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Migration and Migration History

by Barbara Lüthi

A Terminological Approach

Migration has been a constant feature of human history – "homo migrans" has existed ever since "homo sapiens".^[1] Moving away from the traditional nation-based dichotomy of *emigration* – *immigration*, the less specific term *migration* allows for many possible trajectories, time spans, directions and destinations. It can be temporary or long-term, voluntary or forced. It can occur in stages or in cycles, and can be mono-directional or more varied. Generally speaking, however, human migration can be defined as crossing the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period.^[2] More specifically, international migration means crossing the frontiers that separate one country from another, whereas internal migration refers to a move from one administrative area (a province, district or municipality) to another within the same country. Some scholars argue that internal and international migrations are part of the same process, and should be analyzed together. With respect to physical movement, the term *mobility* encompasses a broader range of people – migrants as well as tourists, business people, the armed forces, etc.^[3]

Migration history historicizes the agency and motives of migrants who, "within their capabilities, negotiate societal options and constraints in pursuit of life-plans".^[4] It also looks at both ends of human mobility and at the process of migration. Whether it be from a macro-regional perspective or at the micro-level, migration history investigates the following areas: the reasons and conditions under which people leave the specific social, legal and economic setting of their place of departure, coupled with the impact of out-migration on families and societies; the dimensions and patterns of movement through space and time

(circular, seasonal or definite); the migrants' process of acceptance into or exclusion from their host societies, coupled with their impact on the host countries, regions or localities; the interconnections between the places of departure and arrival; and the power that states have exercised over migrations and the technologies they have used to manage migrants. Migration historians also study the migrants' agency in migrational processes (e.g. motivations, networks, impact on structures such as family and state) within specific structural constraints.^[5] A definition based on migrant agency within structural constraints must to a certain degree be modified for involuntary migrants (such as enslaved or indentured workers and refugees) since these are often deprived of agency.

Global migrational movements throughout the twentieth century cannot be understood without their links to other mass migrations within and across borders or overseas, or to the inter- and intraregional flow of labor involved in processes of urbanization, industrialization and decolonization.^[6] Relevant here is the entire spectrum of migration processes within a specific area, including the interactions between all identifiable patterns of migration and their specific socio-economic, demographic and political placement. Also to be considered here is the transport infrastructure and communication technologies as well as the rise of nation-states and their heightened concern for regulating human mobility. As the historian Dirk Hoerder observed of the twentieth century, "scholarship has focused on labor migration systems before 1914, refugee generations in the first half of the 20th century, the impact of decolonization in the second postwar era, and new migration systems emerging since 1960".^[7] Accordingly, scholars need to distinguish between the various forms and geographies of mobility.

A Short History of Migration in the Twentieth Century

Even a highly selective picture of human migration during the twentieth century reveals its complexity and diversity.^[8] Parallel to disintegration of the multi-ethnic Habsburg, Ottoman, and Romanov empires, nation-states reached their apogee in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the first half of the twentieth century the Balkan Wars and the First and Second World Wars triggered refugee movements in unforeseen numbers. Whereas World War I itself generated millions of refugees, the new postwar nation-states introduced programs of "unmixing" peoples or "ethnic cleansing".^[9] Under the nation-state regimes, as states successfully usurped the "monopoly of the legitimate means of movement", and with the introduction of citizenship and identity documentation, entry regulations became more restrictive and demands for military service and loyalty to the nation increased.^[10]

By the end of World War I most states of the North Atlantic world no longer required additional industrial workers, thus ending the prevalence of labor migrants across the globe; wars and national expansion were themselves destroying the lives of millions of people. For example, after 1900 Japan launched an aggressive invasion into Korea, followed by Manchuria, China, and finally into much of east and southeast Asia. By the late 1930s millions of Chinese refugees had fled the advancing armies. During the same time period the Nazi ideology – which had saturated not only Germany's state policies but

those of their collaborators throughout Europe – led to the deportation of German and European Jews, Gypsies, political opponents, "alien enemies", homosexuals and many others to labor and concentration camps. In turn, the wars of Jewish refugees in Palestine with their neighboring Arab states caused resident Palestinians to flee. In many of these wars, colonial laborers were often used to support the war efforts. Forced migration was not only an effect of wars but also harsh labor regimentation following the seizure of power in the Soviet Union under Stalin, particularly in the 1930s. Following the coerced collectivization of agriculture there was a collapse in production that led to famine-induced mass migrations.

Whereas the interwar period and the Second World War itself were marked by the mobility of millions of "displaced persons", refugees and people fleeing from the new communist regimes in central and eastern Europe, another of its hallmarks was colonization and those empires which served as a foundation for contemporary global migration. After the end of World War II, decolonization and unequal global terms of trade imposed on the southern hemisphere by the "North" shifted refugee and labor migrations to the "South". The Western countries, which had formerly sent their people abroad, now became the destination of often desperately poor migrants, and, to date, highly militarized border controls have mostly proven ineffective; the Western imperialist states had missed the opportunity to negotiate an end to colonialism. Wars of independence were begun by peoples in the colonies of Asia as well as North and sub-Saharan Africa. By the 1960s the countries of Britain, France, the Netherlands, Italy and Belgium were forced to abandon most of their colonies and – mainly as a consequence of this decolonization – major refugee populations were spawned in Africa.

In the 1970s, as a result of the Vietnam War and conflicts elsewhere in Indochina, the geographical focus of these refugee movements shifted to southern and southeastern Asia.^[11] In addition to the refugee movements induced by decolonization, three major types of migration ensued:^[12] "reverse migrations" that brought colonizers and their personnel back home, "displacement migrations" as a result of the reordering of societies within the newly independent states, and income-generating labor migrations abroad to compensate for the disruptions in the daily lives of the people and the lack of long-term prospects in the newly independent states. An emerging North-South divide ("global apartheid"), institutionalized through unequal terms of trades that disadvantaged the South, served to continue earlier forms of more direct exploitation and caused continuing migrations. Ever more people – with or without official documents – attempted to reach the wealthy job-providing North.

Several overlapping macro-regional *migration systems* emerged after World War II,^[13] two South-North systems in Europe and North America supplementing the Atlantic migration system. In the 1950s and 1960s postwar reconstruction and economic growth first created a demand for labor from southern to western and northern Europe, then expanding into North Africa. The North American labor market and the U.S. capital investments transforming their societies attracted Mexican and other Latin American and Caribbean migrants.

Regional migration systems also developed in the Caribbean and Central and South America. Supported by U.S. administrations, right-wing governments triggered large refugee movements in certain Latin American countries. Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina have become magnets for migrant groups during different time periods, and political refugees from the former military dictatorships are also, in part, returning to their former countries.

In Asia the fast-growing economies of South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia formed a new migration system. Pursuing its racist policies, Japan did not admit immigrants despite its demand for labor, and its Korean laboring population (from colonial times) experienced continuous discrimination. After the end of colonial rule, Chinese diasporas in southeast Asia were often singled out as scapegoats during times of economic crisis; hundreds of thousands were forced to flee.

By contrast, the intra-Asian system was supplemented by a new phase of the Pacific migration system, which evolved after the end of the race-based exclusion in North America. Migrants from China, India, the Philippines and southeast Asia moved mainly to the U.S. and Canada. The Persian Gulf region attracted experts from the Western world as well as male labor from the Maghreb and the Indian Ocean region, whereas female domestic labor was specifically recruited from Asian societies.

Sub-Saharan Africa developed another system in temporarily expanding economies such as Kenya, Somalia and – since the end of Apartheid – South Africa. But obstacles in development due to dysfunctional economies as well as disruptive World Bank-imposed cuts in social services triggered internal rural-urban moves as well as out-migration to former colonizer countries.

Finally, socialist Eastern Bloc countries have shown singular migration patterns. Collectivization, uneven rural-urban development, economic growth in Hungary and Yugoslavia and in parts of the USSR as well as investments in southern Siberia resulted in interregional and interstate mobility. A ban on emigration separated this macro-region from all other migration regions. Only with collapse of the system in 1989 have new east-to-west migrations occurred, and centers such as Moscow and Prague have attracted internal, Chinese and Western migrants.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, religious fundamentalism, increasing xenophobia in many countries, and so-called homeland security barriers are threatening the migrants' freedom of movement. At the same time, the demand for migrant labor (increasingly also for domestic work or old-age care in affluent countries) is growing, just as migrants themselves are desperately searching for entry into societies that permit sustainable lives. Research data indicate growing disparities between the northern and southern hemispheres due to the imposition of tariff barriers and unequal terms of trade by the powerful North. Thus the precondition for south-to-north migrations is being fortified by the very policies of those countries unwilling to admit more migrants.

Conceptualizing Migration: Approaches and Perspectives

Although immigrant and ethnic history accounted for most of the early migration history in North America and Australia, migration received little attention from scholars before the twentieth century. By the end of the century, scholars had shifted their focus from a state-centered framework to analyzing human agency, emphasizing differences in migration according to gender, race, class, age and other categories. During the past decade, migration has increasingly developed into a subject of interdisciplinary approaches, with practitioners of each involved discipline making contributions to the field.^[14] Especially since the 1990s, new paradigms and approaches have gained momentum, tackling specific terminological inaccuracies and a wide range of misconceptions that have distorted scholarship in migration studies. First of all, scholars have begun to look beyond the normative model of "global" migration – one that focuses solely on European migration and the Western world – to focus on the rich and complex migration patterns and circulations of the entire modern (and premodern) world. The reductionist "push"- "pull"/modernization theory has also been nuanced. A second source of distortion was the long-standing principle of "methodological nationalism", which depicted migration as a linear process and relied on the nation-based idea of "emigration"- "immigration" and notions of "uprootedness".^[15] Recognition of the specious nature of this assumption has led to an epistemic move towards a more comprehensive "systems approach" and the study of "transnational communities".

Beyond Europe

Eurocentrism – or Atlantocentrism – has traditionally dominated mainstream migration research in Europe and the Americas, with migrational movements in other regions studied largely as aspects of European expansion. One reason for this limited perspective may be the segmented nature of the field of migration history. Scholars on Africa, Asia and Oceania often do not explicitly position their work within the paradigm of migration studies; rather, they see themselves as contributing to specific scholarly debates on topics such as slavery, world systems and imperialism. Accordingly, this scholarship often goes unnoticed by migration historians.

Critiques of this imbalance often come from outsiders to the field – for example, from Patrick Manning, a scholar of world history and African migrations, or Adam McKeown, a specialist in Chinese migrations. In his innovative article on "Global Migration, 1846-1940", McKeown fundamentally questions the accepted belief that the mass migration in the Atlantic world during that period was unique in nature and volume.^[16] Rather, by using a macro approach, he redirects the reader's attention to two other major migration systems in northern and southeast Asia between the mid-nineteenth century and the outbreak of World War II. Furthermore, he argues that the Asian migrants moved for the same reasons and under similar circumstances, reacting to economic stimuli and moving to areas with a high demand for labor. He also shows that all three migration systems were integrated in the same global economy.^[17]

McKeown belongs to a cohort of scholars who reject Eurocentrism and Atlantocentrism.^[18] Provincializing Europe and the Atlantic not only allows one to

7

include other regions but also challenges widely shared assumptions, e.g. regarding "free" and "unfree" labor dividing the "West and the rest", static and mobile societies, and the impact of race on mobility. This requires comparisons and links not only at the macro level but also moving to those micro and meso-levels of migrant agency often largely ignored in global history.

Systems Approach

Compared to many other methodological-theoretical frameworks – such as the network theory, the neoclassical economic approaches or the world systems theory as well as approaches focused on state action and state borders^[19] – the "systems approach" allows for "comprehensive analyses of the structures, institutions, and discursive frames of the societies of origin and of arrival, in particular local or regional variants", including factors such as industrialization, gender roles, family economies, or demographic details.^[20] The systems approach also focuses on the complexity of migrants' agency as well as looking at their trajectories between societies. As historians Dirk Hoerder and Christiane Harzig argue, its comprehensive theoretical-methodological framework incorporates "causal and incidental factors and outcomes as well multiple rationalities".^[21] The questions guiding such an approach can be manifold. In what ways did family, communities and cultural practices inform the decision-making process? What human or social capital and what traditions of both short-distance and long-distance migrations were available to migrants before and after departing? As journeys became ever more time-compressed through rail, sea and air travel, how did this shape the migrants' "mental-geographical maps" (Harzig/Hoerder)? How do host societies' notions of assimilation, acculturation or integration shape the newcomers' opportunities? How do migrants react to economic or social discrimination? How did diasporic cultures and mentalities – non-contiguous cultural groups linked through real or imagined bonds across regional or global spaces – historically form and imagine themselves? And how did they connect and develop cultural identities?^[22]

These questions are only a small sampling of questions addressed by the systems approach. One of this approach's strengths is its focus on "continuing transcultural linkages" and the interconnectedness of particular societies and states through transborder migration, capital flow, and ideas.^[23] Whereas any attempt at an all-encompassing theory may be futile – for example, the micro and the macro not being easily united in a single approach – the strength of the systems approach is that neither does it deny the importance of structural constraints on individual choices nor does it downplay the agency of individuals and families.

Transnational/Transcultural Lives

Theories of cultural interaction, neoclassical economic approaches, approaches to migrants' agency, and the more comprehensive systems approach are all examples of how diverse disciplines have dealt with migratory movements. Objects of inquiry and theory-building are closely linked to the levels and units of analysis as well as to matters of data and methodology.^[24] In migration studies these can vary both within and between disciplines. Very generally speaking, for example, whereas theorizing in history and anthropology mainly takes place at a

micro or meso-level, and whereas these disciplines are concerned with individuals, households or groups, political scientists and demographers are more often interested in the macro level, being concerned with populations, states and the political and international systems. Despite these divergences, several convergences have led to an interchange among the disciplines. For example, the comparative method has been applied in migration research across the entire spectrum of social-science disciplines,^[25] and one of the dominant paradigms in migration theory was the assimilation model put forward in the 1920s by Robert E. Park and his colleagues of the Chicago School of Sociology, it remaining salient well into the 1970s.^[26] Since the 1980s this concept has given way to new ones such as the more complex concept of immigrant incorporation.^[27]

Another concept which gained currency in migration studies and global history in the 1990s was *transnationalism*. First formulated by anthropologists, it has had an impact on migration research in several disciplines. Challenges to nation-state homogeneity have existed in various regions since the 1910s, e.g. by intellectuals such as Randolph S. Bourne, Horace Kallen or Fernando Ortiz. But the concept gained new relevance within migration studies through publication of the anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton's influential book *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration* (1992), which defined transnational migration as the activities of migrant groups whose social relations connected two or more countries. The authors' aim was to overcome the binary model of emigration and immigration in order to observe the border-crossing practices of migrants.^[28]

Transnational migrants lead a "double life": They often speak more than one language, move between different cultures, have emotional ties to two or more cultural spaces, and follow political, economic or cultural interests that span more than one nation.^[29] Transnational processes are understood as signs of the global era; though transnational practices and flows may not be "new" per se, their intensification under the particular conditions of late modernity (travel means, communication technologies, the economic nexus of remittances) make them significant social forces.^[30]

There have been at least three critical questions addressed regarding the concept of transnationalism.^[31] First, the term transnationalism has been used for a variety of phenomena, ranging from long-term migrant groups to tourists and travelers. This ambiguity indicates a need for more precise definitions. Likewise, the equation of transnational practices with the broad term "transnationalism" begs the question of whether transnationalism connotes a specific "way of life" or implies an ideological dimension (comparable to other "isms").

Second, although the term "transnational" does not completely deny the importance of the nation-state, national territory, national identities and national loyalties, it does anticipate their diminishing significance.^[32] The response has been a critical revision of the long-standing tradition of methodological nationalism within the social sciences and humanities. Yet recent historical research has questioned this trend by emphasizing the power of nation-states

to shape and delimit transnational migration through restrictive immigration policies and border controls, especially since World War I.^[33]

Third, a similar critique has been voiced against the common view of transnational migrants as "nomadic subjects" in a global era. In reality the image of unfettered transnational biographies, of lives lived in "in-between spaces" (Homi Bhabha), excludes the majority of migrants: Transnational lives are dependent on the legal status of people in transit. Global connectivity is indeed promoting international mobility; yet this is still largely the privilege of wealthy people from the West, in particular the northern industrialized countries, and certain Asian ones as well.^[34]

Further empirical research is needed, firstly, with respect to transnationalism's temporal aspects. Is transnationalism a single-generation phenomenon or are transnational ties reproduced in the second generation as well? When and why do these phenomena disappear again? How do race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion and nationalism play out in transnational contexts?^[35] Also, from the migrants' perspective, regional or local identifications may be more important, meaning "transregionalism" or "translocalism" may be equally valuable as research terms. Additionally, "transculturalism" denotes the competence to live in different cultures and, accordingly, to create a transcultural space which permits complex and multi-directional moves and linkages between different spaces, none of which can leave cultures unchanged.^[36] And finally, for contemporary history it is worthwhile asking how and what imaginary and virtual spaces are formed through new technologies, such as the internet and cell phones, and how these shape the time-sensitive relationships of transnational migrants.^[37]

Migration in Contemporary History: Topics and Trends

Both refugees and so-called illegal migrants have traditionally been deeply embedded in the (global) rhetorics of crisis. Both have played important roles throughout the twentieth century and will remain relevant for the foreseeable future. These inevitably selective themes and their underlying debates are briefly outlined below.

Refugees/Refugeeness

There is nothing new about the phenomenon of people being forced to leave their homelands. However, the legal concept of "refugee" and its employment as an object of academic research is more recent and constitutes an important aspect of contemporary migration.

The 1951 United Nations Geneva Convention defined a refugee as any individual who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion", had crossed an international boundary to seek protection.^[38] Since the adoption of that definition, the distribution of refugees has attained a global scope. The twentieth-century nation-state system was highly effective at generating refugees, with Europe taking the lead in the first half of the century, post-colonial Africa and Asia in the second. Whereas the refugee convention was originally defined for those who had fled Nazi persecution in Germany and occupied Europe, from the 1960s on, as a result of decolonization and wars,

new refugee populations arose mainly in the developing nations of Africa, south and southeast Asia, and Central America. As Khalid Koser reminds us, what had begun "as a largely European problem at the end of the Second World War had become a truly global phenomenon, with immense complexities".^[39]

The 1990s saw the return of refugee crises to developed countries, with groups originating in such regions as Bosnia, Kosovo and the former Soviet Union sharing the plight of those in Rwanda, Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor. But despite the myth of "asylum invasion" in Western Europe, the majority of refugees are currently found in the southern hemisphere, particularly Africa and Asia. The bulk of the burden of supporting them therefore still falls upon the poorest parts of the world.

Despite a virtually uncontested definition of refugee status in the aftermath of World War II, more recent discord as to the precise criteria for that status has sparked considerable scholarly debate. To begin with, neither the Geneva Convention of 1951 nor its 1967 protocol specifically addresses the current realities of refugees. The anthropologist Liisa Malkki has argued that the term "refugee" does not constitute a naturally self-delineating domain of knowledge: Forced population movements have extremely diverse historical and political causes and involve people who – while all displaced – find themselves in qualitatively different predicaments.^[40] Whereas the Convention focuses on state persecution, today's refugees more often flee the general insecurity of conflict rather than a specific persecution. And while economic inequalities generate far more refugees than political-ideological conflict, economic migrants do not fit the Convention's criteria for refugee status. Furthermore, the Convention does not explicitly accept such conditions as sexuality-based persecution or ecological deterioration as flight-inducing factors.^[41] Finally, the Convention is based on the political theory of sovereign states and does not cover persons displaced internally, for example, through civil wars. Still, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) currently outnumber those qualifying for UN protection. Unprotected by international agreements, they are often even more vulnerable than cross-border refugees. Furthermore, the lines between voluntary and involuntary flight are often vague. Motives for flight can be a mix of economic and political forces, as when an economic collapse follows a coup d'état. In some cases, direct violence is involved; in others not. Refugee studies have criticized refugee agencies for protecting those who depart reactively, whereas those who behave proactively under deteriorating circumstances remain unprotected.

With this principle in mind, the power of bureaucratic documentation to make social distinctions and classify human beings according to established criteria touches on an important aspect of modern migration policy. Since the 1980s, the national asylum procedures in Europe have become more complex and the possibilities for international refugee protection (as well as labor migration) from the less developed countries have been seriously undermined by ever more restrictive laws and categorizations designed to disqualify claimants from international protection in most parts of the "global north". In his widely cited articles on "Labelling Refugees" (1991, 2007), Roger Zetter reminds us that examining how labels are chosen and applied to those migrating can explain how

certain bureaucratic, political and other interests and procedures are crucial determinants in the definition of labels such as "refugee" or "forced migrants".^[42] Labels, he contends, are "the tangible representation of policies and programs, in which labels are not only formed but are then also transformed by bureaucratic processes which institutionalize and differentiate categories of eligibility and entitlements".^[43]

Central to Zetter's thesis is the examination of the powerful institutional contexts involved and the discourses through which the category "refugee" is construed and public policy shaped. With respect to historical research this entails examining not only the agency, settings and motivations of refugees for leaving a country but also the practices of states and other actors as they attempt to manage refugees through specific processes of "labelling". Special attention must be focused on the sometimes deliberate "fractioning" and conflation of such labels in the interests of national and supra-national actors or of the securitization of migration.

In order to move beyond the conventional definition of "refugees", we need to analyze the *multiple actors, settings and reasons* influencing displacement in historical narratives. This may show that recent increases in the number of refugee groups have been accompanied by similar increases in the complexity of the causes, dynamics and effects of global refugee flows. As can be witnessed in the recent proliferation of categories to describe the diverse global phenomena of forced displacement, "refugeeness" involves much more than a single identity position but includes the political refugee, the environmental refugee, the internally displaced person, and a host of others. Faced with this plethora of human-displacement categories, current conditions strongly suggest that the answer to "who is a refugee" must necessarily be plural, ambiguous, and most of all historical.^[44]

With respect to refugee migration, though, the historian Peter Gatrell has argued that questions should be asked not only about the circumstances of displacement, or the practices of states and non-governmental agencies involved, but also "about the complex relationship between those who observe and those who experience displacement".^[45] Historians' perspectives both depend upon and determine their source material: Is one writing with regard to the history of the state or rather from a refugee-centered perspective? Moreover, since refugee situations are very much the product of power imbalances, the "refugee voice" is unlikely to even be heard, let alone recorded. In researching contemporary refugeeeness, oral history may provide a helpful tool in creating new sources and in gleaning new insights. This may also reveal refugees' "capacity for agency against all odds".^[46]

Evoking very little response in scholarly studies of the past decade have been calls to historicize "refugeeness" and the diversity of refugee experiences and strategies as well as the vast array of discursive and institutional fields within which such labels as "the refugee" are being constructed. Such marginal attention to refugees in migration history may result from a "sedentary bias" in reaction to perceived challenges to nation-state approaches in history and the social sciences in general. But the studies of refugees and displacement may well

offer fresh insights into the concepts of culture and community as bounded and territorialized units.

The Production of "Illegality"

Despite being one of the leading subjects of current debates on migration today, one finds only sparse literature on the construction of the concept of "illegality" and its historical development.^[47] As the anthropologist Nicholas De Genova has observed, whereas the term "illegal" migrant supplies a "broad legal or descriptive rubric" it encompasses a tremendous heterogeneity: "illegality" must be understood as an epistemological, methodological and political problem.^[48] It is vital to produce a historically informed account of the sociopolitical processes of "illegalization" themselves. "Illegalization" is the discursive and legal production of migrant "illegality", which, as a social relation, is inseparable from citizenship; and despite their stigmatization, "illegal" migrants do not exist in hermetically sealed communities – in everyday life they often entertain close social relations with "legal" migrants and citizens. Like migration itself, "illegality" is a truly global phenomenon, achieving specific relevance only in specific historical and social contexts. "Illegal" migrants leave their countries for the same reasons as any other migrants. The reason for the increasing numbers of migrants moving in "illegal" ways can mainly be seen in the increased state control over mobility. At present, despite the desire of large numbers of people to relocate, legal opportunities to do so exist only for a privileged few – and human trafficking and migrant smuggling have developed into lucrative businesses.^[49]

"Illegal" migration is a complex concept. For Western states,^[50] "illegal" migration covers people 1) crossing borders without the proper authority, including unauthorized exit; those 2) crossing a border in a seemingly legal way through the use of fraudulent documents or by using legal documents fraudulently, or, alternatively, through "marriages of convenience" or impostor relatives; and those 3) entering legally and overstaying one's period of authorization. Related to the principle that the state defines who crosses and occupies its territory, one must distinguish between what states and what people consider to be legitimate. From a state perspective, "illegals" are not simply transgressing the law but are undermining the ability of the state to control its territory. By contrast, as the historian Mae Ngai reminds us, illegal aliens, who are marginalized by their position in the lower strata of the workforce and through their exclusion from the polity, "might be understood as a caste, unambiguously situated outside the boundaries of formal membership and social legitimacy." Yet the meaning of illegality shifts across time and space and there are important regional differences in the way the concept of legal/illegal migration is applied. A historical perspective may show how the sovereign state's relationship to legal and moral norms is contingent and subject to change.^[51]

Whereas the various notions of illegality and the concept of being illegal date back to the process of state formation and the emergence of systems of local poverty relief, the term "illegal" – as it applies to migrants – was only coined in the 1930s. In early-modern Europe, people outside of the highly organized labor market (e.g. vagrants), along with anyone else seen as a potential burden to local social relief systems, were restricted from relocating or from gaining

admission to a municipality. Similar vagrancy policies were reproduced in the colonial empires of the nineteenth century. Yet in the early modern period few restrictions existed on immigration at the state level, whereas emigration was understood as a loss of state revenue in the form of taxes as well as a loss of manpower; there was also the accompanying fear that local social systems would be made responsible for those left behind.

Although the period between 1850 and 1914 has often been regarded as the apex of "free migration", it also saw the emergence of racially motivated migration regimes which excluded, for example, Asian migrants from white settler colonies.^[52] Several decades later the exclusion of people seen as "non-white" and therefore racially inferior – e.g. the Chinese – produced diverse forms of illegality, as presently illustrated by the example of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. Movements to legally curtail rights of entrance went hand in hand in many countries with the monopolization of migration control.^[53] The rise of nationalism made it essential for states to be able to identify their citizens. Whereas race and national origin did not automatically lead to exclusion, the rise in political participation and the extension of social rights were the result of a varied palette of restrictions and control technologies. As the following examples show, several continuities began to develop with regard to illegality:^[54] Poor migrants in general were not welcome and were prone to deportation (although not all deportations sprang from illegality) and state control tightened with the state's interest in social welfare and labor market regulation (especially in highly developed postwar welfare states).

For purposes of historical analysis it is important to bear in mind that regimes throughout the world share the desire, if not always the ability, to control migration. Nevertheless, this can also entail highly contradictory governmental responses towards illegal migration – as can be seen very clearly in the U.S. state's ambivalent attitude towards Mexican immigration over the course of this past century. Selective enforcement of American immigration law – coordinated with seasonal labor demand by U.S. employers – has long maintained a "revolving door policy" whereby illegalization and deportations occur concurrently with the large-scale, largely permanent *importation* of Mexican migrant labor. One of the consequences of this history of selective enforcement policies is that the sociopolitical category "illegal alien" has itself become saturated with racial connotations and indeed has long served as a constitutive dimension of the racialized inscription of Mexicans in the United States.^[55]

Prospective research on illegality needs to first investigate, for example, its impact on various social groups by using the analytic categories of race, class and gender. As the historian Marlou Schrover and her colleagues have convincingly argued, illegality is constructed differently for men and women at given times and in given places. It is also important to understand what differences are traditionally expected when it comes to women and men.^[56] Secondly, the common portrayal of "illegal" migrants as victims of smugglers and traffickers seems inconsistent with the evidence that the vast majority of migrants move on their own initiative. Therefore, one must examine the public and political perceptions of "illegality" and the actors involved.^[57] Thirdly, deportation, incarceration in extra-territorial spaces and human-rights abuses

are becoming part of the everyday life of "illegals" and others holding any irregular status.^[58] For instance, the concept of the free movement of individuals within the European Union would seem to no longer reflect reality – the walls of what was once called Fortress Europe (*Festung Europa*) have been extra-territorialized and systems of "remote control" (such as the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, FRONTEX) have been adapted to the needs of migration policies.^[59] Therefore, historians of migration must not only analyze the origins, development and legitimization of migration policies but also investigate the often violent effects that these policies have on migrants.

Footnotes

1. ↑ Klaus Bade, *Europa in Bewegung: Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, München 2000, p. 11.
2. ↑ The United Nations defines an international migrant as a person who stays outside of their usual country of residence for at least one year.
3. ↑ Stephen Castles, *Migration. Sociological Aspects*, in: Neil Smelser/Paul B. Baltes (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 14, Amsterdam 2001, pp. 9824-9828; Khalid Koser, *International Migration. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford/New York 2007; Dirk Hoerder, *From Immigration to Migration System. New Concepts in Migration History*, in: *OAH Magazine of History*, 14 (1999) 1, pp. 5-11.
4. ↑ Christiane Harzig/Dirk Hoerder, with Donna Gabaccia, *What is Migration History*, Cambridge 2009, p. 3; Walter Nugent, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870-1914*, Bloomington/IN 1992.
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11. ↑ Koser, *International Migration*, p. 74.
12. ↑ Harzig/Hoerder, *What is Migration History*, p. 46.
13. ↑ *Ibid.*, pp. 48ff.
14. ↑ Caroline B. Brettell/James F. Hollifield, *Migration Theory. Talking across Disciplines*, New York/London 2000.
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21. ↑ Harzig/Hoerder, *What is Migration History*, p. 87.

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27. ↑ Alejandro Portes, *Children of Immigrants. Segmented Assimilation and its Determinants*, in: id. (ed.), *The Economic Sociology of Immigration*, New York 1995, pp. 248-279.
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35. ↑ See for example Patricia R. Pessar/Sarah J. Mahler, *Transnational Migration. Bringing Gender In*, in: *International Migration Review* 37 (2003) 3, pp. 812-846; Peggy Levitt, *God Needs No Passport. Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape*, New York/London 2007; Eithne Luibhéid/Lionel Cantú Jr. (eds.), *Queer Migrations. Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*, Minneapolis/London 2005.
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38. ↑ See [http://www.unhcr.org/protecl/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf\(04.09.2010\)](http://www.unhcr.org/protecl/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf(04.09.2010)). Whereas in 1951 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recognized 1.5 million refugees, by 2001 the numbers had increased to 15.2 million, with an additional 9.5 million "persons of concern", including asylum seekers, returnees, and internally displaced persons.
39. ↑ Koser, *A Very Short*, p. 74.
40. ↑ Liisa Malkki, *Refugees and Exile. From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things*, in: *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), pp. 495-523; id., *Speechless Emissaries. Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization*, in: *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1996) 3, pp. 377-404.
41. ↑ *Persecution on grounds of gender was included only as late as the 1990s.*
42. ↑ Roger Zetter, *More Labels, Fewer Refugees. Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization*, in: *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20 (2007) 2, pp. 172-192, here p. 173; id., *Labelling Refugees. Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity*, in: *Journal of Refugee Studies* 4 (1991) 1, pp. 39-62.
43. ↑ Zetter 2007, p. 180.
44. ↑ Peter Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees. Beyond States of Emergency*, New York 2006; Marita Eastmond,

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 47. ↑ Other terms such as "undocumented", "unauthorized", or "irregular" prove to be just as problematic or misleading as "illegal". For example, not all illegal immigrants are necessarily undocumented or unauthorized when entering a country. The term "illegal" should remind us that not the migrants themselves but rather their activities are regarded as "illegal" by the states and therefore refers to the construction of what is legal. For literature see Marlou Schrover/Joanne van der Leun/Leo Lucassen/Chris Quispel (eds.), *Illegal Migration and Gender in a Global and Historical Perspective*, Amsterdam 2008; Bill Jordan/Franck Duvell, *Irregular Migration. The Dilemmas of Transnational Mobility*, Surrey 2003.
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 50. ↑ See Schrover/van der Leun/Lucassen/Quispel (eds.), *Illegal Migration*, p. 10.
 51. ↑ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects. Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton/Oxford 2004, p. 2ff.
 52. ↑ See Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order. Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*, New York 2008.
 53. ↑ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport. Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*, Cambridge 2002.
 54. ↑ Schrover/van der Leun/Lucassen/Quispel (eds.), *Illegal Migration*, p. 19f.
 55. ↑ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; De Genova, Migrant "Illegality". From a Mexican perspective see David Fitzgerald, *A Nation of Emigrants: How Mexico Manages Its Migration*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 2009.
 56. ↑ For example, in the context of trafficking, whereas women are often depicted as being trafficked, i.e., against their will, men are generally spoken of as being smuggled, i.e., with their consent, against payment and therefore retaining control of their own fates. This habitual portrayal of women as victims has often led to proactive state measures: in Bangladesh, Indonesia or Nepal, for example, emigration of women is either highly restricted or banned as a protective measure – sometimes protecting women, but also often restricting their choices. In any case, protection and punishment are unequally distributed between women and men. Schrover/van der Leun/Lucassen /Quispel (eds.), *Illegal Migration*.
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 58. ↑ Efthimia Panagiotidis/Vassilis Tsianos, Denaturalizing "Camps". Überwachen und Entschleunigen in der Schengener Ägäis-Zone, in: *Transit Migration Forschungsgruppe* (ed.), *Turbulente Ränder. Neue Perspektiven auf Migration an den Grenzen Europas*, Bielefeld 2007, pp. 57-85; Suvendrini Perera, What is a Camp?, in: *Borderlands E-Journal* 1 (2002) 1, http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol1no1_2002/perera_camp.html (04.09.2010).
 59. ↑ See [http://www.frontex.europa.eu/\(04.09.2010\)](http://www.frontex.europa.eu/(04.09.2010)).

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