Terminology

Section 1.1

Topics:

Migration Typologies
Commonly Used Migration Terms
This Section introduces the terminology used in this Manual and in the field of migration management. The field of migration includes a vocabulary of technical terms and specialized concepts. It is important to use the right term for the right situation if policies are to be appropriate and effective. Only a small number of terms used in the field of migration management have meanings that are universally accepted. A common understanding of terms and definitions is essential for effective cooperation in migration management. Definitions given in this Section are supported by a discussion of the perspectives involved in the foundations for the entire course.

Learning Objectives

- increase your knowledge of the terminology that will be used in this course

- understand the importance of terminology in developing policy responses

- understand the distinctions that can be used to develop a typology of migration

- understand how to use terminology accurately

Background

International migration has changed significantly in recent years. In the last decades of the twentieth century, migratory patterns have diversified tremendously. Policy makers and decision makers are developing new ways to understand migratory movements, evaluate their consequences, and implement policies to manage them. A wide range of disciplines, including behavioural science, law,
health, political science, and economics, are contributing terminology to the field of migration policy and practice.

In the past, migration movements were more straightforward because they often involved linear relations between a country of origin and a country of destination. Migration was largely based on traditional ties that were cultural, emotional, economic, or historical. These traditional relations are now giving way to an unprecedented widening of the migration landscape, accompanied by an evolution of new types of migration. International migratory movements are becoming increasingly complex as a result of economic expansion, widening economic disparities, the greater availability of transportation, and information about distant places that is available at nearly any point on the globe. The predominantly Western long-term migration model will be less dominant in the future, as other types of migration come to the fore, for example short-term and circulatory migration.

Although economic motives are among the most important drivers of migration, other motives must not be underestimated. For countless men and women, migration is a window on the world that enables them to secure financial and personal independence. The assumption that a State must necessarily be built on a homogeneous national community is becoming increasingly anachronistic. International migration is an emerging challenge to the nation State. “Transnationalism” leads to the acquisition of multiple identities, where the country of origin and the country of residence can both be sources of identity and rights.

The late twentieth century has witnessed one of the most significant trends in migration: the emergence of transnational communities known as diasporas. A diaspora is defined as both a dispersion of people from their original homeland and as the community formed by such people in other countries. Thanks to modern transport and communication resources, migrants and their descendants can maintain close links with their country of origin or with other groups in the diaspora.

Guiding Questions

1. What terms and concepts are most relevant to your migration context?

2. What typology is most relevant or helpful for understanding migration as it affects your State?

3. What perspectives guide your choice of migration terminology?
What assumptions and conceptual models do you use to develop a typology of migration?

What is the difference between a paradigm based on migration and one based on mobility?

**Key Message**

Developing a common understanding of terms and definitions is essential for a cooperative approach to migration management. Awareness of the assumptions and distinctions that terms are based on will help practitioners identify the right kind of approach for developing policies and managing migration in a particular setting.

**Terms and Concepts**

**Diaspora**
Communities of migrants settled permanently in countries other than where they were born, but aware of their country of origin and continuing to maintain links with their country of origin. A diaspora is defined as both a dispersion of people from their original homeland, and as the community formed by such a people in other countries. (Greek: scattered abroad, dispersion)

**Paradigm**
A conceptual model that is used by an intellectual discipline to understand complex phenomena. A paradigm includes assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that determine how something is understood. New paradigms develop when observations cannot be explained by current assumptions and beliefs.

**Terminology**
The vocabulary of technical terms used in a particular field, subject, science, or art

**Typology**
The systematic classification of phenomena into groups that have common characteristics. A typology results from making distinctions that create separated groups in a range of related phenomena. Typologies make it easier to analyze and understand the complex realities of migration.
Topic One

Migration Typologies

The typologies of international migration discussed in this Section illustrate the multidisciplinary perspectives that are available to migration managers and policy and decision makers. Some of the material may refocus your approach or enrich your understanding of what you are dealing with. To understand migration typologies, it is important to explore the meaning of migration terms, since awareness of the assumptions, and conceptual models they are based on, will help you identify the right kind of approach for developing policies and managing migration in your context.

Definitions of “migration” and, by extension, “migrant” are constructed from distinct political, social, economic, or cultural contexts that can vary greatly. There are real variations in the social and economic significance of migration phenomena, and a typology of migration can be developed on the basis of several distinctions. Migration policy and management of migration will be influenced by the distinctions that are chosen to support working definitions.

For example, definitions can be drawn from a geographical standpoint (“migration”), or from a human standpoint (“migrant”). From a geographical standpoint, “migration” is the movement of a person or group of persons from one geographical unit to another across an administrative or political border, with the intention of settling indefinitely or temporarily in a place other than their place of origin. A further distinction can be made between the “country of origin,” or place of departure, and the “country of destination,” or place of arrival. In addition, migration often does not occur directly between the point of origin and point of destination, but involves one or more “countries of transit.”

Viewed from the human standpoint, any person who leaves his or her country with the intention to reside in another is called an “emigrant” or “émigré.” In the new country, that person will be considered as an “immigrant,” or be given some similar designation that is determined under national laws because every State frames its own immigration laws. The term “migrant” is more general than “emigrant” or “immigrant” because it does not specify the direction of the movement.

Migration has numerous and varied causes; and even in one individual, the motives to migrate may be mixed and multiple. For example, asylum-seekers may be fleeing persecution as well as poverty in their country of origin. Distinctions between immigrant and settled person, economic migrant and
asylum-seeker, foreign worker and travelling businessman, student and highly skilled professional, are more blurred today than a decade ago. Individual motives and ambitions that influence migration are intertwined with external factors and pressures. Highly qualified citizens of poor countries may consider migration for two reasons. They may be attracted by greater professional recognition and a higher salary in another country, and, at the same time, they may be motivated by the opportunity to contribute to the development of their country of origin through remittances and the transfer of skills.

A good typology will not be artificially constructed around abstract criteria; it will offer an explanation of migration and be adapted to a particular context. The following points present observations and distinctions that can determine a typology of migration.

Important Points

1 Efforts are underway in many regions to harmonize terminology and definitions and understand how terms are used within a region in order to facilitate the analysis of migration data and migration trends. Providing a definition that will be universally accepted is not easy and the presence of a variety of definitions has meant that statistical criteria will vary and produce data that are difficult to compare.

Section 2.1, *Migration and Statistical Data*, discusses the statistical consequences and implications of such variation.

2 A distinction may be drawn between “internal migration” and “international migration.” Internal migration is movement within the same country, from one administrative unit, such as a region, province, or municipality, to another. In contrast, international migration involves the crossing of one or several international borders, resulting in a change in the legal status of the individual concerned. International migration also covers movements of refugees, displaced persons, and other persons forced to leave their country.

3 A hard and fast distinction between internal migration and international migration can be misleading because international migration can involve very short distances and culturally very similar populations, while internal migration can cover vast distances and bring markedly different populations into contact.
In some rare instances, borders themselves can “migrate.”

Example

The breakup of the Soviet Union transformed several million internal migrants into international migrants. The Russians in Estonia or Tajikistan who left their region of origin as internal migrants in the USSR have become foreigners in the new independent States. The breakups of Czechoslovakia or the Yugoslav Federation are other examples.

International migration becomes “immigration” or “emigration,” depending on how the country of destination or country of origin is considered. There are two directions involved in the sum total of people moving from one place to another, i.e., “migration flow”: “outflow” or “emigration” and “inflow” or “immigration.”

The term “migrant” can designate a person who, voluntarily and for personal reasons, moves from his or her place of origin to a particular destination with the intention to establish residence without being compelled to do so. This definition selects the voluntary nature of the movement as the criterion for the definition. This definition covers persons moving regularly as well as irregularly, that is, without being in possession of valid documentation such as a passport with a visa, a work permit, or a residence permit. Persons travelling on vacation, on a business trip, for medical treatment, or on pilgrimage are not generally considered as migrants, even though their movement is voluntary, as they do not intend to establish a habitual residence in the place of destination.

Migration may be “temporary” or “permanent,” depending on the duration of absence from the place of origin and the duration of stay in the place of destination.

What You Need To Know About...

Migration Typologies

The typologies used to categorize the phenomenon of migration are extremely broad in scope. Many migration professionals have addressed the issue of developing an integrated typology of migration. The result is a range of approaches: geographical, demographic, sociological, political, legal, or multidisciplinary.
A social and cultural typology is arranged according to a series of migrant characteristics: gender, marital status, age, professional qualification, ethnic background, or religious persuasion.

The reasons for migration can also form the basis for a typology of migration. Migration can be caused by economic reasons, commercial or technical reasons, environmental factors, or economic imbalances or breakdowns. Migration can also be caused by demographic reasons: family migration, migration of young people and retirees, and “replacement migration.” Migration can be caused by politics: refugee movements, colonial or inherited migration within “migration pairs,” or by repatriations. Any of these reasons may combine to produce composite types of migration.

A legal typology is also important for migration. A regular and legal situation implies access to a host country’s labour market, eligibility for social and medical assistance, and certain civic rights such as the right to vote in local elections. By contrast, a migrant in an irregular situation may be subject to detention, expulsion, deportation, prosecution, and also be more exposed to human rights violations. Legal measures vary from one country to the next. Differences include rules on labour access, regulations on access to nationality and the naturalization policy in the host country, and on the determination of refugee or family reunion status.

A basic typological distinction can be made between established and often long-standing emigrant populations, (“stocks”) and those entering and leaving at a given point in time (“flows”).

What Do You Think?

Another typology distinguishes between forced and voluntary migration. This typology may seem simple but on close examination is problematic. For example, labour markets may not be sufficiently structured to meet the needs of local people in a post-crisis situation when everything must be rebuilt, especially for more qualified persons. In such a case, is the person who migrates in search of a new job forced to do so or is it a voluntary decision?
Apply What You Have Learned

1. Which distinctions are most useful for defining “migrant” and “migration” in your setting?

2. How useful is an emphasis on the voluntary nature of migration for a typology of migration in your setting?

3. Is the direction of migration flow significant for definition purposes in your setting?

4. Would you prefer a geographic, human, or combined approach to defining “migrant” and “migration”?
Commonly Used Migration Terms

The increasing complexity of migration movements calls for new concepts and terminology to describe and analyze them. For example, as recently as ten years ago, the term “human trafficking” was rarely used in debates about migration policy and practice. Today, curbing trafficking in persons is one of the top migration management priorities of States.

The following definitions are not all technical or legal in nature, and provide readily understandable and widely applicable explanations for some of the most commonly used migration terms. A particular example of migration may fit several definitions at the same time, and a particular migrant may have characteristics that appear in several of the explanations given for terms.

What You Need To Know About...

Terms Used to Discuss Migration

“Deportation” refers to the act of a State in removing a non-citizen from its territory after refusal of admission or termination of permission to remain. Whereas return migration can be spontaneous or assisted (and therefore incorporates an element of volition), deportation is the actual execution of the removal.

“Expulsion” is the act of informing of the prohibition to remain in the territory of a State. An expulsion order will be given if the individual either entered illegally or is no longer authorized to remain in that State.

“Forced migration” is the non-voluntary movement of a person in order to escape armed conflict, a situation of violence, violation of his or her rights, a natural disaster, or a man-made disaster. This term applies to refugee movements and forced exchanges of populations among States.

“Illegal entry” means the crossing of borders without complying with the necessary requirements for legal entry into the receiving State.
“Irregular migration” is the movement of a person to a new place of residence or transit using irregular or illegal means, without valid documents or by carrying forged documents. This term also covers smuggling of migrants.

“Net migration” is the migration balance, resulting from the difference between arrivals and departures. This balance is called “net immigration” when arrivals exceed departures and “net emigration” in the opposite case.

“Non-admission” is the act of informing of the prohibition against entering the territory of the State concerned.

“Orderly migration” is the movement of a person from his or her usual place of residence to a new place of residence, in keeping with the laws and regulations governing exit from the country of origin and travel, transit, and entry into the host country.

“Re-emigration” is the movement of a person who, having returned to his or her original country of departure for some years, departs again for another period or another destination.

“Repatriation” is a sub-category of return migration that refers to refugees returning to their places of origin, prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention of 1949, civilians in times of war, and diplomats in times of crises, as per the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relation of 1961 and 1963, respectively.

“Return migration” is the movement of a person returning to his or her country of origin, or of habitual residence, after spending at least one year in another country.

“Smuggling of migrants” is defined in the Protocol to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime as procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, from the illegal entry of a person into a State of which he or she is not a national or a permanent resident.

“Total migration” is the sum of the entries, or arrivals, of immigrants and of exits, or departures, of emigrants.

“Trafficking in persons” is defined in the Protocol to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime 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 includes, at the minimum, the exploitation of 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.

**What You Need To Know About...**

*Terms Used to Discuss Categories of Persons Involved in Migration*

An “asylum-seeker” is a person who has crossed an international border and has not yet received a decision on his or her claim for refugee status. This term could refer to someone who has not yet submitted an application for refugee status, or someone who is waiting for an answer to their claim. Until the claim is examined fairly, the asylum-seeker is entitled not to be returned. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee.

A “diaspora member” is a person who is part of a community of migrants who have settled permanently in countries other than where they were born but who remain aware of their country of origin and continue to maintain links with their country of origin.

An “economic migrant” is a person leaving his or her habitual place of residence to settle outside his or her country of origin in order to improve his or her quality of life. This term is also used to refer to persons attempting to enter a country without legal permission and/or by using asylum procedures without bona fide cause. It also applies to persons settling outside their country of origin for the duration of an agricultural or tourist season, appropriately called “seasonal workers.”

A “frontier worker” is a migrant worker who retains his or her habitual residence in a neighbouring State to which he or she normally returns every day or at least once a week.

An “internally displaced person” is defined in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* to mean a person forced to leave his or her habitual residence spontaneously in order to flee an armed conflict, situations of widespread violence or systematic human rights violations, or to escape natural or man-made disasters or their effects. This term also covers persons displaced within the borders of their country of origin, who are not covered by the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* because they did not cross an internationally recognized border.

An “irregular migrant” is a commonly used term describing a migrant in an irregular situation in a transit or host country due to illegal entry, or to the expiry of his or her visa. The term is applied to
non-nationals who have infringed the transit or host country’s rules of admission; persons attempting to obtain asylum without due cause; and any other person not authorized to remain in the host country. Such persons may also be defined as an “undocumented migrant,” “clandestine migrant,” or “illegal migrant.”

A “migrant worker” is defined in the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* to mean a person engaging in a remunerated activity in a country of which he or she is not a national. A migrant worker establishes his or her residence in a host country for the duration of his or her work. This term is applied to irregular migrant workers, as well as to staff of multinational companies whose duties require them to move from one country to another. The 1990 *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* defines other more specific categories such as “seafarers,” “project-tied workers,” and “itinerant workers.”

A “refugee” is a person who, pursuant to the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, owing to 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 or her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country. In 1969, the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) adopted a broadened definition to include any person who is forced to leave his or her habitual residence due to aggression, external occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disrupting public order in a part or the entirety of his or her country of origin or his or her country of nationality. In adopting the Cartagena Declaration in 1984, the governments of Latin America also considered as refugees persons fleeing their country because their life, security, or their freedom are threatened by widespread violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, large-scale human rights violations, or any other circumstances seriously disrupting public order.

A “seasonal worker” is a migrant worker whose work depends on seasonal conditions and is, in consequence, performed only during part of the year.
Apply What You Have Learned

1. List the terms that describe migrants in your setting. Which categories are most significant for policy development?

2. What forms of irregular migration are of greatest concern in your setting?

3. What kinds of migration are most common in your setting?

4. Which terms are not commonly used, or used with a different meaning, in your setting?
Concluding Remarks

This Section has described some of the terms used to understand migration phenomena. It has also identified some of the distinctions that are used to categorize migration phenomena.

For many people, mobility has become a full-time way of life involving constant travelling back and forth. The new type of migrant is leaving in order to be better off at home later—they are “straddling various worlds.” Migration policy makers and migration managers must bear this paradigm change from migration to mobility in mind when designing and implementing migration policies. Using the right terminology and understanding the terminology used by others are necessary stepping-stones towards developing relevant policies.

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Endnotes

1 Dumont defines a “migration pair” as made up of two countries with regular migration exchanges that constitute a significant part of their international migration over a meaningful time span due primarily to their proximity or their particular history.