WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2018: CHAPTER 7

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Cover photo: Osman was inspired by two-time Olympic bronze medalist Rohullah Nikpai, who is an ethnic Hazara like himself. "It is not easy being a Hazara in Afghanistan; we are often discriminated against by other ethnic groups and the Taliban who do not see us as 'real' Afghans," he says. Over the years he graduated his way up to black belt and won a local competition. Later the Taliban discovered Osman's identity and threatened to kill him, so he left Afghanistan for Indonesia. He has been awaiting refugee resettlement for several years and uses his time in South Sulawesi to train the local community in the sport he loves. © IOM (Photo: Muse Mohammed)

7 UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION JOURNEYS FROM MIGRANTS' PERSPECTIVES[1]

Introduction

Today, just as happens every day, many thousands of people throughout the world will be setting off on journeys in the hope of being able to forge safe and meaningful lives in a new country. Some will be carrying passports containing visas issued by the country to which they are heading, many having gone through visa application processes to secure the right to start a new phase of their lives in another country. These people will most likely be able to choose many aspects of this new phase: their new job or vocation; the city in which they intend to live; the mode of travel they will take; the timing and length of their journey; with whom they go; and how long they intend to stay. They should be considered the luckier ones, and more likely than not, they will be citizens of developed countries.

Today, just as happens every day, many others will be setting off on journeys they know will be long and dangerous – so much so that they may allow themselves the realization that they may be abused, exploited or even die en route. These people will most likely be facing considerable uncertainty about the journey ahead and, if they do make it to their destination, what awaits them in their new country. Many will not have visas in their passports and some won't even have a passport or travel document. They may know in general terms how to get to various places along the way; on whom they can rely to help them; how much different legs of the journey might cost; and the modes of travel they will need to take. Equally, many things will remain unclear. These are not the luckier ones, and more likely than not, they will be from developing countries and fragile States, some having had their lives up-ended by civil conflict, persecution or various other forms of disaster.

While our introductory remarks are squarely rooted in the realities of the day, migration is a constant in human history and has long been related to livelihoods, culture and disastrous events, as well as exile. Central to any discussion on migration are the people who migrate – who they are, how they migrate, and why they migrate – which is often deeply connected to the circumstances in which they find themselves and the degree of choice they have in contemplating and undertaking migration. There is increasing recognition of the importance in better understanding how migrants contemplate migration options (including *not* migrating) and undertake migration journeys. This recognition is in part fuelled by the increasing visibility of dangerous and sometimes deadly migration journeys. IOM's Missing Migrants project, for example, has found that more than 46,000 migrants have died during migration journeys since 2000.[2] Concerns for migrants' safety and rights has grown at the international level, as demonstrated by the September 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which has a significant focus on these two issues.[3] The Declaration includes a commitment to adopt a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018, which in and of itself is an indicator of the heightened concerns regarding *unsafe*, *disorderly* and *irregular* migration. One of the key points to note is that the Declaration and commitment to agree upon such a compact have in part been in reaction to the mass migration to and through Europe in 2015, during which migrants (including refugees) demonstrated significant determination in reaching particular destinations such as Germany, Sweden and Austria.

This chapter discusses the importance of understanding migration from migrants' perspectives, principally by listening to and learning from migrants through rigorous research. While all migrants make decisions before and during their journeys – some decisions being of greater consequence than others, and even involving life and death scenarios – this chapter focuses more on people who have fewer means and more restricted choices. The contemplations of those with significant degrees of freedom, such as the millionaire Chinese manufacturer migrating to Australia in retirement, is less of a focus, partly because those with wider choices are less likely to find themselves in situations of vulnerability. The chapter discusses migration journeys and how migrants consider migration before and during such travel, acknowledging that there is a great diversity of experiences, but that nevertheless, some important aspects can be drawn from current migration research and practice. The next section provides a brief examination of migrants' "self-agency" (i.e. migrants' abilities to make and act upon independent decisions and choices) and the "continuum of agency" that explains variations in choice when it comes to migrating. Section three then discusses key and emerging issues in migration research that are signalling shifts in how contemplations of migration and migration journeys have been changing for migrants themselves in recent years: (mis)information; preference for visas; risk and reward; and pressures to migrate. In the following section, we summarize some of the recent advances in research methods and technology that are making migrant-centric research more feasible globally. The conclusion then discusses implications for research and policy initiatives, including those related to the global compact on migration. Overall, we argue that better understandings of migrants' choices about migration and migration journeys are of fundamental importance to more effective policymaking on migration.

Considerations of self-agency in migration

There has been considerable research and enquiry into the reasons underpinning migration, both internal and international, over many decades, stretching back in the modern era as far as the 1880s.[4] Ongoing examination of migration drivers and factors principally involves attempts to explain migration patterns as well as the structures and processes that influence and shape the movement of people from one place to another (both within a State and between States). Underpinning all major migration theories, a central consideration is the extent to which people are able to exercise free will, or self-agency.[5] All general migration theories involve a consideration of migrant agency (or a lack thereof) to varying degrees, and there is recognition that greater emphasis on migrants' roles, decision-making and behaviour before and during migration is increasingly important in helping to explain how migration occurs. In other words, the extent of migrants' self-agency is becoming a crucial aspect in any attempt to make sense of migration patterns, processes and consequences.[6]

Historically, and particularly in the aftermath of World War II, a binary construct explaining migration in terms of people's agency – forced migration versus voluntary migration – tended to dominate policy as well as research. Subsequently, and particularly over the last two decades, there has been widespread recognition that a continuum of agency exists, rather than a voluntary/involuntary dichotomy.[7] Faist, for example, argues that such a continuum should be thought about in terms of "degrees of freedom, as ranging from high to low",[8] with de Haas suggesting that "the 'voluntary'/'forced' migration dichotomy is simplistic because it assumes that one category of migrants enjoys total freedom and the other category has no choice or agency at all".[9] In this context, how migrants contemplate and undertake migration, including those who may have extremely limited ability to choose where to go and how to get there, has emerged as a critical issue in migration research and policy:

4　　Ravenstein, 1885 and 1889.

5　　See for example writings on cumulative causation (Massey, 1990), neoclassical economics (Todaro, 1989), world system theory (Portes and Walton, 1981), social capital theory (Massey, 1987), new economics of labour migration (Stark and Bloom, 1985), and social network theory (Boyd, 1989).

6　　McAuliffe and Jayasuriya, 2016; Triandafyllidou, 2017.

7　　de Haas, 2011; Faist, 2000; Massey et al., 1998.

8　　Faist, 2000.

9　　de Haas, 2011.

> Different forced migrants, however they are categorised, have different areas of choice, different alternatives, available to them, depending not just on external constraining factors but also on such factors as their sex, age, wealth, connections, networks etc. This means that we have to understand the point of view and experiences of the people making the decision to move … We have to see them as agents, however limited, in a physical sense, their room for manoeuvre may be.[10]

In the context of labour migration, there has been a considerable focus on agency and structure, and how people contemplating migration navigate through a range of "intervening obstacles".[11] While the popular view remains that so-called "economic migrants" are active in their pursuit of migration and exercise a considerable degree of agency, this is too simplistic. Research and analysis in more recent decades, for example, has found wide variation in the ability of labour migrants to make choices, depending on the constraints and options they face; these include conditions of bonded labour, as well as labour migration that involves people trading off their rights in pressurized environments.[12] The extent to which labour migrants are able to exercise agency and choose aspects of their migration can be heavily circumscribed, although in most circumstances some choice remains, including as to whether to migrate – the main point of concern in most studies on migrants' agency – where to migrate, how to migrate, and whether or when to return home.[13] There is a related increasing appreciation of the need to better understand, by asking migrants themselves, how they contemplate migration before and during their migration journeys. This is particularly important if we are to better understand the dynamic and changing nature of migration patterns and processes.

Migration and the lottery of birth

Examining the overall quality of life by country, and the ability to migrate in terms of visa access, reveals that access to regular migration options is in some ways related to the "lottery of birth". It appears, for instance, that some nationality groups are much less likely to have access to visas. Table 1 summarizes global indices of human development, fragility and visa access of selected countries.[14] The Visa Restrictions Index, a global ranking of countries according to the travel freedom of their citizens,[15] for example, reveals that an individual's ability to enter a country with relative ease is in many respects determined by nationality. Visa access also broadly reflects a country's status and relations within the international community and indicates how stable, safe and prosperous it is in relation to other countries. The data also show two other aspects: that there are some significant differences between highly ranked human development countries and others; and that mid-ranked development countries can be significant source, transit and destination countries simultaneously. Nationals from countries with very high levels of human development can travel visa free to around 85 per cent of all other countries worldwide.[16] These countries are also significant and preferred destination countries.[17] Toward the bottom of the table, however, the visa restrictions in place for these countries indicate that regular migration pathways are problematic for citizens. Irregular pathways are likely to be the most realistic (if not the only) option open to potential migrants from these countries.

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10   Turton, 2003.

11   Lee, 1966.

12   Ruhs, 2013.

13   Khalaf and Alkobaisi, 1999; Ullah, 2010.

14   The Human Development Index is a composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: life expectancy, education and a decent standard of living. The Visa Restrictions Index measures visa restrictions in place in 218 countries and indicates the capacity of individuals to travel to other countries with relative ease. The higher the rank, the more countries an individual can enter visa free. The Fragile States Index, produced by the Fund for Peace, is an annual ranking of 178 nations based on their levels of stability and the pressures they face. It includes social, economic, political and military indicators.

15   Henley & Partners, 2017.

16   Ibid.

17   Esipova, Ray and Pugliese, 2017; Keogh, 2013; McAuliffe and Jayasuriya, 2016; UN DESA, 2016.

Table 1. Human development, fragility and visa rankings, selected countries

	Country (in HDI rank order)	Human Development Index 2016	Fragile States Index 2016	Visa Restrictions Index 2017
		Rank	Rank	Rank
Very High Human Development	Norway	1	177	4
	Australia	2	172	7
	Switzerland	2	174	6
	Germany	4	165	1
	Denmark	5	175	3
	Singapore	5	161	4
	Canada	10	169	6
	United States	10	159	3
	Sweden	14	171	2
	United Kingdom	16	162	4
	France	21	158	4
	Italy	26	148	3
	Greece	29	130	6
High Human Development	Malaysia	59	115	13
	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	69	47	95
	Turkey	71	79	52
	Sri Lanka	73	43	95
	Lebanon	76	40	96
	Mexico	77	107	26
	Thailand	87	74	67
	Tunisia	97	88	73
	Libya	102	25	99
Medium Human Development	Egypt	111	38	88
	Indonesia	113	86	79
	Iraq	121	11	103
	Morocco	123	89	78
	India	131	70	87
	Bangladesh	139	36	95
	Pakistan	147	14	102
Low Human Development	Syrian Arab Republic	149	6	101
	Haiti	163	10	86
	Sudan	165	4	97
	Yemen	168	4	98
	Afghanistan	169	9	104
	Ethiopia	174	24	96
	Eritrea	179	18	98
	Somalia	n/a	1	100
	A number 1 ranking means:	Very high human development	Most fragile country	Most mobile passport citizenship
	The lowest ranking means:	Low human development	Least fragile country	Least mobile passport citizenship

Source: UNDP, 2016; FFP, 2016; Henley & Partners, 2017.

Note: Somalia is not included in the HDI. According to UNDP, to include a country in the HDI requires recent, reliable and comparable data for all three dimensions of the Index. For a country to be included, statistics should ideally be available from the national statistical authority through relevant international data agencies.

While the contexts in which migration takes place impact on how people migrate, it is also worth acknowledging the enduring facet of human nature that makes us prone to seeking "better lives" including through migration. A stark manifestation of this quest for a better life can be seen when examining migration patterns by country income levels. Two thirds of all international migrants, for example, currently reside in high-income countries.[18]

Migrant-centric approaches: What can (potential) migrants tell us

In trying to better understand how migrants think about and decide upon migration, research findings are able to support or refute some of the popular assumptions made about migrants' behaviour and anticipated behaviour.[19] While some policymakers have access to a wider range of information and data than ever before, it is apparent that there still exists a level of presumption and a lack of knowledge about potential and actual migrant decision-making and experiences. For example, it is generally assumed that the huge number of people who make extremely dangerous sea journeys every year would be much reduced if they had access to information about the risks involved in the journeys, including those of death. However, while better information has been shown to have some impact on decision-making, it is only one part of the picture.[20] Better understandings of why some people choose to take highly risky journeys, even in the knowledge of the risks to their lives, are important to develop deeper knowledge about migration from migrants' perspectives (see below concerning the specific issue of risk and risk-taking). One of the major advantages of research that focuses on migrant decision-making and experiences is precisely that it is migrant-centric, not policy-centric. Rather than replacing evaluative research on policy settings, asking potential and actual migrants how they think about migration and the journeys they may take or are taking can provide important insights into the changing dynamics in origin and transit settings. Feeding this knowledge into sustainable responses that are more effective at protecting migrants both before and during their journeys is a top priority. Such information can also be used to develop different conceptual frameworks that more accurately account for migrants' views.[21]

How potential and actual migrants contemplate migration journeys at various stages is of keen interest to migration researchers as well as policymakers. The existing evidence on this topic points to a number of important considerations. First, there have long been acknowledged distinctions between the *desire* to migrate, the *intention* to migrate and *actual migration behaviour*.[22] While research on migrants' aspirations and intentions can contribute to our understanding of possible future migration trends, a desire or intention to migrate does not necessarily (or often) translate into actual migration. A recent example of this is reflected in the latest results of the *Gallup Survey on Migration Intentions*, which illustrate the significant differences between aspirations, intentions and realization. Conducted annually since 2005, the latest survey results indicate that an estimated 710 million adults (14% of the world's adult population) would like to migrate to another country if they had the opportunity. The figures reduce dramatically, however, when it comes to migration *plans* (66 million) and to actual preparations (23 million, or 0.4% of the world's adult population).[23]

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18 UN DESA, 2016.

19 Hernández-Carretero and Carling, 2012.

20 RMMS, 2014; Alpes and Sorensen, 2015.

21 McAuliffe and Jayasuriya, 2016; Triandafyllidou, 2017.

22 Stark, 1981; Carling, 2002.

23 Esipova, Ray and Pugliese, 2017.

Second, how migrants think about and undertake migration occurs in dynamic and sometimes fast-paced environments, so that people may need to respond to changes in circumstances quickly. This dynamism is being supported by increased transnational connectivity via more sophisticated and accessible telecommunications technology (as discussed in chapter 6). The dynamic nature of migration settings requires that we continue to invest in researching migrants' views and experiences, rather than see it as a "one-off" exercise.

Third, there has been less of a focus on people who do not want to migrate, partly because remaining at home is often considered the norm. However, there are indications that pressures on people and communities to migrate internationally may be increasing in some circumstances.[24] The longer-term development of "cultures of migration" may pose problems for an increasing number of communities in the future that would prefer to remain at home, but are less able to do so.[25]

Figure 1. Top desired destination countries of potential migrants, 2010–2015
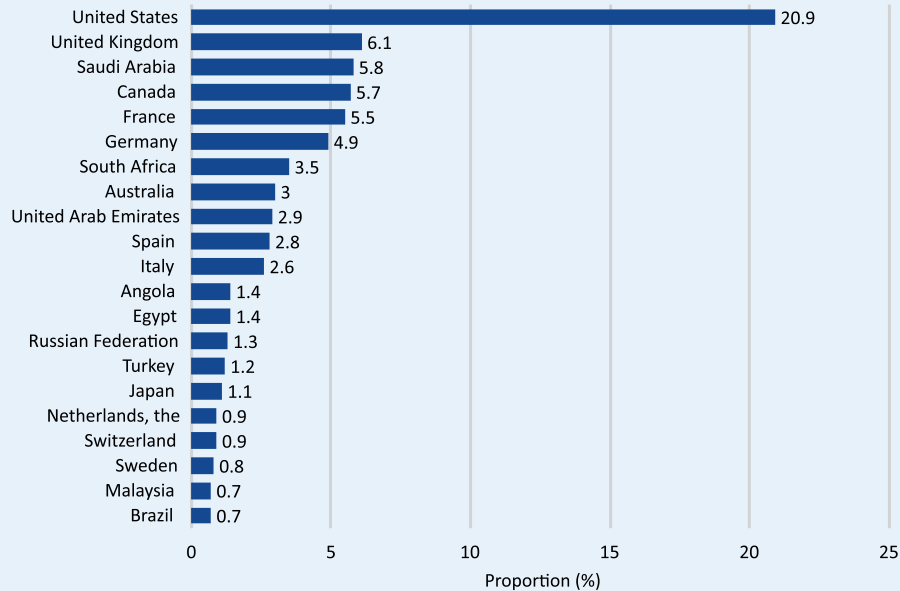
Source: Gallup Survey on Migration Intentions (2017), IOM GMDAC.

The Gallup Survey (2017) shows that some destination countries are strongly preferred over others, most particularly the United States. This appears to be regardless of the likelihood or ability of respondents to migrate to these countries. These survey data need to be treated with caution, for the survey results also indicate that far fewer people are planning migration compared with those desiring or intending to migrate. This is also reflected in many other studies, which have shown that only very small proportions of

24   Bylander, 2014.
25   Mescoli, 2013; Ball, Butt and Beazley, 2017; Mbaye, 2017.

those who may want to migrate, actually do so.[a] More often than not, explanations of preferred destinations focus on economic issues: wealthy countries with higher wages tend to be popular destination countries in studies such as this. However, for some groups, other factors can be more important; and perceptions of a country's multiculturalism/tolerance, the extent to which the rule of law applies, and how safe it is, can feature more prominently than income-generation and opportunities for work.[b]

a Jayasuriya, McAuliffe and Iqbal, 2016; McAuliffe and Jayasuriya, 2016.
b McAuliffe and Jayasuriya, 2016.

Central to any discussion on migrants' perspectives is the role of information and how it interplays with migration processes, especially in light of the increasing use of social media and telecommunication technologies. This aspect is discussed in the next section, before we examine the remaining key and emerging issues heralded by migrant-centric research. We include examples of recent empirical research to illustrate how migration considerations are changing in some communities.

(Mis)information

Information is central to migrants' contemplations and perceptions of migration, whether considering their options, choosing a destination, or determining the safest and most financially feasible routes. Information is also central to considerations of returning home. The quality and validity of information available plays a crucial role for a journey to be successful, however this is defined. Extensive research shows that the source of information is a very important aspect for migrants when deciding whether they can trust it or not and how much weight to give it.[26] Information can come from social connections such as families, friends and other networks, both at home and in destination countries; and research over several decades confirms that information provided by those close to the migrant (in social, not geographic terms) is most valued.[27] Several recent studies confirm this understanding, finding that information from close social connections is considered by migrants, before and during journeys, as the most important source, because it is information they can trust.[28]

Conversely, as social connections are more trusted than official sources, it may happen that valid information, such as government information about migration policies, may not be perceived as accurate by migrants and is less likely to shape migration decisions. Moreover, in some cases, distrust in the government or corrupt practices of government officials may impact on how information is perceived. This is particularly relevant to information campaigns (including deterrent messaging) by destination countries aimed at potential irregular migrants. Some research has found that information campaigns are generally ineffective and that asylum seekers do not know much about (European) destination countries.[29] However, it also appears that migrants seem to recognize that not all governments are the same, and that some are much more likely to provide accurate information on migration than

26 Wall, Campbell and Janbek, 2015.
27 Pickering et al., 2016; Komito and Bates, 2011.
28 Kuschminder and Koser, 2016; Maroufof, 2017; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2016.
29 Gilbert and Koser, 2006; UK Home Office, 2004.

others in specific circumstances. Research conducted in Indonesia in late 2014, for example, found that 39 per cent of Afghan respondents indicated that "their most trusted source of information to inform them of their onward journey to Australia was the Australian Government".[30]

The transmission of information is also evolving and recent dramatic advances in telecommunication technologies have transformed the nature of information exchange. Social media and real-time telecommunications applications (such as Facebook, Skype, Viber, WhatsApp and other instant messaging applications) are providing new ways of sharing information on the potential risks and rewards of making journeys. This appears to be influencing migration decision processes and having an impact on migration patterns, as exemplified by the large-scale movements of people to Europe in 2015 (see discussion in chapter 6 on Mobility, migration and transnational connectivity). A study undertaken by a German non-profit organization, for example, looked at how Syrian and Iraqi refugees navigated information sources before, during and after their journeys to Germany.[31] Above all, the interviewees trusted social connections such as family and friends. The findings, however, also indicate that increasing reliance is being placed on information from less well-known networks via social media, especially when preparing for a planned transit.[32]

Further, social media provide a platform for contact between people seeking to migrate and those advertising migration services, both lawful and unlawful (e.g. travel services and recruitment agencies, as well as smugglers selling fraudulent identity documents and visas). Although many are aware that the information provided may not be accurate, prospective migrants may use social media to locate smugglers.[33] In a survey undertaken in 2016, the European Commission asked 21 European States how social media and other relevant online platforms are used by migrants and by the smugglers themselves to recruit their customers. From the results, it appears that there are groups, on Facebook for instance, where migrants and asylum seekers "search for travelling companions and ask for advice on dangers, risks and reliable smugglers." There are also more informative groups disseminating information on routes, destinations, asylum practices, political situations, legislation and welfare benefits. States further mention YouTube videos in which people give advice and detailed instructions in several languages on how to migrate, seek asylum and proceed in practice.[34]

A strong preference for visas

Where possible, migrants will choose to migrate through regular pathways on visas.[35] As highlighted in our opening remarks, there are stark differences between travelling on a visa and travelling without a visa. From a migrant's perspective, the experience can be profoundly different in a number of important ways that can impact on the migrant as well as his/her family, including those who may remain in the origin country. First, visas denote authority to enter a country and so offer a form of legitimacy when arriving in and travelling through a country. A valid visa provides a greater chance of being safeguarded against exploitation. Conversely, travelling without a visa puts people at much greater risk of being detained and deported by authorities, or exploited and abused by those offering illicit migration services, such as smugglers or traffickers, and having to operate largely outside of regulated systems.

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30 Pickering et al., 2016.

31 MiCT, 2016.

32 Ibid.

33 Frouws et al., 2016.

34 EC/EMN, 2016.

35 Please note that while "regular" migration does not necessarily require visas, the discussion refers to visas because these are often a requirement, most especially for migrants from developing countries. In addition, the term "visa" is much more widely understood than "regular" by migrants and the general public.

Second, travelling on visas is undoubtedly much easier logistically, as the availability of travel options is far greater. In some cases, it can mean the difference between a journey being feasible or not, most especially in relation to air travel, which tends to be heavily monitored and controlled at departure, transit and entry points. Third, visas provide a greater level of certainty and confidence in the journey, which is much more likely to take place as planned, including in relation to costs. Travelling on visas is more likely to be safer, more certain and more easily able to accommodate greater choice, such as length of journey, travel mode and with whom to travel (if anyone).

It is unsurprising then that there is often a strong preference for travelling on a visa. Access to visas within decision-making contexts, therefore, features heavily in the minds of potential migrants and has been shown to be a key factor when the possibilities of migrating are explored while in the country of origin. In recent research on online job search and migration intentions, for example, the availability of visas was found to be a determining factor in how people conducted online job searches.[36] Similarly, changes in visa settings have been found to have an impact on potential migrants' contemplations of migration, as well as their eventual migration. This can be seen, for example, in the changes that occur after visa restrictions are removed for specific groups, including by citizenship.[37] While there is a myriad of examples, such changes have been prominent when visa liberalization has occurred in key destination countries or regions, such as in the United States in the 1960s and within the EU as Schengen arrangements expanded over time, taking in an increasing number of countries.[38]

Knowledge of the availability of visas is found to be relevant in a range of different settings, including those where the underlying reasons for wanting to migrate may be due to a multitude of circumstances and factors. In Sri Lanka, for example, the use of labour migration pathways to States within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has been found to be associated with underlying protection needs. In the absence of accessible protection options, people have sought to migrate using the options that are available to them, and in this case, that has meant migrating as labour migrants. The findings of this study are reported in the text box below.

Labour migration as an alternative for asylum seekers facing protection issues

This study represents possibly the first longitudinal study on migration intentions, actual migration, and immobility undertaken in a post-conflict country. It is clear that using labour migration as an escape route does not apply to people living inside areas severely affected by conflict relative to those outside areas severely affected by conflict. Results suggest that those facing persecution … do actively consider, and in some cases use, labour migration as an escape strategy. That labour migration, as opposed to seeking asylum, is considered an escape strategy is not strange in an environment of restricted asylum seeking options[c] and where resources needed for labour migration are estimated at twenty times less than those needed to seek asylum.[d]

From a policy perspective, this paper demonstrates that people needing to escape persecution, and seeking other forms of protection may, if presented with the option, migrate to countries for work through regular pathways, rather than to other countries for asylum via irregular pathways. These are not refugees

36   Sinclair and Mamertino, 2016.
37   Czaika and de Haas, 2016.
38   Ortega and Peri, 2013.

who enter the labour market,[e] but people who *could* be refugees, and instead choose regular labour migration pathways in a destination country (usually the Middle East) that may not be their preferred choice. Hence, a possible option is to explore the feasibility of encouraging low-skilled labour migration for potential asylum seekers – and even refugees waiting in UN camps – to Middle Eastern countries. An alternative strategy could be for developed countries to assist vulnerable people to improve their vocational skills and work with key destination countries to improve recognition rates, which could guide them into regular migration pathways. However, it is noted that it is unlikely that developed countries would recruit low-skilled workers on any significant scale, especially if labour-intensive and low-paying service industries, such as cleaning, are already filled by irregular migrants.[f]

c Jayasuriya, McAuliffe and Iqbal, 2016.
d Van Hear, 2014.
e Salt, 1992.
f Ibid.

Excerpt of Jayasuriya, 2016.

Unsurprisingly, the preference for visas and regular pathways extends to other aspects of migration, including migration status after arrival as well as how people engage in return migration. Georgian migrants in Greece, for instance, would often rather try to obtain a residence permit than apply for asylum or stay irregularly.[39] Recent research on assisted voluntary return also found that one of the main factors involved in the decision-making of return migrants was their preference to be law-abiding.[40] While this was by no means the only factor, that people would prefer to remain within the law of the country they are in, including during return migration decision-making, not only makes intuitive sense, it is also practical from migrants' perspectives. Remaining within the law may have implications for return to origin as well as for any future international migration plans that may eventuate.

Risk and reward

Most people may have preferences for law-abiding behaviour, including for authorized, visa-related travel, but what happens when regular pathways and authorized entry are not available? We can see from table 1 that for some people, there can be little hope of securing a visa to travel to most countries. Afghans, for example, currently rank last on the Visa Restrictions Index, meaning that access to regular migration pathways to preferred destinations is severely restricted. In the absence of accessible regular migration options to many countries, people are more restricted in their ability to migrate internationally, with remaining at home; migrating to less desirable, but accessible countries; and irregular migration options (to preferred destinations) being more feasible. This may result in "involuntary immobility",[41] whereby people

39 Maroufof, 2017.
40 Koser and Kuschminder, 2015.
41 See Carling's discussion of involuntary immobility (Carling, 2002).

who would prefer to migrate are not able to do so, or in people resorting to high-risk journeys through irregular migration. For some people, there may be variations in between these extremes, such as migrating to countries that may not necessarily be preferred, but are at least accessible. This appears to be a stark reality for many; while the United States may be the most preferred destination country in the world, most people who migrate internationally do not get to the United States, but instead pursue other options. This is supported by current data on international migrants, for example, which show that in some regions, intraregional migration far outstrips outmigration from the region. This is most notable within Africa, where migration within the region accounts for the vast majority of current migration and is partly related to regional free movement agreements (see discussion in chapter 3).

Notwithstanding information campaigns, media reporting and information from family, friends and other migrants, in some circumstances potential migrants continue to contemplate high-risk irregular migration journeys. Recent survey research undertaken by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat in Ethiopia found that despite a very high proportion of potential migrants (92%) being aware of the risks associated with irregular travel to Yemen and Saudi Arabia, 42 per cent indicated that the benefits of migration were worth the risks faced during the journey and upon arrival in transit and destination countries.[42] Tolerance of different types of abuse and/or physical hardship during migration was found to have ranged from between 1 per cent (sexual abuse) to 44 per cent (degrading treatment and verbal abuse).[43] Another recent study involving interviews with around 500 people in Europe who had crossed the Mediterranean found that many of them were not oblivious to the risks posed by these irregular migration journeys, and that they chose to embark on the sea crossing despite being cognizant of the real dangers.[44] There has also been research into the psychological mechanisms people utilize when contemplating and undertaking high-risk irregular maritime migration. Carling and Hernández-Carretero, for example, examined how potential migrants in Senegal related to the risks of maritime migration to the Spanish archipelago.[45] They found that in the face of high-risk journeys, people adopted several psychological mechanisms, including forms of avoidance, discrediting negative information and engaging in harm minimization. The ability to reach a desired destination via irregular maritime migration, which would otherwise be out of reach, appears to invoke resignation to the "pain" of such migration, as well as some psychological strategies to lessen the pain. Abuse, exploitation and trauma during migration journeys, however, remain an under-researched, and perhaps not well understood, facet of irregular migration. What we know of the extreme conditions some migrants face is often from investigative journalists, non-governmental organizations or international organizations, who have the ability to relay migrants' stories quickly from migration routes that may be difficult for others to access. Information on experiences and exploitation can help us better understand the difficult choices migrants are making and the changes that are occurring in migration corridors – see, for example, the text box on the Darién Gap corridor taken from an investigative journalism article published in *Outside* magazine. Importantly, the context in which people make migration decisions and the opportunity for a better life (however defined) can be a considerable incentive, despite the risks involved.

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42   RMMS, 2014.

43   Ibid.

44   Crawley et al., 2016.

45   Carling and Hernández-Carretero, 2011.

Darién Gap: A terrifying journey through the world's most dangerous jungle

The Darién Gap is a lawless wilderness on the border of Colombia and Panama, teeming with everything from deadly snakes to antigovernment guerrillas. The region also sees a flow of migrants from Cuba, Africa and Asia, whose desperation sends them on perilous journeys to the U.S.

…

As traditional pathways to the U.S. become more difficult, Cubans, Somalis, Syrians, Bangladeshis, Nepalis, and many more have been heading to South American countries and traveling north, moving overland up the Central American isthmus. The worst part of this journey is through the Gap. The entire expanse, a roadless maze that travelers usually negotiate on foot and in boats, is dominated by narco traffickers and … guerrillas who've been waging war on the government of Colombia since 1964. Hundreds of migrants enter each year; many never emerge, killed or abandoned by coyotes (migrant smugglers) on ghost trails.

…

A pudgy Bangladeshi man named Momir, his face ghoulishly pale from fever, rejects the coyote's order to get out of the boat when it runs aground. Arafat shows us a large gash on the bottom of his foot and refuses to walk any farther. The men are weak from days of traveling in muggy, 90-degree temperatures, subsisting on crackers and gulping river water. And they are scared. … Jafar starts to cry, triggering an outburst of desperate pleas from the men. They flash scars on their wrists and stomachs; one is missing part of a finger. … It's easy to understand why any sane person would leave such grim prospects behind. Harder to grasp is how these men ended up on the southern edge of the Darién Gap, half a world away from home, without the faintest idea of the grueling trials ahead. Their willpower is amazing, but the Gap's shadowy depths have swallowed travelers far more prepared.

Another [motel manager] Montero video showed a group of Nepalis hunched over paper plates … Authorities had caught them and brought them to Montero's for a meal before deportation. "Of course, I never called customs on any of the ones who stayed here, because I don't agree that those looking for a better life should be sent back," Montero said. "Their motivation is incredible."

Excerpt: Jason Motlagh, published 19 July 2016 by *Outside* magazine.

Besides, there is now clear recognition of the increasing pressure being placed on the international protection system, which provides asylum seekers with a lawful, but nevertheless irregular migration option for many people who are unable to access visa-related travel. From migrants' perspectives, irregular asylum migration can sometimes be the only option available and is one that is being increasingly exploited by migrant smugglers, many of whom are driven by profits at the expense of migrants' well-being.[46] Particular corridors have become extremely dangerous as smuggling and trafficking networks have expanded to take advantage of people with very few options.

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46   Carling, 2016; McAuliffe and Koser, 2015.

The international protection system risks becoming a "funnel" for people who may not have protection needs under the Refugee Convention, but may nevertheless be extremely vulnerable at home and during migration journeys:

> I hope that, after enduring the risks and hardships of this journey, the boys study there and have a better future – because we knew that they had no future in Kabul. We are happy that they safely made this journey. Only God knows about their future. I would like to go and join them in Germany. Younger siblings too would like to join them in Germany. Afghanistan is not a safe anymore and everyone wants to live in a safer place. We are happy with this decision now. If, God forbid, something happens to us in Kabul, then two of our family are safe and alive in Germany.
>
> Mother of two migrants
> from Kabul[47]

Along with the risks and how people contemplate dangerous journeys, the potential rewards need to be acknowledged. For some communities, the rewards can be long term, allowing the next generation and their children access to better education, health services and living standards, while at the same time supporting family members and communities in origin countries. For other groups, including those that may have been marginalized economically, socially or politically in their home countries, international migration has become a survival strategy whereby family and community members engage in migration to access resources and safety, often along kinship or ethnic lines.[48]

Pressures to migrate

Even where regular pathways via visas are available, the existing evidence is pointing to increasing pressures on some families and communities to migrate internationally, including people who may prefer to remain at home.[49] Notwithstanding the benefits of international migration, this points to a potentially negative consequence for some communities related to the longer-term development of "cultures of migration" – described, for example, as a culture in which "non-migrants observe migrants to whom they are socially connected and seek to emulate their migratory behaviour".[50] The development of such cultures has been found to impact on how potential migrants think about their futures: "Young people who grow up and come of age increasingly expect to migrate internationally in the course of their lives".[51] And yet, more recent research is highlighting that over time there can be emerging pressures on people who want to remain at home, but are finding it increasingly difficult to do so. Overall, this appears to be affecting young people across a variety of settings – for instance, facing increased pressure from family members to move overseas and provide remittances back to extended families.[52] In research undertaken in 2016 on Afghans who migrated to Europe in 2015, remarks by migrants' families who remained at home highlight the issue:

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47   Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2016.

48   Monsutti, 2005.

49   Ball, Butt and Beazley, 2017.

50   Kandel and Massey, 2002.

51   Ibid.

52   Heidbrink, 2017.

> After the insurgents killed our brother, and set our house on fire, the decision was made to send our brother away … All the family decided together that we would send our brother to Europe so that he can help out the whole family financially once he makes it to Europe.
>
> Brother of migrant
> from Takhar[53]

In West Africa some families rely heavily on remittances sent from children and spouses, and the pressure to migrate on behalf of the entire family can be significant:

> The Anne family relied on other sons to help financially…Now, it is up to Arouna Anne, the last male in the family, to make a better life for his parents and the children his dead brothers left behind. He is just 14 years old. … Arouna hasn't seen his parents for six months. He sends a bit of money to them from time to time. It's not enough. "I am the only remaining son now," he said. "I have to support the family." Arouna knows well the dangers of the trip to Europe. One of his friends from home also tried the trip not long ago and died in Libya.[54]

Similar findings are evident in quite different settings, although peer pressure is also playing a role. For example, in a 2016 study of migrant adolescent girls from Ethiopia and Eritrea to Sudan, researchers found that the situation of families had a significant impact on the girls' and young women's decisions to migrate. They were more likely to migrate when coming from families that had experienced some kind of crisis, such as the absence of one or both parents. Although constrained by a lack of opportunities and options and by limiting gender norms (see text box on gender dimensions), their "desire to do 'something' about their situation points to the agency of the girls who by deciding to leave take control of their lives".[55] The research also found that migrant girls from Ethiopia and Eritrea felt pressured by the community "culture of migration", in which migration is becoming a competition and those who decide to stay behind or who cannot move are stigmatized. This peer pressure defining those who have migrated as the "successful ones" also affects migration decision-making processes.[56]

The number of children migrating around the world has risen significantly in recent years. The challenges and vulnerabilities that migrant children face during migration journeys can be extreme, raising a plethora of issues in formulating effective responses. Appendix A includes discussion on migrant children journeys, with case studies on Afghan unaccompanied minors and children from Central America transiting through Mexico.

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53 Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2016.

54 Searcey and Barry, 2017.

55 Grabska, Del Franco and de Regt, 2016.

56 Ibid.

Additional findings on the development of long-term labour migration corridors point to an increasing reliance on remittances as key components of household incomes, which in turn locks people into specific migration patterns. While the positive benefits of improved household income and related social changes can be clear, some are feeling the impact of significant pressure to migrate and a sense that options to stay at home are no longer as viable as they once were. The case of the Nepalese migrant workers highlights aspects of this phenomenon. Over the last ten years, the massive outmigration from Nepal for foreign employment, mostly to the Gulf and Malaysia, has changed the livelihoods and social structure of rural Nepal. Within this context, migration by Nepalese men has become a ubiquitous phenomenon, and although studies have found that decisions to migrate are generally taken at the household level, there is increasing pressure to migrate. Research found that migration decisions have increased in social significance and a "culture" of migration has increasingly emerged.[57] The study on left-behind women in Nepal shows that male migration on a large scale has also had profound impacts on women and families who have remained, including in relation to their agency. In terms of family well-being, migration has clearly improved the well-being of households through increased income, improved food security, land and livestock leasing, and greater access to girls' education. It has also resulted in increased workloads for women, but not necessarily by their own agency with respect to household decisions. Major decisions still tended to be made by migrant men through mobile phone communication, although there was a clear increment in women's authority to make decisions.

Gender dimensions: decisions, feminization and gender roles

Migration-related decision-making processes can have strong gender dimensions. In traditional societies, for example, patriarchy affects a range of social and familial interactions, including on migration. In some societies, female participation in decision-making is still rare. Family traditions, status, cultural practices and religious beliefs play roles in who make decisions within families. For example, in the Philippines, migration decisions of young single women are usually structured with respect to potential benefits for the household as a whole. This means women's decision to migrate may be based on household needs rather than on their own individual advancement.[g] In Afghanistan, there tends to be a strong "masculinity" aspect to migration, especially irregular migration of young men and boys, which is seen as a "rite of passage" to adulthood.[h]

A central aspect of migration–gender relationships is the change in the gender composition of international migrants – the so-called "feminization" of migration.[i] Women comprise roughly half of the world's international migrant population; however, the proportion varies considerably by region, and there are countries (such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand) where the majority of emigrants are female.[j] There has also been a qualitative change in that today, female migrants are more likely to move independently rather than as dependants,[k] including from the countries mentioned above.

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57   Adhikari and Hobley, 2015.

This has also meant that women are more involved in sending remittances and supporting their families from abroad, which in turn is altering social and familial dynamics and decision-making. Recent empirical research undertaken in Java highlights the changing nature of international migration:

> Men and women's (im)mobilities are deeply intertwined with their roles and positions in the household … The case studies illustrate a range of outcomes of gendered decision-making, even in the highly patriarchal Javanese context. We highlight how the decision-making process surrounding labour migration access is a function of changes in gender and intergenerational dynamics within the household 'in flux'. Gender intersects with prevailing ideologies and migration systems (over time) to enable previously immobilised households and individuals to access labour migration. Relatedly the migration experience of individuals can have a relational effect on other household members' imagined or actual migrations and futures, such as in Gendered migration within households 'in flux'. Zaitun's household where her daughter-in-law's migration has a bearing on other members' mobility. Similarly, Khalid's unpleasant illegal migration journey laid the foundation of support for Riana's mobility through formal channels.[l]

g Chant and Radcliffe, 1992; Oishi, 2002.
h Monsutti, 2007.
i Castles and Miller, 2003; Pfeiffer et al., 2007.
j United Nations, 2006; Martin, 2007.
k Ullah, 2013.
l Khoo, Platt and Yeoh, 2017.

Advances in research technologies

Over the last few decades, the world has seen an exponential growth in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Innovations such as the Internet, social media and mobile devices have changed not only the way people communicate, but also how information is produced and disseminated. The impact of these technological advances has been far-reaching, touching all facets of human life and all fields of study, including migration. Technology is increasingly changing migration research and data collection methods in ways that have elicited both considerable support and raised concerns. While traditional research methods such as face-to-face interviews and paper-based surveys undoubtedly continue to be highly relevant, technological advancements have opened up new research avenues, providing further opportunities to enhance our understanding of migrants' views and movements.

Online research tools, software and hardware devices

Internet tools such as web-based surveys and online interviews have expanded the ability to conduct migration-related research in places that are difficult to reach. They have made it possible for researchers not only to expand greatly their geographic reach, but also to access specific groups quickly and efficiently.[58] The Internet has also enhanced inclusion in the research process, allowing for the participation of migrants whose voices and circumstances would otherwise not be heard.

For researchers whose work focuses on sensitive subjects such as smuggling or irregular migration, Internet-based research methods have proven to be indispensable. Irregular migrants, for example, may hesitate to participate in studies that use traditional research methods such as face-to-face interviews out of fear that their identities may be exposed, as "research into irregular migration inevitably deals with sensitive issues".[59] By using tools such as web-based surveys, researchers can increasingly provide greater anonymity for respondents.[60] There is growing recognition that these types of surveys, when applied to sensitive subjects, are able to elicit more honest and personal answers from participants.[61] A 2013 study on irregular migrants in Australia, for example, used tablet computers with self-completion surveys translated into multiple languages.[62] By giving migrants more control – granting them the ability to switch to their preferred language while completing the surveys – the research successfully generated what could be reasonably considered honest and candid responses from the survey participants.[63] Online methods are demonstratively less intrusive and can empower migrants in their role as research subjects. These methods have also been shown to reduce both social anxiety and desirability effects, thereby producing more truthful answers in research results.[64]

Furthermore, longitudinal studies, which are key in understanding migrants' decision-making, have been enhanced by technologies such as GPS capabilities. For example, where consent is granted, the GPS capability of personal devices has made it easier for researchers to track migrant journeys.[65] New and emerging software and hardware tools also mean that data can be collected relatively cheaply, as well as faster, and can be stored for longer periods of time.[66] These ICTs provide researchers with the ability to maintain participant engagement as well as improve data retention for studies that stretch on for long periods of time.[67]

Social media and big data

Social media technologies are emerging as formidable tools in social science research. With the rise of sites such as Facebook and Twitter, with Facebook alone boasting more than 1.9 billion users worldwide as of May 2017,[68] social media sites have become useful repositories of information on migrants. Importantly, these sites enable researchers to access a much broader community of migrants by providing powerful search capabilities for

58 Oiarzabal and Reips, 2012.
59 Düvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer, 2008.
60 Reips and Buffardi, 2012.
61 Kays, Keith and Broughal, 2013.
62 McAuliffe, 2013.
63 Ibid.
64 Joinson, 1999.
65 Taylor, 2015.
66 Banati, 2017.
67 Farabee et al., 2016.
68 Fiegerman, 2017.

potential study participants. Social media sites can be particularly useful when conducting research on diaspora communities, which are increasingly using these platforms for all kinds of network activity.[69] Reips and Buffardi expressly argue that "social media can provide migration researchers with a unique insight into migrants' thoughts and behaviours that are occurring naturally in their social networks".[70] Moreover, sources of big data[71] such as social media and Internet search patterns can provide geocoded data that can be helpful in locating people, including migrants. The Syrian Humanitarian Tracker, a mapping system that uses machine-mining techniques and crowdsourced photo, video and text reports,[72] has proven to be one of the most successful big data tools since the Syrian conflict started. It has been used not just by researchers to follow trends in the conflict, including migrants' movements, but also by internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants themselves in search of safe travel routes and to steer clear of human traffickers.[73]

Challenges and opportunities

The benefits that new technologies bring to migration research are undeniable. However, these new research tools and methods have also been criticized on methodological and ethical grounds. Some contend that research conducted online, for example, often fails to consider the significance of the interactions between subject and scholar.[74] The failure to recognize subtle cues such as tone of voice and facial expressions during online interviews can hinder researchers from fully comprehending the views of the study participants.[75] Additionally, the fact that Internet access is not universal raises the spectre of research bias, as the so-called "digital divide" excludes people who do not have access to these technologies.[76] However, the increasing use of highly portable tablet technology enables researchers to work in remote locations, as well as with respondents who may need support when completing surveys. Another concern associated with methods such as web-based surveys is verifying that those completing them are the intended participants. However, advances in online surveys now provide the ability to automatically verify survey responses,[77] with the use of database technology allowing for the corroboration of the identity and age information provided by the participants.[78]

Issues surrounding privacy, data protection and confidentiality, especially in studies that use big data sources such as social media, continue to pose risks and challenges for both study participants and researchers.[79] "Stalking" on social media, for example, where a researcher may not inform or get the required consent of those being observed, raises ethical concerns. Researchers are also increasingly finding it difficult to differentiate between personal and public data, as the line between the two is no longer clear-cut. Consequently, there is a growing body of work on how social science researchers can better conduct studies using new technologies without compromising themselves or their research subjects.[80] While the use of new research technologies evidently

69 Crush et al., 2012.

70 Reips and Buffardi, 2012.

71 "Big data is the practice of using collected data to create algorithms, models, and analytics to better understand human behavior" (Kuang, 2017).

72 See Syrian Tracker, www.humanitariantracker.org/syria-tracker.

73 Ashton et al., 2016.

74 Ignacio, 2013.

75 Ibid.

76 Hargittai, 2010.

77 Andrews, Nonnecke and Preece, 2003.

78 Nash et al., 2013.

79 Harriman and Patel, 2014.

80 Gold and Nawyn, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2011; Kays, Keith and Broughal, 2013; Karpf, 2012.

comes with pitfalls, ICTs have also generated enormous advantages for social science research. As migration researchers increasingly embrace these technologies, it is imperative to ensure not only that the appropriate methods are used, but also that ethical challenges – which can be amplified in the digital age – are addressed.

Implications for policy and research

Human migration is an age-old phenomenon, with migration decision-making processes occurring before, during and after migration continuing to be shaped by broader economic, social and cultural conditions. While the inherent nature of decision-making may not have changed substantially over time, the conditions within which it takes place are evolving. Increasing transnational connectivity and telecommunications advances in particular, means that we are more able than at any other time in history to see, read and hear about how people live their lives in far-off locations. We are now afforded a greater sense of our shared humanity that extends beyond culture, creed or wealth, just as we are more able to see and (virtually) experience the personal costs of war, famine and abject poverty. Our increasing global connectivity is also extending into supporting interactions, including the sharing of (mis)information, the transfer of money, and the exchange of ideas and knowledge, with interactions now able to occur in real time. This has implications for many aspects of our daily lives, including how we think about migration and mobility.

In this chapter, we have examined how migrants think about migration journeys in different settings, drawing on emerging findings from a significant body of work on the topic. We are seeing more research being done in origin and transit countries, most especially in relation to irregular migration. One of the most interesting aspects and emerging tensions concerns the consideration of migrants as actors with (expanding) agency within research domains, including the traditional categories of "forced" migrants, such as refugees. This builds on the recognition in recent decades of the move away from the binary forced-voluntary construct towards a continuum of migrant agency. The ways in which migrants are accessing and utilizing information from a range of sources continues to be of interest, and research is showing that it is an area that is evolving rapidly, including the consumption of social media as well as the changing nature of contact with people who facilitate migration journeys, such as recruitment agents and migrant smugglers. The issue of increasing transnational connectivity and migrants' communication patterns is discussed in chapter 6.

Within the context of the 2018 global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, a more nuanced understanding of potential and actual migrants' perspectives and considerations allows for deeper reflection of sustainable policy responses that are more able to incorporate population support and stabilization, and enhanced human security during journeys, as well as expanding visa-related travel options. In this context, we find the following points to be relevant for research and policy:

- **Researchers need to take more notice of migrants' agency, understanding how people contemplate migration vis-à-vis policy categories** and place less emphasis on the policy categories that are central to regulated systems. Rather than citizenship, skills or other attributes to meet visa requirements, for example, the ability to pay for illicit migration services and enact strategies to manage risky journeys appear to be increasingly more significant in determining who moves and where, raising broader issues for the regulation and management of migration and support for populations in home and host countries.

- Reconciling aspirations to migrate as well as increasing pressures to migrate in some communities with the need for States to manage regulated entry and stay of migrants continues to be challenging. **Further investment in the formulation of innovative and practical ideas on how regular pathways can be enhanced without inadvertently creating overwhelming increases in "demand" for migration is a priority.** Understanding how migrants contemplate migration and migration journeys is central to the development of effective approaches.

- The dynamic nature of migration settings, supported by increased transnational connectivity via more sophisticated and accessible telecommunications technology, **requires that we continue to invest in understanding migrants' views and experiences** by undertaking longitudinal surveys rather than seeing surveys as an occasional, "one-off" exercise.

- As the pressures on people and communities to migrate internationally may be increasing in some circumstances, the longer-term development of much stronger "cultures of migration" may pose problems for an increasing number of communities in the future who would prefer to remain at home, but are less able to do so. It is important, therefore, to **better understand the factors that are involved in preferences to *not* migrate** (including in conflict and other perilous environments). This will assist in being able to better support people who would prefer to remain in their communities.

- Harnessing the **opportunities as well as managing the risks that new research technologies continue to present** will remain a critical aspect in fostering effective and ethical research into migration. Big data analysis, for example, provides a new way of analysing migration dynamics, but this must not be at the expense of compromising migrants' privacy and confidentiality.

Appendix A

The migration of children: Drivers and challenges
Tom K. Wong, Nadia Hartvisgen and Elizabeth Arroyo[81]

Just as with adult migrants, a wide range of factors help to explain why children migrate, and such decisions are rarely reducible to any single determinant. However, the migration of children – especially without parents or other adults – raises more pressing questions about the variable roles (or lack thereof) that children may have in migratory decisions. In addition, for children left behind after their parents migrate, it may be that "immigrant children are active agents in family reunifications and are able to (re)make and negotiate kin relations".[82]

It is important to keep in mind that the majority of the world's child migrants are not refugees and asylum seekers who are fleeing violence or escaping persecution. These children may migrate in order to pursue improved prospects in other countries, such as greater economic prospects and expanded access to educational opportunities. The role of family is deserving of special attention here. Family dynamics may themselves serve as push factors for migration, for example, when family breakdown (e.g. loss of the breadwinner or the head of household) creates an economic necessity to move elsewhere. Dynamics within families may also lead to children, particularly adolescents, shouldering the migratory burden, because they are more physically capable of making what can be difficult journeys abroad. In some cases, families may also strategically decide that children have a higher likelihood of succeeding in the country of destination.[83]

However, children may also migrate as the result of decisions to leave difficult conditions or exigent circumstances – conflict, persecution and discrimination, abuse and violence, and environmental disasters, are just a few examples of the factors that can drive child migration. Conflict is deserving of special attention, as children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by armed forces or armed groups, among many other severe forms of abuse and exploitation. Indeed, conflict displaces millions of families and children each year.[84]

It is important to recognize that not all child migrants lack agency in migratory decisions. The migration of adolescents may be less tied to the decisions of adults than the migration of younger children. For example, whereas for younger children, parents may face the decision to leave them behind with family members or bring them along with them, adolescents may be given a choice. While child migrants, whether adolescents or younger children, may have little agency in making migratory decisions in the context of conflict-induced migration, adolescents may have more agency than do younger child migrants in other contexts; for example, when migratory decisions centre on pursuing better economic or educational opportunities.[85]

Afghan unaccompanied minors

Afghanistan has experienced conflict and political instability nearly continuously since the late 1970s. As a consequence, Afghan displacement and migration have been a constant feature of the global landscape in recent

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81   Tom K. Wong, University of California, San Diego; Nadia Hartvisgen, University of California, San Diego; Elizabeth Arroyo, Sin Fronteras, IAP.

82   See Caneva, 2014, for a review of children's roles in migratory processes. See also Tyrrell and Kallis, 2016.

83   Mougne, 2010; Edmonds and Salinger, 2007; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2009.

84   UNICEF, 2016.

85   For example, see Vervliet et al., 2015.

decades. Afghans have consistently been one of the largest groups of asylum seekers in Europe.[86] In this context, many Afghan children have begun these journeys alone, or become separated somewhere en route.

A recent study of Afghan unaccompanied minors in Europe finds many are second-generation migrants, meaning they have little or no connection to Afghanistan, were living in a country other than Afghanistan, and have now made the journey to Europe.[87] Interviews with Afghan unaccompanied minors suggest that many do not envision their futures in Afghanistan, nor in neighbouring countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran or Pakistan, and are prepared to risk their health and safety to reach Europe.[88] Afghan unaccompanied minors are thus likely to continue to seek refuge in Europe. Afghan unaccompanied minors accounted for more than one half of all unaccompanied minors who lodged an asylum claim in the European Union in 2015.[89]

When it comes to why Afghan unaccompanied minors are leaving Afghanistan for Europe, the Afghanistan Research Unit and the UNHCR find, "Children were motivated to engage in unaccompanied journeys due to a combination of frequently interrelated factors, including poverty, insecurity, inadequate opportunities for education and employment, and family and peer expectations".[90] Moreover, especially in high-sending areas, where migration and smuggling networks have developed, decisions to leave Afghanistan were often shared by the heads of the family and the children. It is important to note that research unpacking the decision-making logic that families use when sending their children on their own to Europe finds that, in many cases, the risks involved are well known a priori. However, these risks are eclipsed by the potential benefits of migrating, or because families feel they have no other choice but to send their children.[91]

During transit, these children, mostly adolescent boys aged between 13 and 17,[92] are vulnerable to physical violence, harassment by smugglers and law enforcement officials, sexual exploitation, and many other forms of abuse. In interviews conducted by researchers with Afghan unaccompanied minors, while some openly discussed their migratory journeys, many did not want to recall their experiences.[93] As mentioned above, as Afghan unaccompanied minors often leave for Europe with the consent and support of their families, the trauma that unaccompanied Afghan minors experience is thus "compounded by their expectations and the pressure not to disappoint their families back home".[94] These pressures are made heavier by the debt that families accrue when children are entrusted into the care of smugglers. Personal aspirations and hopes for a better life can add even greater pressure, which can lead Afghan unaccompanied minors into risky and dangerous situations.[95] Still, despite all of this, "both children who returned from unaccompanied journeys and their family members strongly affirmed that they would engage in further unaccompanied travel once they could finance the trip".[96] Moreover, in a recent IOM report based on 1,206 interviews with unaccompanied child migrants in Greece, 42 per cent of the children, primarily from Afghanistan (as well as Pakistan), were intent on reaching their final destination in Europe, regardless of the services provided to them in Greece; only around 23 per cent expressed

86 Echavez et al., 2014.
87 Donini, Monsutti and Scalettaris, 2016.
88 Boland, 2010.
89 Eurostat, 2017.
90 Echavez et al., 2014.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Boland, 2010.
94 Donini, Monsutti and Scalettaris, 2016.
95 Mougne, 2010.
96 Echavez et al., 2014.

the desire to return to their country of origin. The remainder of those interviewed expressed willingness to return to origin countries, but later decided to remain in Greece.[97]

Unaccompanied children from Central America transiting through Mexico

In 2014, a deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Northern Triangle of Central America, which includes El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, led many unaccompanied minors to leave their homes. Whereas some went to neighbouring countries, many sought refuge in the United States and made the trek north through Mexico. During that year, the United States Border Patrol apprehended 52,000 Central American unaccompanied minors who arrived at the southern border of the United States.[98]

As the movement of Central American unaccompanied minors through Mexico has increased, so too has the country's immigration control efforts. In 2015, Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM) (National Institute of Migration), apprehended nearly 36,000 Central American unaccompanied minors who were transiting through Mexico.[99] By comparison, in 2014 this figure was significantly less at just over 23,000.

One of the main drivers of the movement of Central American unaccompanied minors to the United States is violence. Homicide rates in the Northern Triangle are among the highest of any region in the world.[100] Unaccompanied minors often leave the Northern Triangle to avoid recruitment by gangs who force young people to commit crimes, including homicide and extortion, or coerce them into drug or sex trafficking.[101]

Migrating within the Northern Triangle can be less fraught than the journey through Mexico, where unaccompanied minors enter Mexico in the town of Tenosique in the state of Tabasco (Mexico's northern border with Guatemala), or in Ciudad Hidalgo in the state of Chiapas (Mexico's southern border with Guatemala). Unaccompanied minors generally enter Mexico on cargo trains or are smuggled into the country by human smugglers. Images of children riding atop cargo train cars, often with nothing more than the clothes on their bodies or a backpack, and often with nothing to hold onto except thin rails along the edges of the train cars, make vivid the dangers of this harrowing journey. Moreover, the strong presence of the INM in certain areas has led migrants to abandon safer routes and attempt to transit through Mexico along more dangerous routes to avoid apprehension. In addition, via Plan Merida (the Merida Initiative), the United States has appropriated billions of dollars to help Mexico tighten security along its southern border and expand its immigration detention capacity, including for unaccompanied minors,[102] among other measures. While this has made transit through Mexico more difficult, it has also increased demand for smugglers. As unaccompanied minors transit through Mexico, they can be subject to kidnapping, extortion by organized criminal networks, labour exploitation and sexual exploitation, among other forms of abuse.[103]

While transit through the country has become more dangerous, Central American unaccompanied minors continue to make the journey through Mexico to the United States. Recognizing this, the Government of Mexico has also

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97 IOM, 2016a.

98 Meyer et al., 2016. The 52,000 Central American unaccompanied minors who were apprehended at the border in 2014 represented a 150 per cent increase from the previous year and a 1,200 per cent increase compared with 2011.

99 Secretaría de Gobernación, 2016.

100 For example, in 2015, El Salvador and Honduras ranked first and second in the number of intentional homicides per 100,000 people. See World Bank, n.d.

101 For example, see Ward, 2013; see also Serna, 2016.

102 Bochenek, 2016.

103 Kinne, Goździak and Martin, 2016.

made efforts to provide assistance to unaccompanied minors. One example is the creation of the Oficiales de Protección de la Infancia, whose mission is to provide assistance and support to migrant children. In 2014, Mexico also passed the Ley General de los Derechos de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes (General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents), which included measures to provide legal assistance for unaccompanied minors.

Protection challenges

Child migration creates many unique protection challenges, as child migrants face the "double vulnerability" of being both a child and a migrant.[104] Empirically, child migrants are particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and trafficking; and concerns about these abuses intensify when children are migrating alone or become separated from their families. Even if children may initially migrate alongside their families, they can for various reasons become separated during their journey. As UNICEF describes, "violence may come in the form of state action (particularly during migration enforcement or detention), the general public (in the form of xenophobic attacks), employers (in various forms of child labor), other children (including bullying and abuse in schools) or within families (in the form of domestic violence)".[105]

Child forced labour and child forced marriage are among the most severe forms of exploitation to which children are uniquely vulnerable. When children or their families are forced to rely on smugglers, concerns about such exploitation becomes even more acute. Of course, while migrant smuggling and human trafficking[106] are distinct, concern about the exploitation of children by smugglers often engenders concern about trafficking in children. Although global estimates of victims of trafficking are limited and challenging to collect, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that 28 per cent of detected victims of human trafficking were children in 2014, with approximately 20 per cent of victims being girls and 8 per cent being boys.[107]

The death of child migrants makes even more urgent the need to address the protection challenges that attend child migration. According to the IOM's Missing Migrants Project, there have been at least 46,000 migrant deaths since 2000, and many of those who died were children.[108] In 2015, for example, the IOM estimates that roughly one out of every three migrant deaths in the Aegean Sea was of a child.[109] Moreover, one quarter of the nearly 24,000 migrants who were rescued at sea in the Mediterranean by Médecins San Frontières (MSF) between May and December 2015 were children.[110]

The disappearance of child migrants also demands our urgent attention. In 2016, the disappearance of an estimated 10,000 unaccompanied children in Europe captured international media headlines. In addressing Members of the European Parliament, Europol noted that while some of these children may have left in search of family in Europe, many are likely being exploited by smugglers, including for the purposes of labour exploitation (used for begging or being forced to commit crimes) and sexual exploitation.[111]

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104 UNICEF, 2016.

105 Ibid.

106 For definitions of the terms "migrant smuggling" and "human trafficking", as well as other related concepts, see Appendix A in Chapter 2 of this report, *Migration and Migrants: A global overview.*

107 UNODC, 2016.

108 IOM, 2016b.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 European Parliament News, 2016.

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