

MIGNEX Handbook Chapter 2

Key concepts in the migration-development nexus

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MIGNEX

MIGNEX (Aligning Migration Management and the Migration-Development Nexus) is a fiveyear research project (2018-2023) with the core ambition of creating new knowledge on migration, development and policy. It is carried out by a consortium of nine partners in Europe, Africa and Asia: the Peace Research Institute Oslo (coordinator), Danube University Krems, University of Ghana, Koç University, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Maastricht University, the Overseas Development Institute, the University of Oxford and Samuel Hall.

See www.mignex.org.



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The MIGNEX Handbook

The MIGNEX Handbook grows chapter by chapter over the lifetime of the project. It is primarily as a tool for internal information-sharing and quality assurance. The text refers to 'we' as the team members and 'you' as an individual team member reader. The handbook is public in order to ensure transparency and facilitate knowledge exchange also on issues such as project management, methodology and communication.

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History of changes

Version	Date	Changes
1	21 December 2018	Version submitted as official deliverable to the EC.
2	12 March 2019	Updated with the revised template and ISBN numbers. The list of project-specific abbreviations in the previous version has been deleted. The description of research areas has been amended to indicate that this term is particular to the MIGNEX research design.

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MIGNEX Handbook Chapter

Key concepts and definitions in the migration-development nexus

Many common concepts – including forced migration, root causes, migration decision, and transit migration – carry assumptions that run counter to the analytical ambitions of MIGNEX. Navigating the terminology calls for balancing critical thinking and pragmatism.

MIGNEX is expected to help address the 'root causes' of migration. However, the concept itself is troubled by a narrow conception of migration as a symptom of problems. The emphasis on disaggregation in the MIGNEX methodology is reflected in a terminology that lets us pick processes and phenomena apart.

When our audiences use terminology that differs from ours, we should engage with their usage and explain why we take a different approach.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter draws upon parts B1–B3 of the Description of Action (DoA), where a number of concepts are discussed and defined. The chapter differs from the DoA in that descriptions are expanded or refined, and by the inclusion of additional concepts. While all Project Handbook chapters may be revised and updated, this will be particularly important with the current chapter. As work progresses in the different parts of the project, we will find that more concepts need to be defined, and we may decide to adjust our understanding or usage of ones that have already been addressed.

Please contact the author if you have suggestions for future revisions, for instance about additional concepts that should be included, or usage advice that should be added on the basis of your experience with how the concepts are understood by our audiences.

2.2 Concepts and definitions

2.2.1 Guidelines for consistency and usage

The concepts and terms presented in this chapter are central to the migration—development nexus, and particularly relevant to MIGNEX as a result of the project's approach and methodology. They should be used in a broadly consistent way, guided by the following points:

- Avoid using the terms in ways that *conflict with* the definitions presented here. This is important for the coherence of MIGNEX output.
- Pay attention to the *usage advice* that is included with some of the concepts, for instance to highlight particular pitfalls or implied assumptions.
- Do not give the impression that we have project-specific definitions. For instance, avoid writing 'in MIGNEX we define migration as...' unless you are discussing a technical operationalization. Such formulations give the impression that we are creating our own terminology that differs from standard usage. What we do is to promote understandings that are meaningful for the field more generally. When it is necessary to explain how we use a term—e.g. because others use it differently—we can do so with more open and authoritative formulations, such as 'by "development" we mean ...'.
- Be reader-friendly and pragmatic. Ensure that our target audiences can understand our arguments, but do not overburden them with conceptual discussions that are not essential to the particular publication. When our audiences use terminology that differs from ours, we must be prepared to engage with their usage either adapting to theirs in a particular context (such as a presentation) or explaining why we take a different approach.

More specific operationalizations may be needed for particular parts of the project, such as the survey, policy review, and specification of conditions in the QCA.

2.2.2 Alphabetical list of concepts

In the presentation of concepts and definitions, cross-references to other terms are displayed in SMALL CAPS.

Ability

In the context of the aspiration/ability model of migration (Carling 2002) *ability to migrate* refers to an individual's capacity to overcome the barriers to migration and thereby convert migration aspirations into actual migration. See also ASPIRATIONS and INVOLUNTARY IMMOBILITY.

Usage advice: Ability should be used as a standalone term but be linked to migration by means of phrases such as 'ability to migrate' or constructions such as '... the aspiration to migrate but not the ability to do so'.

Aspirations

Aspirations play two distinct roles in the context of migration. First, *life aspirations* describe the desires, hopes, or ambitions that might motivate migration – such as the wish to establish a family or develop a professional career. Second, *migration aspirations* as a short-hand term for the conviction that migrating is preferable to staying. It partly overlaps with related terms such as migration desires, plans, or intentions (Carling and Schewel 2018). See MIGRATION PROCESSES.

Capabilities

Capabilities are the cornerstone of the so-called capabilities approach to human development, which emphasizes freedom of choice, individual heterogeneity and the multi-dimensional nature of welfare. The approach itself was developed primarily by Amartya Sen (1989, 1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2011), and its introduction to the field of migration and development has been spearheaded by Hein de Haas (2010). While the 'ability to migrate' can be seen as a specific capability, the role of capabilities is primarily as an operationalization of development outcomes. See also ABILITY and DEVELOPMENT.

Conditions

In the context of Qualitative Comparative Analysis, conditions refer to the characteristics that are included in the analysis and differentiate between the cases. In other words, 'conditions' in QCA are broadly analogous to variables in quantitative data sets.

Usage advice: Avoid using the general term 'conditions' in ways that could create confusion with respect to its specific meaning in QCA. (For this reason, the model in Figure 1 uses 'circumstances' where the original model used 'conditions'.)

Communities

Communities is a tempting, user-friendly synonym for research areas. However, 'community' implies a form of social cohesion that might not be a feature of every research area, and it is a word that is sometimes used euphemistically to denote ethnic or religious groups.

Usage advice: Do not use 'communities' to denote research areas. Use 'community' only in specific instances when it is a fitting description, e.g. to denote a group that self-identifies as a community.

Development

Definitions of 'development' remain contested and complex. One reason for this is that the concept is used both analytically and normatively. Moreover, specific uses in either research or policy often require particular operationalizations that are imperfect representations of 'development' as a theoretical concept. In the absence of a unifying definition, we can point to three elements that should be reflected in our approach to development:

- Development is 'a process of enlarging people's choices'. This basic description was the
 foundation for the first Human Development Report (UNDP 1990), drawing upon the work
 of Amartya Sen (1989), who defined development as 'expansion of capabilities'. The core
 idea is that different people value different outcomes, and that choice itself is
 fundamental. (See capabilities.)
- Development is a multi-dimensional concept. The original notion of human development focused on (1) leading a long and healthy life, (2) being educated and (3) enjoying a decent standard of living. Other relevant dimensions include democratic participation and security from violence, as reflected, for instance, in the broad scope of the SDGs (UNGA 2015).
- Development is both individual and systemic. The current well-being of individuals matters, but so does the distribution of well-being and the capacity of economic, political and social systems to provide the circumstances for that well-being on a sustainable, long-term basis (Barder 2012).

Usage advice: When we use 'development' as a general term, it should be compatible with the capabilities-oriented, multi-dimensional and multi-level approach summarized above. When

we relate to more narrow, particular representations or measures of development, this should be deliberate and explicit.

Drivers of migration

The concept 'drivers of migration' has rapidly gained popularity since the turn of the Millennium, compared to terms such as 'causes of migration' and 'determinants of migration' (Carling and Collins 2018). Part of the reason might be that it implies more complex causal mechanisms. Van Hear *et al.* (2018) present the first systematic engagement with the concept of drivers and distinguish between predisposing, proximate, precipitating and mediating drivers.

Failed migration attempts

Attempts to migrate often end in other ways than arrival and settlement at the intended destination. Failed migration attempts serves as an umbrella term for such outcomes. First, a large number of migrants die *en route*. Second, many migrants are apprehended and returned soon after arrival (or before reaching their intended destination). Third, migrants frequently get stuck along the way for extended periods of time, without the means to complete the final legs of the journey. (See also TRANSIT MIGRATION.) Finally, prospective migrants can invest heavily in preparatory steps such as obtaining a visa or work permit, but not succeed. Failed migration attempts come at a high cost for the individual, and often also for migrants' families and societies of origin. The value of the concept 'failed migration attempts' primarily lies in identifying development impacts of migration that do not result from the settlement of migrants abroad.

Forced migration

The term 'forced migration' emerged as a response to the restrictive legal definition of refugees. It is used to cover a broader range of displacement in response to fear of violence or persecution, including internal displacement. However, the term 'forced migration' is increasingly discredited because (1) the notion of being passively forced is a misrepresentation of the MIGRANT DECISION-MAKING that shapes all migration trajectories, and (2) it has developed a specific meaning that excludes important uses of force in migration, especially deportation at the hands of government or migration enforced by family members. Analysing the interaction of different forms of force and choice at different stages of migration processes reveals much greater complexity than the forced/voluntary dichotomy (Erdal and Oeppen 2018).

Usage advice: The term 'forced migration' should preferably be avoided, both because of its general analytical shortcomings and because it easily undermines the types of complex explanations we seek to produce in MIGNEX. If 'forced migration' is cautiously and selectively used to communicate with key audiences who employ this concept, we should always avoid contrasting it with 'voluntary migration' or implying that 'forced/voluntary' is an analytically useful dichotomy.

Institutional coherence

Institutional coherence refers to institutional and procedural mechanisms that are designed to improve POLICY COHERENCE. Such mechanisms are critical to ensuring coherence over time in a continuously changing policy environment. Attention to institutional and procedural factors can help identify the causes of incoherence and formulate remedial measures. The project's distinction between policy coherence and institutional coherence is integral to its fundamental approach of disaggregation.

Involuntary immobility

Involuntary immobility describes the situation of individuals who have an aspiration to migrate but not the ability to do so. For instance, many prospective migrants in low-income countries have neither the possibilities of legally obtaining a visa, nor the financial means to migrate by means of migrant smugglers. concept is an integral part of the aspiration/ability model of migration (Carling 2002). It can apply to people who seek to escape insecurity or conflict – but are unable to do so – as well as to people who want to migrate for other reasons. See also ABILITY and ASPIRATIONS.

Local area

Local area is an acceptable synonym for 'research area' that might be useful in external communication. For instance, we can say that 'the MIGNEX team collects data in 25 local areas across 10 countries'.

Local level

The local level is a broad term for describing processes and phenomena that play out at the scale of MIGNEX research areas. Whereas 'research area' is a concept that structures our data collection and analyses, 'the local level' refers to the type of context that we seek to capture with this design. Other sub-national levels, such as regions or provinces, play a different but also important role.

Migrants

Migrants are individuals who have moved away from their usual place of residence without foreseeing immediate return, regardless of the reasons for migration, their legal status, or the duration of their absence. Since MIGNEX is concerned with internal as well as international migration, 'migrants' does not necessarily mean people who have moved to another country. In line with the specification 'regardless of the reasons for migration', migrants include refugees. As former IOM Director General Swing has put it, 'all refugees are migrants, but not every migrant is a refugee.' This is an *inclusivist* definition of migrants, as opposed to a *residualist* definition, which see migrants as united by being 'not refugees' (Carling 2017b).

Usage advice: Avoid using 'migrants' in ways that imply exclusion of refugees. Rather than 'refugees and migrants', write 'refugees and other migrants', 'migrants, including refugees' or simply 'migrants'. Make it explicit if 'migrants' are used to refer only to international migrants.

Migrant decision-making

Regardless of their motivations for migration, migrants make numerous decisions that shape their trajectory. These include decisions about whether, where, how, and with whom to move. Those who migrate irregularly, in particular, can face such decisions repeatedly on a number of legs on a long journey. The concept of migrant decision-making describes this process (Mallett and Hagen-Zanker 2018). See also MIGRATION DECISION.

Migration decision

The decision to migrate has been central to migration theory as an object of explanation or prediction. In short, under what conditions to people decide to migrate? However, such a question is analytically flawed when people cannot simply 'decide' to migrate and then do it but have to overcome overwhelming obstacles.

Usage advice: Use 'migration decisions' only in contexts where it is clear that migration is an available option, and therefore something people can 'decide' to do. It may, for instance, be more appropriate with respect to internal, rather than international, migration.

Migration infrastructure

Migration infrastructure is 'the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility' (Xiang and Lindquist 2014:S124). Xiang and Lindquist distinguish between five dimensions: the commercial (brokers, smugglers), the regulatory (state apparatus and procedures), the technological (communication, transport), the humanitarian (NGOs and international organizations), and the social (migrant networks). Migration infrastructure affects migration processes in two ways (Carling 2017a). First, it affects the development of migration aspirations, e.g. when social or commercial infrastructure makes migration seem feasible and attractive. Second, migration infrastructure affects whether or not such aspirations are realized. (See also MIGRATION PROCESSES and Figure 1.)

Usage advice: Be aware that while 'migration infrastructure' is gaining ground as a concept in migration studies, it is not obvious to wider audiences – especially because infrastructure is primarily thought of as physical features such as roads and power supplies.

Migration management

Migration management has come to replace 'immigration control' as the dominant policy paradigm, driven by the realization that migration cannot be successfully addressed in a unilateral way. Especially since the turn of the Millennium, the preference has been for an approach that emphasizes collaboration with countries of origin and transit. Migration management is sometimes associated with a 'win-win-win scenario' that envisions benefits for countries of origin, countries of destination, and migrants, if migration is well-managed. It is also associated with the ideal of 'safe, orderly and regular' migration, enshrined in the Global Compact on Migration. The shift to a more collaborative approach and a more holistic rhetoric does not imply a softening of the coercive aspects of migration governance, such as antismuggling measures, migrant detention, and forced returns.

Migration processes

Migration processes refers to the full gamut of migration desires, intentions, attempts and actual migration movements. The term encompasses different types of migration movements, differentiated with respect to composition, direction, timing, and volume. Taking such a broad approach makes it possible to study the variety of causal mechanisms that connect migration and development. Figure 1 shows the causal chain from current circumstances to migration outcomes. (See the DoA or Carling 2017a for further explanation.) See also ASPIRATIONS, MIGRATION INFRASTRUCTURE, FAILED MIGRATION ATTEMPTS, and INVOLUNTARY IMMOBILITY.

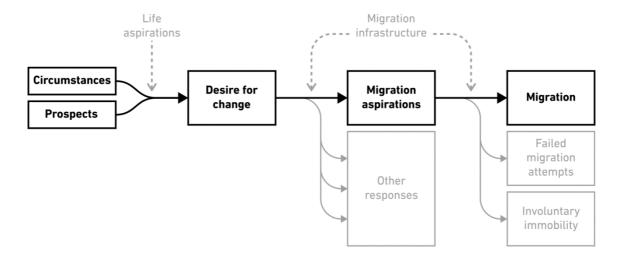


Figure 1. Model of the causal chain leading to migration outcomes.

Source: Based on Carling and Talleraas (2016) and Carling (2017a).

Migration-development nexus

The migration–development nexus is 'the totality of mechanisms through which migration and development dynamics affect each other' (Carling 2017c). The concept was originally introduced by Sørensen et al. (2002).

Migration-relevant policy

Migration-relevant policy refers to all policy that might affect migration dynamics, even if it is not presented under a migration heading. The effects on migration could be unintentional and indirect. For instance, trade policies could have effects on livelihoods in countries of origin, and the resulting changes could affect migration flows. The concept of migration-relevant policy is valuable for a comprehensive assessment of policy coherence.

Policy coherence

Policy coherence is a potential outcome of the interplay between policies across different policy areas or different government levels. It is achieved when the policy objectives across different areas or levels are aligned and policies interventions are mutually supportive of these goals: this is reflected in the very title of our project. In the context of MIGNEX, coherence is an issue in the relationship between migration policies, development policies, and other sectoral policies at the national level. In addition, there can be different degrees of coherence between the policies of a national government and those of sub-national authorities, supranational entities, the multilateral system, partner countries, and non-governmental stakeholders.

Policy interventions

Figure 2 presents the three primary forms of policy intervention in the migration—development nexus. Migration policy (1) directly regulates or influences migration flows. This could, in turn, have indirect positive or negative consequences for development. Development policy (2) seeks to promote development, primarily because it is important in its own right. The root causes approach to migration management implies that development policy can also be an indirect form of migration policy (2a). The third type of policy intervention (3) seeks to affect the development impacts of migration. Cases in point are measures to reduce remittance costs or stimulate migrant investment in countries of origin. MIGNEX is concerned with coherence among the

different types of policy intervention, the prospects for influencing migration via development policy, and the effectiveness of measures to increase the development benefit of migration.

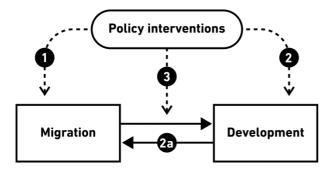


Figure 2. Relationships between migration, development, and policy interventions

Source: MIGNEX Description of Action

Research areas

Research areas are a particular concept in the MIGNEX research design. They the sub-national units of analysis in which most of the data collection is concentrated. A research area could be a town, part of a city, or a rural district. However, it is not necessarily an administrative unit. Each research area is sufficiently small to experience the same specific developments and conditions but could be diverse in socio-economic terms. The principles for defining and selecting research areas are presented in the Project Handbook appendix. In external communication, research areas can be described as LOCAL AREAS. See also COMMUNITIES and LOCAL LEVEL.

Root causes

Root causes of migration generally refer to adversities such poverty, environment degradation, and armed conflict that are seen to be push factors for migration. The implication is that the most sustainable way to manage migration is to address the root causes. The root causes doctrine became part of European policy in the 1980s and gained popularity through the 1990s (Castles and Van Hear 2011). By the 2000s, it had become engrained in European policy thinking about migration and development (Crush 2015). The root causes approach has forcefully reemerged in response to the migration and refugee crisis from 2014 onwards. The text for the call for proposal under which MIGNEX was funded stated that 'if the EU wants to successfully manage immigration flows at home, it needs to strengthen its cooperation with third countries of origin and transit of migrants, by fully addressing the root causes of migration' (European Commision 2015:60). The establishment of the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa in 2015 represents a clear and substantial commitment to this effect.

Usage advice: The term is well-established among our audiences and closely linked with the expectations of MIGNEX findings. It is therefore one that we may have to use. However, it comes with the limitation of portraying migration inherently as a symptom of problems. When reference to 'root causes' is not needed for connecting with our target audiences, MIGRATION PROCESSES can preferably be discussed in more analytically precise ways.

Specific developments

Specific developments is a core concept that supplements traditional notions of development as a broad improvement in living conditions. We take as a starting point that development is a multi-faceted process of social transformation with multiple, context-specific manifestations that are sometimes contradictory. (See also DEVELOPMENT.) We suggest that some of these manifestations can be identified as 'specific developments' that are experienced at the local or regional level. Examples of specific developments include the following:

- Major infrastructure projects (e.g. rural electrification, a new highway)
- Rapid expansion of livelihoods (e.g. the establishment of a large employer)
- Collapse in livelihoods (e.g. sudden fall in tourist arrivals due to security threats)
- Wide-ranging legal or policy change (e.g. introduction of sharia law)
- Depletion of a natural resource (e.g. loss of grazing land to desertification)
- Increased security threats (e.g. as a result of insurgency)
- New opportunities for education (e.g. the opening of a city's first university)

All of the above exemplify changes that are more specific than 'development' or 'root causes' and which could plausibly play a role in the life experience that underpins decisions about migration. A specific development is thus a societal change that

- is sufficiently concrete to be identified as a particular change
- is sufficiently important to be experienced by the majority of the population
- may result, wholly, partly, or not at all from policy interventions
- may be experienced by different people as a positive, negative, or contradictory change
- may be limited to a specific location or be more general (e.g. nation-wide)
- may be gradual or sudden, but always experienced as a change over time

Usage advice: The concept of specific developments is particular to MIGNEX and closely linked to our methodology. Moreover, our precise specification of this concept could evolve in the course of the research, as we apply it in practice. It should therefore be used with caution in external communication, especially in the early phases of the project.

Transit migration

Transit migration is loosely used to refer to the passage of migrants through countries that may not be their intended destination, sometimes involving prolonged presence. The term has become an established part of the migration management framework and is often used to designate certain countries as 'countries of transit' as opposed to countries of origin and countries of destination. Turkey and Tunisia are cases in point. However, the idea of transit migration has been criticized on analytical grounds because it is based on assumptions about migrants' *intentions* of onward movement, which are uncertain and unstable (Collyer *et al.* 2014). Moreover, it easily obscures the fact that most so-called transit countries are also countries of immigration and emigration.

Usage advice: Strike a balance that recognizes the dominant understanding and usefulness of the term, while avoiding unfounded assumptions about (1) migrants' intentions of onward movement, or (2) the primary role of a specific country in the regional migration regime.

Two-step approaches to migration

Two-step approaches are a broad class of analytical frameworks that are united by attention to the explanatory role of thoughts and feelings that precede migration outcomes (Carling and Schewel 2018). Various renditions of two-step approaches use different vocabularies but share

the premise that migration ASPIRATIONS may or may not result in actual mobility. Consequently, explanations for migration patterns must be sought both in the *formation* of migration aspirations and in their *conversion* into migration – both of which vary across contexts and between individuals.

Voluntary migration

The term 'voluntary migration' emerged as a logical counterpart to FORCED MIGRATION and is mainly used in the context of a forced/voluntary dichotomy (Erdal and Oeppen 2018). It mirrors the analytical shortcomings of 'forced migration'. However, it does not fill a specific need in the way that forced migration serves to describe flight from violence or persecution that may or may not fall within the legal definition of refugees.

Usage advice: Avoid using the term 'voluntary migration'.

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