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# DEFINING HUMAN MIGRATION – A POLICY MAKERS PERSPECTIVE

Literature  
review

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F22, E61

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## Abstract

*Migration is a global phenomenon gradually increased in scope, impact and complexity. Practically all countries are simultaneously countries of destination, origin and transit for migrants. Traditionally migration flows are complemented by new changes generated by economic, demographic, political or social conditions, and these trends affect both the size and structure of the migrant population and also economies and societies.*

*Of course this has sparked international interest from various NGOs and by the European Union and the United Nations. This paper aims to present the vision of international organizations concerned with migration and how they define migration and its typologies.*

## 1. Introduction

Few international economic transactions and agreements are affecting living standards and financial stability of developing countries to the same extent that migration does it. Certainly the perception of the impact of migration on development is affected by how it is perceived the development itself.

The United Nations Organisation (UN) defines development as a complex concept that depends on many factors such as: reducing poverty, improving health, increasing access to education, gender equality and sustainable development, and also emphasizing effective global partnerships to achieve these factors. Human development requires emphasis on individual freedom and capability to reach such a standard of living that they consider valuable and, in this sense, migration can be seen as having a high intrinsic value in order to achieve a certain level of freedom (United Nations, 2000).

However, migration and debates on development tend to focus on the instrumental value of migration in achieving other goals such as those mentioned above.

Like many other concepts in the literature, the migration benefits of many definitions and approaches, related concepts or different classifications. There are differences in the literature regarding the concept used to name the mobility of people in other countries. Although the term „migration” (or the terms „international migration”) occurs most often, the two arms of the term (emigration and immigration) are also used.

The act of emigrating means the action to leave home and settle (permanently or temporarily) to another country. The act of immigrating means the action to come from a foreign country to settle here (Romanian Explicative Dictionary, 2009).

There is a growing importance for the definition of „migrant” in tandem with „migration”. It also can be observed that although there are differences, almost all definitions contain two variables - time and space. If referring to space, it is generally shared the view that international migration involves crossing an international frontier in terms of time certain differences occur.

Migration is seen differently depending on sciences of study. Thus, demography focuses on technical arrangements for the registration, evaluation and calculation of global and specific indicators of the phenomenon. Geography takes into account the side of spatiality (geographical areas of departure and destination, distances, continents flows etc.).

Sociology try to assess the overall consequences of migration and cultural anthropology focuses on issues like relations between migrants and natives, cultural transfers, reacting to a particular system of rules, etc. From an economic perspective, the migrant is analysed as a supplier of labour, consumer, investor or a taxpayer, being immigrant or emigrant.

Also, there is a distinction between the use of the term „migration” and the „migration”. Thus, the second most often used when referring to migration as a mass phenomenon, with a significant impact on history. The literature speaks of „migration” in a strictly historical context, in other ones use the term „migration” with the two facets of his (emigration, immigration).

Not least is required positioning the concept of migration in relation to the concept of geographical mobility because the two concepts are sometimes confused. Geographical mobility is related to the spatial dimension and movement of individual to take a new job in another location regardless of its size (city, region, country or continent). This feature of mobility reduces the supply-demand imbalances of the labour market and thus influences the economic development (Cucuruzan, 2010).

Basically, any movement of the work production factor from one area to another is a geographical mobility, and if in this movement a change of residence occurs then we talk about migration. In other words, a migrant is unequivocally a mobile person but a mobile person is not necessarily a migrant. There are authors who do not assimilate the differences between the two terms considering migration the displacement to the workplace and the residence maintaining residence.

The connection between the two concepts is easier to see from a space-time approach, where is considered that both migration and mobility can take place over distances of varying sizes. This connection can be seen in the Figure no. 1.

While it would seem that migration is confused with the short-distance mobility, the difference between those two stays in the novelty brought by migration, placing the individual in a new context. The mobility allows the departure and the return of the individuals even every day, at the same address (Cucuruzan, 2010).

The European Commission is using the concept of „free movement of workforce”, starting from the principle of free movement. Free movement of

workers is a fundamental principle enshrined in Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (EU), stating that the EU citizens are entitled:

- to look for a job in another EU country;
- to work in that country without needing a work permit;
- to reside in that country for this purpose;
- to remain in that country beyond the period of employment;
- to receive the same treatment as nationals of that country in terms of access to employment, working conditions and all other social and tax advantages.

EU citizens can transfer certain rights related to health insurance and social security in that country and the recognition of professional qualifications in other countries it's also possible (European Union, 2010).

## **2. Defining migration – two different approaches**

If you need to talk about the history of migration definition, it can't be told exactly when this term was used for the first time, precisely because migration is a historical phenomenon very normal in today's society and it no longer requires definition. However, the phenomenon has many facets and features, therefore it is more than necessary to define the concept of migration and its related forms.

The literature abounds with definitions and classifications in terms of migration and migrants. In the first phase should be recalled the contribution of Alan Simmons whose first study to clarify the definitions and typologies of migration, suggests the use of three large-scale dimensions in order to define migration: a change of residence, a change of employment and a change of social relations. He suggested that the three dimensions should always be considered when defining migration, which gradually gained ground as can be seen in the definitions that follow. He observed also the fragmentation of the domain because the migration theories are covering specific types of different historical and social contexts. This fragmentation affects the distinction between causes and effects and levels of analysis: micro, macro, domestic or foreign (Simmons, 1987).

One of the most frequently cited definition is the one given by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which presents migration as „the

movement of a person or group of persons across borders or within the same state. It is a displacement of the population, including any type of human mobility, regardless of duration, nature and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants and people who move for other purposes, including family reunion” (International Organization for Migration, 2004). Furthermore, IOM provides definitions of all concepts that have emerged in recent years in the field of migration. Regarding literature, most definitions of migration are occurring after mid last century (after 1950).

One of the most important economic publications in the field of migration, but this time of the internal migration is the sixth manual published by the United Nations for studies on population - „Methods of measuring internal migration”, published in 1970 that provides a range of information and defines the most important concepts in the field. Here, migration it has a much narrower definition than the definition IOM provided but includes the time as a component and is more easily to be adapted to different contexts.

The manual is based on the concept of „population displacement in space” that can vary depending on the distance and time and that can cover various activities related to everyday life - from traveling to work to shopping and travel. But these movements must be distinguished from those involving long or permanent stay in the destination location and those are covered by the migration movements. The essential character of migration is the fact that this involves change of residence and the start of a new life in a different place (United Nations, 1970).

Through this differentiation of migration, the manual removes other types of spatial mobility associated with migration, like nomadism (the displacement of populations that have no fixed residence) or seasonal movements (movements of people living in two or more locations during in one year).

However, change of residence (the residential mobility) varies depending on the distance and the moves can be exactly appreciated - from an apartment to another in the same building or from a house to another in the same neighbourhood or city –this can't no way be classified under migration. This becomes clearer when the term „place” is replaced with „locality”. The locality itself is a largely nondescript term but at least indicates that migration requires changing the living environment

in tandem with the change of residence. Since no one of those can't be measured objectively, the most easily quantifiable characteristic is the distance but starting from one minimum distance we can talk about migration.

Considering these issues, the United Nations defines migration as „a move from a migration area in another area of migration (or moving over a certain minimum distance) that is done in a given time and involves a change of residence” (United Nations, 1970).

Given that both IOM and the UN are generally defining migration it can be seen that the distinction between internal and external migration (international migration) is more than necessary.

### **3. Migration and migrants – a topic of global interest**

Of course not only IOM and the UN have tried to define the migration, there are certain other international organizations that have provided definitions based on those provided by IOM and the UN.

The Table no. 1 shows, in addition to how migration is defined by other international organizations, their affiliation to the definitions provided by IOM or the UN. It can be seen that IOM definition is a reference in defining migration. At the same time, there are organizations that have chosen to define only the migrants as we can see later in this paper.

Regarding literature, the optics are much diversified. As in other areas there is not a definition that is universal in all circumstances and in all situations, acting as a standard in all units of space. So we can say that a complete definition of migration that meets all requirements has not yet identified.

We stated earlier that the definition of migration as a concept is followed in most of the works in the field by the definition of migrants, sometimes giving them even greater importance. Most authors define concisely migrants as „participants” to migration, making distinctions when it comes to defining the migration. But, as in the case of migration, there are a number of differences in the approach of international organizations. For example, IOM believes that there is no universally accepted definition for the migrant, this normally covering all the situations when the decision to migrate is taken by individual reasons and without constraints of external factors. It also specifies that

the term applies to persons and family members who move to another country or region to improve the social and material conditions or the prospects (International Organization for Migration, 2004).

From the UN perspective, the migrant is „a person who changed residence from a particular area of migration into another (or went above a certain minimum distance specified/agreed) at least once in a time given” (United Nations, 1970). A technical definition but easily adaptable to various contexts which may change.

We mentioned earlier that the international organizations were more generous in terms of defining migrants in relation to defining migration. Table no. 2 shows in addition to the above definitions for IOM and the UN other migrant definitions given by the most important international organisations interested by the topic.

The most comprehensive international treaty on migration and human rights is the United Nations International Convention on the rights of migrants which was adopted in 1990.

This treaty sets the standard in the field of access of migrants to the human rights but it met indifference because only forty states have ratified it and it wasn't ratified by the countries powerfully involved in migration. This shows how migrants are omitted regarding their access to rights even if their work is essential in the global economy and how non-economic aspects of migration (particularly the migrants' rights) are part of the neglected dimension of globalization.

The treaty defines the migrant worker as „a person who will be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a paid activity in a state where he has no citizenship” (United Nations International Convention on the rights of migrants, 1990).

Another definition of the migrant worker is given by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in its glossary of terms from 2007: „The migrant workers from abroad are foreigners admitted by the receiving state for the specific purpose of doing an economic activity paid within the recipient state; the length of their stay is usually restricted to the type of their employment” (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007).

The two definitions are used by all international organizations, observing a preponderance to the definition proposed in the 1990 UN treaty, considered a highly important document in the field. European Commission treats equally both

approaches (UN and OECD) taking both of them in its documents and publications (European Commission, 2012).

#### 4. Conclusions

By analysing the definition of migration and migrants we can see their widely sense and the difficulty of distinguishing between migrants. Also, we can see some attempts to define the migration in a context that takes into account all the(new) situations.

Of course, given all the definitions listed above we question if it's important how migration and migrants are defined for the current society and its deciders. Defining migration and migrants is not a simply technical issue because it has a significant impact on migration data and on the analyses generated from them. An incorrect definition has a negative effect on the understanding by the society and the policies creators, generating difficulties for authorities. Not all the migrants from the public debates or from databases are the subject of controls or of migration policies.

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## Tables

Table no. 1

*Defining migration from the perspective of international organizations*

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
<p>„In the context of the EU migration is the act whereby a person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– takes up a residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be at least twelve months, having previously been resident in another Member State or in a third country; or</li> <li>– previously being a current resident of a Member State, ceases to have his normal residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be at least twelve months.”</li> </ul>	European Comission	IOM
<p>„In a global context migration is the movement of a person or a group of people by crossing an international (international migration) or within a state (internal migration). It is a movement of population which includes any type of population displacement regardless of duration, purpose or causes, including migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants or people who move for other reasons, including family reunions.”</p>	European Migration Network	UN
<p>„Migration is crossing the barriers of a political or administrative unit for a certain period of time. It includes relocation of refugees, displaced persons, the homeless and migrants for economic reasons.”</p>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	IOM UN
<p>„Migration is the movement of people from one place to another. Migration can take place within the same country or between different countries. Migration differs from tourism because migration refers to people who go to a new place to settle and reside on the longer term and where they establish deep relationships.”</p>	Red Cross	IOM

Note: References: European Comission, 2012; European Migration Network, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Red Cross

Tabel no. 2

*Defining migrant from the perspective of international organizations*

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<p>„Any person living temporarily or permanently in a country where it wasn't born and where it gained some significant social ties to this country.”</p>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<p>„Any person who changes the country of his former habitual residence.”</p>	Global Migration Group
<p>„A general term for an immigrant or emigrant that defines a person who leaves a country or region to settle into another.”</p>	European Comission

„The person who leaves his home to go to new places in order to find new opportunities and better prospects. The term is very wide and can include asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and illegal migrants.”

Red Cross

„A person from a third country entering or moving within the European Union.”

European Migration Network

Note: References: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Global Migration Group, 2010; European Commission, 2012; Red Cross; European Migration Network

Figures

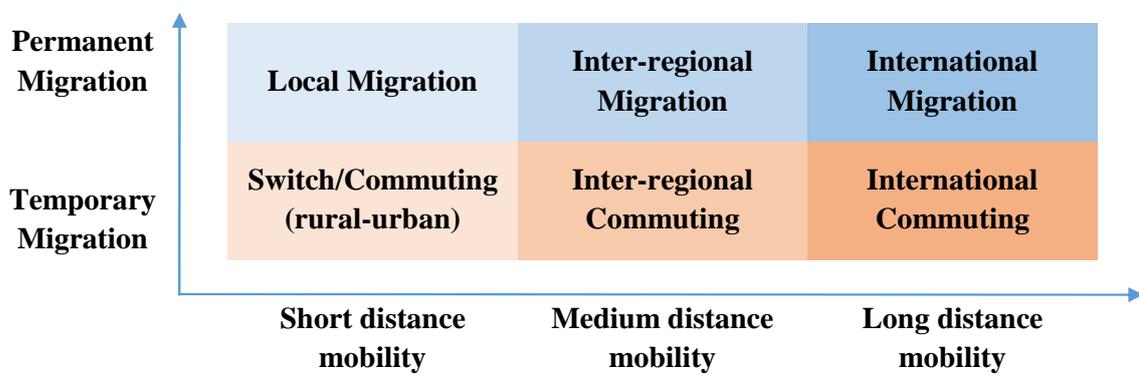


Figure No. 1: Spatial and temporal approach of mobility and migration  
Source: Adapted by the author from Cucuruzan, 2010