social processes (see Box 3.1). This makes it difficult to directly attribute internal migration to environmental factors. For instance, this challenges the popular idea that much migration within Bangladesh is an 'obvious example' of mass displacement due to the sea-level rise (Findlay and Geddes 2011). In fact, many people migrate into areas of greater environmental vulnerability, such as fertile deltas and cities built on floodplains, because of improved livelihood opportunities they can expect to find there.

Second, environmental degradation or natural disasters need to go hand in hand with political instability, poverty, violent conflict and corruption to create conditions for large-scale displacement (Black 2001). For instance, if people get displaced or die as a result of natural disaster, this is not just the direct consequence of the disaster, but also reflects the inability of governments to help people to cope with such stresses, such as by building flood defences, timely evacuation efforts and building regulations.

Third, the most vulnerable are often deprived of the *capabilities* to move at all. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, many of the car-less poor got trapped in the city, and African Americans were therefore overrepresented amongst those who died (Gemenne 2010). In the same vein, when people are impoverished by such factors as drought, they often lack the resources to move, trapping them in situations of extreme vulnerability. In fact, migration is often an effective adaptation to increase resilience by diversifying and increasing family income (Foresight 2011; Gemenne and Blocher 2017).

Detailed studies from Africa failed to find a simple causal link between environmental stress and migration (Jónsson 2010). In Malawi, droughts decreased rural out-migration (Lewin *et al.* 2012). In Burkina Faso, droughts increased short-distance migration between villages, but reduced international moves to Côte d'Ivoire (Henry *et al.* 2004). Also, an analysis of global data from 1960 to 2000 found no direct effect of climatic factors on international migration (Beine and Parsons 2015).

Yet the absence of the displaced millions by climate change migration fearmongers is no reason for complacency. The forecasted acceleration of climate change is likely to have severe effects on production, livelihoods and human security. Populations likely to be affected most are in mega-cities built only a few metres above sea-level (Hugo 2013). Climate change will create serious challenges for humanity. However, using the spectre of mass migration to make the case for urgent action on reducing CO₂ emissions is a clear example of 'being right for the wrong reason', with potentially harmful credibility implications for organizations using these argument. More importantly, though, it overlooks the fact that the implications of environmental adversity are likely to be most severe for the most vulnerable populations lacking the means to move.

Source: Getty Images/Handout



Photo 2.2 When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in August 2005, the most severely affected populations were the poorest who lacked cars and other resources that would enable them to move out

However, to link this issue with the spectre of mass migration is a dangerous exercise based on myth rather than fact. Environmentalists have claimed that the effects of global warming, especially on sea-levels and rainfall patterns, will lead to massive population displacements. In a publication entitled ‘Environmental Exodus’, the influential biodiversity specialist Norman Myers drew a direct, simplistic link between environmental change and large-scale migration, arguing that there would already be 25 million ‘environmental refugees’ which would further increase to 200 million by 2050 (Myers and Kent 1995).

The typical approach of environmentalists has been to map climate-change-induced developments (such as sea-level rise, drought or desertification) onto settlement patterns to predict future human displacement. For instance, if climate change models predicted a sea-level rise of (say) 50 centimetres, it would be possible to map all coastal areas affected by this and work out how many people lived in such areas. The assumption then was that all these people would have to move (see Myers and Kent 1995). Some have put forward scenarios of mass displacements as a cause of future global insecurity (Homer-Dixon and Percival 1996), while certain NGOs even escalated forecasts of future population displacements up to one billion by 2050 (Christian Aid 2007).

Such forecasts have turned out to be highly speculative and scientifically unsound (Gemenne 2011). Researchers have argued that migration is driven by many factors, and can rarely be reduced to the effects of just one form of change, such as climate change (Black 2001; Castles 2002; Foresight 2011). It is not possible to make a direct link between climate change, environmental stress and large-scale migration. Box 2.1

summarizes evidence from recent research, but there are five main reasons to be sceptical on the idea that climate change will lead to mass migration.

First, people can use various adaptation strategies, such as flood defences, changes in livelihoods or short-distance mobility to cope with environmental stresses. Second, in cases of floods, tsunamis and other environmental havoc, the vast majority of people move over short distances, such as to the next neighbourhood, village or town. Third, most of such displacements tend to be temporary, because most people wish to return home as soon as possible. Fourth, most people living in the poorer countries of the world do not have the resources to move over large distances. Fifth, processes of impoverishment influenced by environmental stresses can actually deprive vulnerable people of the means to travel and migrate over large distances, and they might find themselves therefore trapped at home.

It is therefore unlikely that climate change will lead to mass migration from 'South' to 'North'. Even though the methodologies of studies on which previous estimates were based are problematic, they are still often quoted mainly because the idea that climate change will lead to mass migration serves powerful political agendas on the left and right. In fact, they misuse the topic of climate change and migration to give a 'human face to climate change' (Gemenne 2011: 225; see also Klepp 2017). Urging governments to 'do something', NGOs and humanitarian organizations use alarmist narratives turning climate change, and especially climate change migration, into a security topic (Klepp 2017).

By drawing a simplistic, direct causal link between climate change and migration, the 'climate refugee' discourse depoliticizes the migration of vulnerable people (see also Bettini 2013). *Depoliticization* refers to discursive strategies that remove the political dimension from a social issue. Political issues affect the vulnerability of people and their resilience with environmental and other stresses. For instance, poverty, poor housing and weak governmental services explain why the suffering and death toll is so much higher when a hurricane hits a country like Haiti compared to the US.

Politicians have frequently depoliticized social issues by shifting the blame to exogenous or environmental or climatic factors 'beyond their control'. For instance, in Morocco politicians and bureaucrats routinely blame 'drought' and 'desertification' to explain a whole range of problems in rural areas, from low agrarian productivity to the *rural exodus*. In fact, the crisis narrative of desertification has been invoked to facilitate and justify policies that have disadvantaged nomadic groups and deprived them of their mobility freedoms by forcing them to settle down (Davis 2005). Governments may also use 'the climate' as an excuse to displace people, for instance in the case of discourses around sea level rise in Pacific islands. In the Maldives the government has recycled older, highly controversial, proposals for the resettlement of its population dispersed over 200 islands onto 10–15 islands. The main motive has always been economic, because the government finds it too costly to provide services and resources to dispersed populations. However, in recent years the same ideas are gaining renewed leverage by being couched in environmental and 'sea level rise' terms (Kothari 2014).

A simplistic view of the relation between environmental factors and migration can distract the attention away from the political causes of much forced migration. In fact, apart from conflicts and persecution, development projects (such as dams, mining, airports, industrial areas and middle-class housing complexes) and wildlife conservation are a major cause of displacement. Development-induced displacement is actually the largest single form of forced migration, leading to the internal displacement of an estimated 10–15

million people per year, mainly affecting disempowered groups such as indigenous peoples, other ethnic minorities and slum-dwellers (Cernea and McDowell 2000; Tan 2020).

Climate change mitigation can become a cause of displacement in itself. In China, hydropower, irrigation and water transfer projects are an integral part of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, but also displace a large number of people (Tan 2020). Wildlife conservation and other environmental protection projects are estimated to prompt the displacement – or forced settlement (the *involuntary immobilization*, or *sedentarization*) in case of pastoralist and nomadic people – and the loss of land and property for hundreds of thousand of people each year (Chatty and Colchester 2002). Displacees tend to be amongst the most vulnerable people, unable to defend themselves and they often get barely compensated for the loss of livelihood.

These examples expose the importance to remain aware of the deployment of categories, concepts and discourses by political actors that, ironically, serve to try to depoliticize social problems. By deploying alarmist rhetoric around future waves of ‘climate refugees’, media, politicians, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian organizations have turned climate change into an immediate security threat linked to migration. This ignores evidence showing that climate change is unlikely to cause mass migration, and draws the attention away from the political and economic causes of people’s vulnerability to environmental (and other) stresses. Once more, this illustrates how the use of particular categories can become part of political struggles to impose certain world views or to advance particular interests.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the main concepts and categories used in describing and analyzing migration. On the one hand, categories are indispensable to make sense of the complex and inherently ‘messy’ social processes such as migration. Categories help to structure thinking, define phenomena and distinguish patterns and regularities. In other words, social categories are essential devices helping to generalize and to ‘see the wood for the trees’. On the other hand, the chapter highlighted the need to be careful and conscious in choosing and using particular categories. Language is not innocent, but reflects largely unconscious biases or conscious choices. Some categories oversimplify migration and can actually stand in the way of achieving a deeper understanding of migration as a complex social process. Other categories reflect state and legal perspectives and are infused with moral or ideological meanings. In fact, all categories come with their own problems.

This is not necessarily problematic. Governments need categories and clear legal definitions in order to implement policies, and decide which migrants can access certain rights – this is crucial for refugee policies for instance. The categories states use to implement policies do matter a great deal for the daily lives of migrants. The issue is more to be aware of the biases that the use of particular categories can create, and to critically assess the extent to which such categories are relevant and useful to explain the lived experiences and perceptions of migrants themselves. It is also important to be aware of the blurred distinction between dichotomous categories, such as between internal and international migration, permanent and temporary migration, and forced and voluntary migration. This does not necessarily invalidate the categories as such, but is reason to be always conscious of the biases and simplifications their uncritical use involves.

The examples of ‘trafficking’ and ‘climate refugees’ also showed the danger of the unreflective use of migration categories which are part of political and ideological narratives and discourses that deliberately ignore evidence, actively distort the truth and thus obstruct a better understanding of migration processes. Although they are often shrouded in quasi-scientific language, such narratives often buy into simplistic and outdated models to explain migration and ignore the accumulated insights about the nature and drivers of migration processes generated by decades of migration scholarship. Besides an understanding of categories, a good knowledge of theories is essential for obtaining insights into the nature, patterns and causes of migration processes, as well as to strengthen capacity for critical and independent scrutiny of the ways in which politicians and media discuss and frame migration issues. To provide such a solid basis for analysing migration processes, the following chapter will therefore give an overview of the most important migration theories.

Guide to Further Reading

Ruhs and Anderson (2010) and Kubal (2013) provide useful discussions on the blurred lines between regular and irregular migration and situations of ‘semi-legality’ and ‘semi-compliance’. Bakewell (2000) provides an insightful discussion of the frequent gap between government discourses and the lived experiences of forced migrants. Van Liempt and Sersli (2013) and Brachet (2018) provide critical perspectives on the ambiguous category of ‘smugglers’, ranging from ‘migration facilitators’ (by migrants) to ‘criminals’ (by states). A special issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *Migrant Smuggling as a Collective Strategy and Insurance Policy* gives an overview on research evidence on smuggling from around the world (Zhang *et al.* 2018). Anderson and Andrijasevic (2008) provide a critical discussion of the politicization of trafficking. For environmental change, climate and migration, a key reading is the Foresight Report. All papers along with the main report are available at www.bis.gov.uk/foresight, while Black *et al.* (2011) provides a useful summary. Gemenne (2011) reviews critically the various methodologies used to estimate the number of displaced by environmental change. Gemenne and Blocher (2017) discuss how migration can serve as an *adaptation* to climate change.

Extra resources can be found at: www.age-of-migration.com