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Literature review: drivers of migration. Why do people leave their homes? Is there an easy answer? A structured overview of migratory determinants

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Discussion Paper 9/2019

Literature Review: Drivers of Migration

Why Do People Leave Their Homes? Is There an Easy Answer? A Structured Overview of Migratory Determinants

Jana Kuhnt

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Jana Kuhnt is a researcher with the research programme "Transformation of Political (Dis-)Order: Institutions, Values & Peace" at the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).

E-Mail: jana.kuhnt@die-gdi.de

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Tulpenfeld 6, 53113 Bonn
☎ +49 (0)228 94927-0
🖷 +49 (0)228 94927-130
Email: die@die-gdi.de
www.die-gdi.de

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Abstract

Why do people leave their homes? This seemingly easy question requires a more complex answer. What ultimately prompts a person to leave if it is impossible to find a job due to a conflict that has destroyed all economic opportunities? Evidence suggests that the migration decision is a complex process that is dependent on a multitude of factors, such as migration governance regimes, migration and smuggler networks, access to technology, or individual characteristics such as age, gender and educational background. I use a theoretical framework to present the variety of determinants that have been put forward as influencing migration decisions at the macro-, meso-, and micro-level. This structured overview discusses their importance for different forms of migration and subsequently helps to identify gaps for further research.

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Bonn, June 2019 Jana Kuhnt

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Abbreviations

EU	European Union
FHI	Freedom House Index
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
ICTs	information and communication technologies
IOM	International Organization of Migration
NELM	new economics of labour migration
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PTS	Political Terror Scale
UK	United Kingdom

1 Introduction

Historically, humans have always been on the move and this has been an important means of economic and social development (McNeill, 1984). In the past decade, the number of people moving within and across borders has been steadily growing, surpassing global population growth rates (UN [United Nations], 2017). According to the United Nations, in 2017 there were 258 million international migrants globally, an almost 70 per cent increase compared to the year 1990 (UN, 2019). Of those, approximately 68 million were forcibly displaced persons, including over 25 million refugees and 3 million asylum seekers. Additionally, there were more than 40 million internally displaced people (UN, 2019). Forced displacement is also part of human history, reaching its peaks in the 20th century due to the two World Wars. Today, however, we are witnessing the largest total number of forcibly displaced people since reporting began in 1950. This stresses the need to understand the reasons and causes why people move.

Why do people (choose to) leave their homes? This – at first sight – seemingly easy-to-answer question proves to be more complex when faced with migration realities on the ground. It seems reasonable that people leave when facing conflict. However, recent evidence has shown that exposure to violence does not necessarily lead to a situation where all people move away. Also, it is an accepted fact that individuals move in search of better economic opportunities, such as jobs or higher wages. But how do we judge a situation where violence also negatively impacts the economic climate and, through that, destroys opportunities for a livelihood? Does a person who then decides to leave flee from a conflict in the hope of gaining security elsewhere or is he/she fleeing from poverty in the hope of finding improved economic conditions elsewhere? And what is the role that migration governance regimes or networks play in this decision to move? Importantly: Are all people in a position to realise their wish to migrate? And also, one must not forget that there are individual characteristics that can impact their decision, such as age, education and the gender of the individual.

While human mobility is not a new phenomenon, a systematic understanding of the diversity of the underlying reasons still does not exist. Circumstances in which people decide to leave their homes differ, for instance, in their urgency and/or degree of voluntariness, and, hence, these people deserve different levels of protection and assistance. It is important to deepen the understanding of the determinants of mobility to facilitate human movements that improve individual and societal outcomes, to reduce those that decrease well-being and to provide adequate support and protection.

Historically, research has been divided up according to the degree of voluntariness of the movement. So-called voluntary migration has focused on people who, in economic terms, move in order to maximise their individual potentials, for example by reaping the benefits of wage differentials or job opportunities. On the other hand, studies on forced migration have investigated movements in response to conflict or violence. Moreover, theories, such as the neoclassical labour migration theory or push (from the origin)-pull (towards the destination) models, are limited to explaining only one of the dichotomous phenomena. This is problematic as the dichotomy reflects legal-bureaucratic categories rather than sociological ones. It conceals the empirical fact that migration processes are influenced by a multitude of factors and their interactions (de Haas, 2011).

There is a lack of structured overviews on the variety of determinants that influence an individual's desire and decision to move from his/her home. This paper aims at filling this gap by providing a comprehensive review of the range of factors that have been shown to be related to the decision to move. Some of the papers included here offer literature reviews of root causes but none covers the range or scope of this current paper. Also, these overviews are limited by being based on the traditional dichotomy of voluntary or forced migration and, hence, by considering only the respective causes and triggers (Docquier, Peri, & Ruyssen, 2014; Helms & Leblang, 2019).

While I do not challenge the idea that certain situations exert a greater pressure on individuals to move than others, I acknowledge the existence of a wider spectrum between forced and voluntary decisions. Hence, I consider all factors found to be relevant in the respective literature that affect migration aspirations and decisions. In addition, I discuss potentially interesting interactions between determinants, such as the mediating effects of conflict on the larger economy. It is important to note that a *desire* to migrate does not necessarily equal a *decision* to migrate or an actual *attempt* to migrate.[1] The latter is constrained by the individual or household capability, including the financial or social capital.

Previously, migration literature has distinguished between three types of determinants: the root causes; proximate conditions; and intervening factors (Schmeidl, 1997). While proximate conditions of migration capture factors that are closely linked to the actual migratory move in respect to timing, such as the intensity of violence, root causes are associated with more underlying longer-term factors, such as poverty or employment opportunities and wages. Here, political factors are generally defined as proximate conditions, whereas root causes are mainly of an economic nature. The intervening factors were added to this framework at a later point and are based on the notion of facilitating or hindering factors of migration, such as networks or "migration culture". I chose not to use this traditional framework as it assigns a certain hierarchy to the various different determinants that has yet to be proven empirically and does not allow for a more general interaction between them. Rather, I opted for the theoretical framework proposed by Timmerman, Heyse, and Van Mol (2010) in which the causes and drivers of migration are systematically studied. This framework structures the determinants of migration according to three different levels: the macro-, meso- and micro-level. These then influence the perceptions and aspirations of potential migrants and jointly form their emigration environment. In contrast to the majority of existent frameworks and theories, Timmerman et al. (2010) account simultaneously for origin and destination factors and consider their effect on migration aspirations. Using the three levels of influencing factors, they build a suitable framework for the different research perspectives that can be found in migration studies and related fields. Adding to this, I allow for interactions between the different determinants at each level. This is a framework which can be applied to all forms of migration across the spectrum ranging from forced to voluntary moves. An interesting future research question might concern the hierarchy of determinants, which has not yet been established.

1 Migration aspirations do not equal migration intentions as the latter refer to more concrete plans to move. Migration aspirations are influenced by the individual's migratory wishes and capabilities.

The list of papers included in this review is based on comprehensive research of the literature covering popular databases such as Google Scholar and Web of Knowledge. The keywords used included the determinants of migration as listed in this current paper in Section 4 (macro-level), Section 5 (meso-level) and Section 6 (micro-level). In addition, the "snowball" principle was applied, based on influential papers such as Cernea (2006); Czaika and Kis-Katos (2009); Davenport, Moore, and Poe (2003); de Haas (2007, 2010, 2011); de Haas et al. (2018); and Massey et al. (1993). The majority of papers that have been included in this review were published in peer-reviewed international journals. These were complemented by a few studies published as working papers in reputable series. This review only included empirical papers using qualitative or quantitative analysis, which is indicated when discussing each study's results. The papers cover high-, medium- and low-income countries worldwide.

The current paper is structured as follows: After investigating the various definitions of movement and the categories used, the theoretical framework chosen to structure the literature is presented. This is followed by Sections 4 to 6 presenting and discussing the various different studies on determinants of migration at the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. Section 7 then discusses the literature presented, draws conclusions, and identifies gaps for further research.

2 Mobility decisions: who are we talking about?

In recent times the question "Who is a real refugee?" has been prominently debated in refugee-hosting countries. Legally, people qualify if they face a well-founded fear of persecution, or have experienced war or violence (UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees], 2019). This perspective is based on the idea that we can structure migratory movements in two clearly confined categories: those who had no other choice but to leave their country and hence, were *forced* to leave; and, on the other hand, those who *voluntarily* decided to move. However, assuming that one category of people has all the freedom to decide to move while the other has no agency at all is highly problematic (de Haas, 2011). This dichotomy simplifies an issue that in reality is far more complex. Firstly, fearing for one's life might also be driven by severe poverty and, as a consequence, people might have no other choice but to leave their homes in order to survive. Can one term this moving voluntarily? And, secondly, in most cases there is an intense interaction and interdependency between the various different factors causing people to move. An economic crisis may lead to civil unrest which develops into widespread violence, which in turn is likely to negatively affect the economic climate (see, for instance, Engel & Ibáñez, 2007; Lundquist & Massey, 2005). It is becoming increasingly challenging to pinpoint the main reason why people leave their country of birth. At the same time, the plethora of determinants influencing the decision to move is difficult to tie down, particularly in times of protracted crisis situations and complex migration movements (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Zetter, 2015) There is empirical evidence that, even in times of conflict where traditionally the intensified violence was thought to be the main trigger for migration, some people decide to stay while others leave (Williams, 2015; Zimmermann, 2011). Often the decision to move is dependent on further factors such as age, property ownership, health, or access to income, while people often undergo a waiting period before deciding to leave their home (Adhikari, 2013; Richmond

& Valtonen, 1994; Zimmermann, 2011). Also, relatively new emerging factors, such as climate change and resource scarcity, add to the complexity.

While I suggest that the multitude and interdependency of factors influencing human mobility account for the greater complexity of movement decisions, I nevertheless support the notion that certain situations exert a greater force to leave and may offer less freedom of choice. These often go hand in hand with rather unplanned movements exposing individuals to greater vulnerability, which in turn necessitates protection and support structures (Verme & Schuettler, 2019). The importance of factors is likely to vary across this dimension.

In recent years there have been attempts to establish new – more inclusive – concepts aimed at describing the complexities of migration. Examples are "complex mixed migration" (for example, Williams, 2015), "transit migration", and also "survival migration" (Betts, 2013). Furthermore, it is important to note that these can include international as well as national migratory movements, such as so-called internally displaced populations or rural-urban migration flows. Causes and motives why people move may also change over the trajectory of their migratory route, particularly in protracted displacement situations. In recent years several not only qualitative but also quantitative studies have started to investigate these mixed migratory patterns.

Additionally, the occurrence of migration in legal grey areas or outside the official system is prevalent worldwide (Loschmann, Kuschminder, & Siegel, 2014). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines irregular migration as "movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries" (IOM [International Organization for Migration], 2019). Often a person moves between regularity and irregularity; an individual can leave the country on illegal routes but enter a neighbouring country legally by applying for asylum.

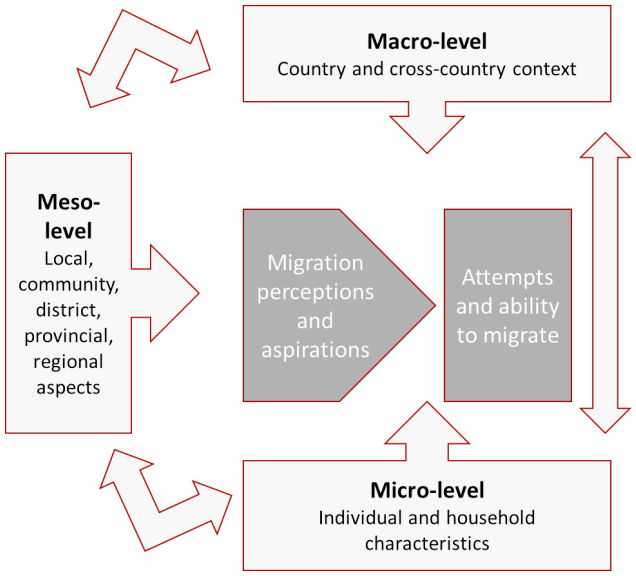
To account for the complex spectrum of decisions around the migratory move, I use a theoretical framework helping to structure the large spectrum of driving factors of migratory movements, including those mainly describing – traditionally speaking – *forced* migratory movements, such as conflict; as well as socio-economic factors often linked to *voluntary* migration; but also further social and individual determinants.

3 Determinants of migration: a theoretical framework

In order to structure the review of the literature dealing with the causes and drivers of migration I apply a theoretical framework proposed by Timmerman, De Clerck, Hemmerechts, and Willems (2014); and Timmerman et al. (2010). Their framework is inspired by Carling's (2002) definition of the emigration environment, which is influenced by the social, political and economic context and which sees migration as a socially and culturally constructed project with micro- and macro-level influences. Timmerman et al. (2010) and Timmerman et al. (2014) extend these ideas and establish the emigration environment in which perceptions and the migration aspirations are formed by macro-, meso- and micro-level determinants and within which the decision to move is taken. Based on this framework, I then study factors influencing peoples' decision to move and suggest adding interactions between the three levels (see Figure 1). The importance of a macro-level factor – such as economic opportunities – is likely to be sensitive to meso-level factors, such

as networks (that can facilitate jobs) or to micro-level factors, such as educational level (affecting employability). This stresses the complexity of factors at hand, which cannot be unilaterally linked to the categories of migratory movements. The interaction of factors subsequently affects the perceptions and aspirations of a potential migrant.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework of determinants of migration



Source: Author, based on Timmerman et al., 2014

The macro-level refers to factors that are common to all potential migrants in a particular country, such as the socio-economic and political context or migration governance and policies of origin and destination countries, regions or other entities (for instance, EU (European Union) mandates). The meso-level encompasses sub-national or local factors, including networks or cultural reasons. Individual and household characteristics of potential migrants, such as gender, age, educational level, and social status, as well as behavioural factors, such as risk aversion, are part of the micro-level. Table 1 provides an overview of the factors covered in this review.

Table 1: Overview factors at macro-, meso- and micro-level

Macro-level	Meso-level	Micro-level
Violence and conflict	Migration culture, networks, and information	Age
Human rights violations	Technology	Educational level
Institutions, welfare state and state fragility	Migrant smugglers	Gender
Economic opportunities and security	Geography and infrastructure	Risk aversion and personality traits
Poverty and development		
Migration governance and policies		
Environmental change and threats		
Development-induced displacement		

Source: Author

The framework does not suggest a hierarchy between the three different levels. In the literature, it has been put forward that macro-level factors play a dominant role, while meso- and micro-level determinants tend to be seen as intermediaries. While this review also recognises that macro-level factors are highly important and micro-level factors are less of a cause and rather a mediator, a general hierarchy across levels is, however, still up to empirics to decide and a systematic assessment thereof might provide an interesting future research question.

Apart from the variety of determinants that influence a person's perception and aspirations to migrate, it is also important to consider their capability to actually do so. People can only move if they have the appropriate agency and opportunity structures at their disposal (de Haas et al., 2018; Timmerman et al., 2014). They need to have access to social, human and financial capital to realise their migration aspirations (de Haas, 2010; de Haas et al., 2018). It has been increasingly noted that, when studying migratory movements, one should consider people's *capabilities* and *aspirations* jointly (Carling, 2002; de Haas, 2003). These are influenced at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels and only once they are taken into account might one be able to explain the individual differences seen in the migration reality. Capabilities and aspirations are not equally distributed across societies and are subject to change over time and place as they are inter alia influenced by the determinants at the three different levels, which are not constant (Timmerman et al., 2014; Van Mol, Snel, Hemmerechts, & Timmerman, 2018).

4 Determinants of migration: the macro-level

The macro-level encompasses the traditional determinants of voluntary and forced migration: the political and economic context. However, there are additional factors that are likely to influence the migration decision that are located on the macro-level, such as migration policies or environmental drivers. All of them can affect a person's aspirations and decision to move from his or her home. They should be seen in their interrelated complexity and not as singular factors but rather as reinforcing or impeding each other.

4.1 Violence and conflict

There is broad agreement in the literature that violence and conflict are the main drivers that lead people to move from their homes (Adhikari, 2012; Cummings, Pacitto, Lauro, & Foresti, 2015; Melander & Öberg, 2006). Quantitative cross-country studies have found that violence is the dominant factor why people leave (Davenport et al., 2003; de Haas, 2011; Melander & Öberg, 2007; Schmeidl, 1995, 1997). These studies have focused on aggregate country-level data of refugee and internally displaced populations as dependent variables. Moving to the subnational-level, and hence taking into account individual decisions, exposure to violence has again been found to be a major determinant with respect to international as well as internal movements (see, for example, Adhikari, 2012; Czaika & Kis-Katos, 2009; Ibáñez & Vélez, 2008). Using village-level data on Aceh Province in Indonesia, Czaika and Kis-Katos (2009) found that conflict is a major push factor for leaving one's home. Applying an event history analysis at the community-level, Lundquist and Massey (2005) observed that households in Nicaragua migrated to the

United States when faced with violence, which was supported by Alvarado and Massey (2010) who presented similar evidence. Using individual-level data in Colombia, Ibáñez and Vélez (2008) also established that violence was an important factor driving people from their homes. Building a theoretical framework to capture determinants of displacement while applying it to Colombian household level data, Engel and Ibáñez (2007) reported that already the threat of violence and the presence of guerrilla and paramilitary groups also increased levels of out-migration. This is likewise supported by a large-scale qualitative investigation undertaken by the IOM (2016) which found that the main reason for the displacement of young African men arriving in Italy was violence.

It is important to note that the large majority of studies already mention the multitude of other factors affecting the decision to move apart from the threat of and exposure to conflict. Engel and Ibáñez (2007) postulated that, even in a conflict environment, economic incentives and individual characteristics also played a role. In addition, Davenport et al. (2003) put forward a theoretical model suggesting that other factors apart from violence influenced peoples' decisions to move. Ibáñez and Vélez (2008) found that individual socio-economic household characteristics and personality traits also mattered. This helps to explain the fact that people make heterogeneous decisions in reaction to conflict.

While there is general agreement on the effect of violence upon human mobility decisions, there is some debate on the type and scope of conflict causing people to move. Schmeidl (1997) found that a country's involvement in international wars was a significant determinant for forced migration, while this was not supported by the analysis conducted by Davenport et al. (2003). Rather they argued that state or dissident threats to personal integrity were important factors. Moore and Shellman (2004) observed the presence of international troops to be a driver of forced displacement. Using a large quantitative cross-country dataset, Dreher, Krieger, and Meierrieks (2011) showed that terror attacks increase skilled migration though not average migration flows. Skilled migration seems to also increase with general political instability as found by Docquier, Lohest, and Marfouk (2007). Investigating current refugee flows from Syria to Jordan, Byrne (2016) established that varying forms of violence affect migration decisions in different ways. There is some evidence that the duration, location and scope of the conflict also have an effect on the number of displaced people. Melander and Öberg (2007) and Melander, Öberg, and Hall (2009) found that the geographical scope – and particularly whether urban centres were affected – seemed to have a significant impact on the number of persons displaced whereas the intensity of the conflict did not. They suggested that it tended to be more important *where* the conflict took place than *how intense* the fighting was. Also, contrary to previous research, they observed that over time the magnitude of migration flows in response to a conflict not only did not increase but actually declined.

Overall, people face different costs and benefits from relocating, which influences their migration decision generating a selection effect in the remaining population (Melander & Öberg, 2007). Bohra-Mishra and Massey (2011) suggested curvilinear effects of violence on migration decisions: only high levels of violence override people's concerns and the costs related to leaving their homes.

While there is a plethora of evidence suggesting the importance of violence as a determinant for a positive migration decision, there is a significant gap in the literature on the interdependency of violence with other potential factors as well as its relative importance,

for instance, with respect to economic stability and opportunities, along with individual-level characteristics (such as educational background, age, gender) that can explain heterogeneous movement decisions. These could well be very interesting areas of future research.

4.2 Human rights violations

Additional political factors that have been suggested and investigated are the lack of human and political rights. In general, quantitative research suggests that this seems to increase the probability of people moving from their homes (Davenport et al., 2003; Kirwin & Anderson, 2018; Moore & Shellman, 2004; Schmeidl, 1997). Moore and Shellman (2004) found that human rights violations (proxied by the Political Terror Scale (PTS)) have a positive impact on the number of refugees that a country produces, which was also supported by Rubin and Moore (2007) using similar data. However, Schmeidl (1997), who uses the Freedom House Index (FHI), established only a weak link. Wong and Celbis (2015) presented evidence that the extent of human rights protection was also an important determinant for more general migratory movements. Additionally, they expanded the spectrum of human rights to include economic and political freedom. Particularly focusing on religious repression, Kolbe and Henne (2014) found that higher levels of discrimination against religious minorities as well as policies that ban certain religious groups increased the aggregate number of refugees. Earlier studies observed a significant impact of ethnic discrimination on displacement (Clay, 1984; Kaufmann, 1996). This was contested by Kirwin and Anderson (2018) who found that, in Nigeria, dissatisfaction with the political system was a strong predictor for aspirations to leave the country whereas this was not true for ethnic discrimination. Investigating political rights as a pull factor, Fitzgerald, Leblang, and Teets (2014) found them (proxied by citizenship policies and vote shares of the radical right) to be significantly related to international migration flows.

Overall there is a broad agreement that lack of political freedom and violations against human rights increase the number of people leaving their homes (Adhikari, 2012). However, political repression does not necessarily lead to *mass* exodus if economic opportunities still exist (de Haas, 2010). Further, when judging the evidence at hand, one has to consider that more autocratic regimes also have greater capabilities of curtailing the migratory plans that people might have if they do not want them to leave the country, for instance, through exit controls or high migratory costs (de Haas, 2011; McKenzie, 2007). This is particularly important for regular migration but less so for those choosing irregular routes.

The studies presented here mostly use aggregated quantitative country-level data and there is a lack of studies investigating the effects of human rights violations and of the absence of political freedoms on migration at the household- or individual-level, particularly on groups other than legally categorised refugees.

4.3 Institutions, the welfare state, and state fragility

Some studies have investigated the effects of institutional quality upon migration decisions. Overall they find that good, well-functioning institutions at the place of destination can act as an incentive to migrate, particularly for highly educated migrants, while bad governance at home pushes people to leave their homes (Ariu, Docquier, & Squicciarini, 2014; Bergh, Mirkina, & Nilsson, 2015; Bertocchi & Strozzi, 2008). Using a gravity model approach with a large cross-country dataset, Bergh et al. (2015) found that institutional quality explains migration flows even after controlling for several country-level indicators, including income levels at origin and destination. Poprawe (2015) showed that the prevalence of corruption is a push factor for migration, and this is supported for the high-skilled by Dimant, Krieger, and Meierrieks (2013). There is a lack of studies using individual-level corruption-perception data in relation to migration levels.

But, in opposition to popular public perception, the support system of the destination country does not seem to be of high relevance to the migration choice. Robinson and Segrott (2002) reported that among asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom (UK) very few had detailed knowledge of potential state benefits. Onward movement within a region, such as the European Union, might however be influenced by differences in support services (Kuschminder, de Bresser, & Siegel, 2015). Further, weak welfare systems in a country of origin increase out-migration (Kureková, 2011). It is likely, however, that this factor varies with the degree of voluntariness or urgency of the movement.

Some authors have proposed links between concepts of state fragility and migration (Araya, 2013; Martin-Shields, Schraven, & Angenendt, 2017). State fragility is generally defined as encompassing several dimensions of macro-level drivers such as legitimacy of the state; authority of the state to prevent conflict or violence; and the provision of basic services to the population. Negative values in these dimensions are related to violence, human rights abuse or the socio-economic deprivation of the respective population. Theoretically, deficits in these dimensions are positively related to out-migration. Further, in the event of external or internal stress situations, countries with weak institutions are not able to respond adequately and are particularly vulnerable to violence. A thorough empirical investigation of these propositions has not yet been undertaken. However, recently there have been some studies investigating the effects of the satisfaction people have with local amenities – such as public services and security – on migration intentions. Using individual-level quantitative data, Dustmann and Okatenko (2014) showed that higher contentment with services provided in the current location decreased migration aspirations. This was supported by Cazzuffi and Modrego (2018) for the case of Mexico. While there are also a few studies which investigate the role of institutional quality on migratory patterns using cross-country data, there is hardly any individual-level evidence that could then be more directly linked to people's aspirations and decisions. These might be an interesting avenue to take in order to start investigating the hierarchies of the various different macro-level determinants of migration and to establish an early warning system for movements both within, and across, borders.

4.4 Economic opportunities

Differences in economic opportunities, particularly employment and wage differentials, have traditionally been seen as the primary drivers of migratory movements. They constitute the basis of the neo-classical migration theory, such as explaining rural-urban migration in the Harris-Todaro model (Harris & Todaro, 1970) or international migration flows (Borjas, 1990) in the push-pull model of migration (Lee, 1996). Here, the individual's rational cost-benefit analysis of an existent wage differential between country of origin and country of destination, proxying better economic opportunities, is regarded as the determining factor. These theoretical considerations have been studied using a great deal of empirical evidence including aggregated country- as well as more refined individual-level data (Amara & Jemmali, 2018; Bertoli, 2010; Cummings et al., 2015; Czaika, 2015; Damm, 2009; Konseiga, 2006; Neumann & Hermans, 2017; Radnitz, 2006).

The studies investigating whether fewer economic opportunities (proxied by economic development based on, for instance, gross domestic product (GDP) or gross national income (GNI)) lead to larger migration flows resulted in mixed results: While Davenport et al. (2003) and Melander and Öberg (2006) did not find higher levels of economic development to be significantly related to the number of refugees, Schmeidl (1997) and Moore and Shellman (2004) reported that it was indeed associated with fewer refugees. This is likely due to the crudeness of the measure, which tends to relate to the more general level of socio-economic development of a country and a phenomenon termed the "migration hump". This describes the non-linear relationship between migration rates and a country's economic development (Martin, 1993). Increased GDP in developing countries typically leads to initially rising levels of emigration. Hence, it is not the poorest people who migrate in the event of positive economic trends, resulting in welfare increases, but rather those who have access to sufficient resources and are able to fund their journeys. This is closely related to the notion of capability, namely, whether people are able to realise their migration aspirations or whether poverty hinders them. In their quantitative analysis of Afghan refugees, Loschmann and Siegel (2014) found that vulnerable households had lower migration intentions indicating that the households made a realistic assessment of their migration potential. The decreasing numbers of Somali refugees travelling to Yemen are thought to be explained due to a deterioration in access to resources in Somalia (RMMS [Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat] & IMI [International Migration Institute], 2012). Potential migrants require the economic resources, and hence capabilities, to migrate from their country while their aspirations need to be higher than the opportunities in their country of origin (Cummings et al., 2015; de Haas, 2007; de Haas et al., 2018). Cross-country analyses of historical and contemporary migration data have supported the notion that the migration hump does indeed exist (Clemens, 2014; de Haas, 2010; de Haas et al., 2018).

However, taking into account relative differences between countries paints a clearer picture: Using bilateral migration flows, studies generally established larger economic opportunities to be a significant pull factor. Investigating migration flows from 1980 to 2005, Ortega and Peri (2009) found income gaps between origin and destination country to be a significant determinant for international migration. This was supported by Clark, Hatton, and Williamson (2007) for migration flows to the United States. Using a large cross-country dataset, Czaika and Hobolth (2016) reported income opportunities at the destination to be an important driver, even for irregular international migration. A meta-analysis of factors explaining migration in the Sahel region showed that better economic

opportunities are a primary driver (Neumann & Hermans, 2017). This was supported by qualitative evidence by Wissink, Düvell, and van Eerdewijk (2013) who studied the intentions of transit migrants in Turkey; and by Schapendonk and van Moppes (2007) with respect to irregular Senegalese migrants where greater economic opportunity in Europe was reported to be an important motivating factor.

Overall, better economic opportunities elsewhere and/or the lack of them in the region or country of origin have been shown to be important driving factors for rural-urban and international migration movements. It is not always clear if it is the lack of economic opportunities *pushing* people rather than the possibility of larger income gains *pulling* them. Particularly, studies investigating rural-urban migration flows have also intensively studied heterogeneous effects across individual and household characteristics.

However standard migration models have been criticised for oversimplifying heterogeneous and complex migration decisions to an individual's goal of maximising income, even more so in insecure environments (Loschmann & Siegel, 2014). More recent papers take the multitude of other factors that explain past and current migration into account, such as the social, political and geographical environment. However, even accounting for those determinants, economic factors continue to play a major role in migration movements (Byrne, 2016; de Haas, 2011). This also applies to insecure settings. Evidence shows that – even in the face of violence and conflict – people still make a deliberate choice to move or stay (Engel & Ibáñez, 2007; Ibáñez & Vélez, 2008). If economic opportunities still exist, or if they continue to have assets, they are less likely to leave.

There are ambiguous results regarding the importance of the economic environment at the place of destination for the migration choice in the face of violence. In her qualitative study of Somali refugees, Zimmermann (2009, 2011) observed that, more than just seeking safety, they continue their journey to places that offer them economic opportunities. "Safety was not all that they [the refugees] sought because it was not all that they had lost" (Zimmermann, 2009, p. 93). However, this claim is contested by quantitative studies focusing on refugees: Byrne (2016) found that, while economic conditions in the country of origin (Syria) affected refugee flows, the economic opportunities in the country of destination (Jordan) were less important. Also Engel and Ibáñez (2007) noted that in typical displacement situations negative income differentials or economic risk do not deter people from leaving as other factors tend to dominate the decision process.

While the general importance of the economic environment for migration choices is not contested, there is still a lack of empirical evidence on the interdependencies with other suggested determinants that lead people to leave their homes. How important are economic opportunities when facing human rights violations? Do such considerations tend to be taken at the household- or even community-level, enabling other members of the household or society to stay?

4.5 Migration governance and policies

Changes to migration policies – in origin, transit and destination country or region – are likely to influence migration. However, the evidence is not straightforward to interpret.

There are several studies showing that effects are often fairly different from what the policies aimed at or what was expected. Tightened border controls or more restrictive asylum policies do not seem to influence the absolute number of people migrating but rather the routes chosen, pushing migrants into irregular movements (Czaika & Hobolth, 2016; de Haas, 2007, 2011; EC [European Commission], 2009; Mbaye, 2014; UNODC [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime], 2018). It has been shown that restrictive immigration policies increase the permanent stay of guest workers while decreasing circular migration and return migration (de Haas, 2007). Based on a large quantitative study of European migration policies, Czaika and Hobolth (2016) found that more restrictive asylum and visa policies led to an increased deflection into irregularity. On the other hand, migration policy "optimists" argue that, overall, immigration policies have been effective in curbing migration (Bonjour, 2011; Carling, 2002; Geddes, 2003). There is some qualitative insight and a growing number of quantitative studies that give support to this claim (Castels, 2004; Hatton, 2005; Karemera, Oguledo, & Davis, 2000; Kuschminder et al., 2015; Ortega & Peri, 2013). Czaika and de Haas (2017) argued that, while more restrictive visa policies decrease inflows, they also deter outflows creating motivations for long-term settlement. Studies have also put forward the notion that, once a certain threshold has been passed, other factors such as networks or migrant agents support the further movement of people irrespective of migration policies. Hence, migration can become self-reinforcing (Cummings et al., 2015; Czaika & de Haas, 2013). Additionally, most studies have only considered the migration policy of destination countries ignoring the potential effect of emigration policies by states of origin. More authoritarian states seem to restrict emigration levels more effectively (de Haas, 2011). In general, evidence suggests that migration policies seem to affect migratory movements, though possibly in unexpected ways. They seem to be a challenging tool with which to influence the overall volume of people migrating. Differing results may be explained by the difficulty of measuring the effectiveness of migration policies or by the endogeneity of migration policy, namely that these are often shaped by a broader economic or political development (de Haas, 2011). Here, interdependencies between the various different determinants of migration should be considered in future research. Also there is a lack of quantitative empirical research investigating how migration policies are perceived and acted upon by individuals. All in all, existent evidence suggests that, compared to other determinants of migration, the effect of migration policy on overall numbers of migrants would appear to be fairly small.

4.6 Environmental changes and threats

In recent years, environmental threats have been discussed more prominently in the context of migratory movements. Soil degradation, drought or flooding, anomalies in rainfall or temperature, as well as natural disasters have been identified as potential causes of large migration flows, a development which is expected to increase even more so in the future (IPPC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change], 2014; UNFPA [United Nations Population Fund], 2009). Empirical research predicts that the geographical distribution of the damages of climate change will be uneven. Developing countries in particular will be affected – while already hosting the most vulnerable populations with less adaptive capacities (Mendelsohn, Dinar, & Williams, 2006; Tol, Downing, Kuik, & Smith, 2004). Livelihood dependence on agriculture and exposed coastal zones will reinforce this. As climate change directly affects other important drivers of migration – such as economic

opportunities, livelihoods, or the political environment – it is difficult to identify environmental changes as a direct determinant as such (Cattaneo et al., in press; Maurel & Tuccio, 2016; McCubbin, Smit, & Pearce, 2015; Raleigh, Jordan, & Salehyan, 2010). Their effect is likely to be indirect in many cases and, while they can increase the incentive to leave, they can simultaneously limit the capacity to do so (Black et al., 2011; Findley, 1994). Typical adaptation strategies to short-term climate risks, such as flooding or droughts, are circular or seasonal (labour) migration. This often takes place within a country and does not lead to movements across international borders (Alem, Maurel, & Millock, 2016; Raleigh et al., 2010). Cattaneo et al. (in press) describe diversity in human mobility with respect to both slow-onset events, such as land degradation or droughts, and fast-onset events, such as storms or floods. While the latter are mostly associated with forced, sudden internal movement, the former are more difficult to relate to specific climate events due to their delayed human response. Hence, slow-onset events are frequently perceived as voluntary movements and often considered to be economically motivated.

There are several quantitative studies at individual- and household-level investigating the linkage between climate change and internal migration (Gray, 2009; Henry, Schoumaker, & Beauchemin, 2004). In Sub-Saharan Africa, Barrios, Bertinelli, and Strobl (2006) as well as Henderson, Storeygard, and Deichmann (2017) observed a significant effect of climate change on rural-to-urban population movements. Joseph and Wodon (2013) reported that there was a significant effect of climatic factors on internal migration in Yemen. In recent years, these were complemented by an increasing number of quantitative studies focusing on international migration flows (Afifi & Warner, 2008; Bettin & Nicolli, 2012). Investigating rainfall and temperature anomalies in Sub-Saharan Africa, Marchiori, Maystadt, and Schumacher (2012) suggested that they initially led to increased internal rural-to-urban migration, as well as, in a second step, to increased international out-migration due to reduced wages (induced by a growth in the labour supply) in urban centres. Looking at migration from developing countries to OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries in response to adverse climatic events, Coniglio and Pesce (2015) found significant direct and indirect effects on out-migration. This is particularly true for agrarian societies. Investigating climate factors as well as natural disasters using data from 1960 to 2000, Beine and Parsons (2015) observed no statistically significant long-run effect of either factor on international migration. However, they reported that natural disasters significantly affected internal migration flows, proxied by the rate of urbanisation. Abel, Brottrager, Cuaresma, and Muttarak (2019) were the first to establish a causal link between climate change – particularly drought severity – and the occurrence of conflict with subsequent increased numbers of asylum seekers.

Overall, the link between climate change and international migration – through heightened internal rural-urban migration and increasing urbanisation followed, in a second step, by international out-migration as urban wages are suppressed – is supported by several studies (Marchiori et al., 2012; Maurel & Tuccio, 2016; Skeldon, 2006). However, individual-level studies investigating the direct relationship between environmental change and international migration are still underrepresented in this research field.

Nonetheless, the difficulty of causally relating climate change directly to international human mobility (which is mostly expected to be driven by slow-onset events) remains. In reaction, some research has instead started to investigate the sensitivity of established root

factors of migration to changing climate (Black et al., 2011; Brzoska & Fröhlich, 2016; Foresight, 2011). Due to the interdependency of these factors as well as the interplay with the respective characteristics of the individuals and households, studying the heterogeneity of reactions to climate change is particularly interesting. While this has been conducted for some characteristics, such as wealth (see Cattaneo et al. (in press) for an overview), other interdependencies, such as gender, are still under-researched and a systematic assessment would provide important future research fields.

As argued above, fast-onset events are easier to relate to mobility decisions (due to the immediate human reaction). However, in general, their effects on long-term international displacements are judged to be limited. Investigating further the effects of increased frequency of such event types (as one manifestation of environmental change) on human mobility patterns would likewise provide interesting future research areas (Cattaneo et al., in press).

4.7 Development-induced displacement

Displacement through development projects, such as dams, mines or urban infrastructure, such as roads, ports or industrial parks, can occur on a massive scale (Cernea & Mathur, 2008; Gellert & Lynch, 2003). Nonetheless, while such displacement can be regarded as one factor forcing people to move, it does not represent one of the root causes. Hence, for reasons of comprehensiveness, it is covered briefly in this review but kept to a minimum.

While development projects often have positive implications for part of the local population by providing new employment opportunities and offering improved public services, they can at the same time force people from their homes to make room for a new dam or road (Scudder, 2005). Development-induced displacement is characterised by a permanent relocation of all people living within a certain geographical area as a result of a development project. This usually affects thousands or occasionally also ten-thousand people (Cernea, 2003). Further, there are several so-called secondary implications, which are indirect consequences of the projects, such as environmental degradation, destruction of flora and fauna, changing water levels, or land loss (Gellert & Lynch, 2003). In particular, indigenous communities or ethnic minorities as well as smallholder farmers are often negatively affected (Doutriaux, Geisler, & Shively, 2008; Randell, 2016). In addition to the people directly affected by the displacement, there are sometimes groups that are indirectly affected: for instance, host communities who have to receive the displaced population, or people living in the area, who did not have to move but whose access to resources or social networks was negatively affected (de Wet, 2001). In general, little longitudinal – particularly quantitative – evidence on development-induced displacement exists.

5 Determinants of migration: the meso-level

Apart from country-level determinants there are also several factors at the societal-, community- and household-level that have been shown to impact strongly on an individual's migration aspiration and decision. While the importance of networks was already acknowledged in several studies some decades ago, the role of the internet and smugglers has only recently drawn more attention. Also, at the meso-level, inter-dependencies between factors exist while they are simultaneously related to determinants at the macro- and micro-level.

5.1 Migration culture, networks, and information

Migration networks are defined as "sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin" (Lundquist & Massey, 2005, p. 42). Garip and Asad (2013)[2] describe two mechanisms on how networks can influence the migration process. The first pathway is social facilitation, describing the act of providing useful information or actual support by helping to find a job or shelter and hence, making the migration less risky and costly. Normative influence, the second pathway, points to a situation where network peers influence prospective migrants through social rewards or sanctions. The latter is related to the idea of a migration culture, which again is closely connected to the existence of migration networks. Based on the theory of cumulative causation, increased migration from a particular country or locality strengthens migrant networks (for example, based on kinship, religion, or another social form), which gives rise to a culture of migration and translocality. As migratory movements become more prominent within certain regions, migration can become an accepted and desired strategy for families to mitigate risks and to achieve improved social and economic outcomes. Having at least one household member who leaves the home can become part of the family's expectations and value system (Heering, van der Erf, & van Wissen, 2004; Timmerman et al., 2014). This creates a general tendency, particularly of young people, to choose migration as a primary strategy either not considering other options or perceiving them as failure (Heering, van der Erf, & van Wissen, 2004; Massey et al., 1998). Migration culture and the corresponding factors have been discussed by researchers as important determinants of movement (de Haas, 2011).

Several studies, mostly qualitative investigations, have demonstrated the vital importance of migrant networks during the entire migration journey – before, during and at the end of the route (Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa, & Spitted, 2001; Schapendonk, 2012, 2015; Schapendonk & van Moppes, 2007; Vogler & Rotte, 2000). Networks lower risks and costs of movement for potential migrants by making information and resources accessible (Cummings et al., 2015). Networks can help in finding shelter and jobs in the country of destination and provide necessary resources for the route. The access to information both prior to and during the migration process is vital to reduce risks. Simultaneously, they transmit information back home, which in turn informs the migration decision (Edwards, 2009; Ros, González, Marín, & Sow, 2007). Several qualitative and quantitative studies using country-level data sources as well as more disaggregated data

2 Based on DiMaggio and Garip (2012).

sources have found that this triggers increased migration, also in conflict situations (Barthel & Neumayer, 2015; Beine, Docquier, & Özden, 2011; Davenport et al., 2003; Herman, 2006; Moore & Shellman, 2004; Schmeidl, 1997). The various different feedback mechanisms functioning throughout the networks and supported by the formation of a migration culture are factors triggering the self-perpetuating character of migration. This is not only true for regular migration but also for irregular migration (Cummings et al., 2015; Van Mol et al., 2018).

Having said this, negative information on obstacles in the destination country seems to be underreported by migrants in order to demonstrate the success of their migration back home. Recently, however, some studies have emerged – mostly of a qualitative nature – suggesting that there are also negative feedback mechanisms working through networks that sometimes discourage movements (Engbersen, Snel, & Esteves, 2016; Fussell & Massey, 2004; Van Mol et al., 2018). Reporting about difficulties, such as employment misfits, hostile host societies, restrictive immigration policies, or the challenges of learning a new language, can potentially decrease migration (de Haas, 2010; Snel, Faber, & Engbersen, 2016; Timmerman et al., 2014). Also, access to other sources of information, such as the internet or social media, can lead to a more balanced and realistic picture of a potential migration outcome (Mai, 2004; Riccio, 2005). Hence, the size of migration flows can be increased or decreased on the basis of these feedback mechanisms operating through networks.

In addition to this, diasporas can shape migration flows (Beine et al., 2011). There are some papers investigating how networks affect not only the size but also the structure of migration flows. Several quantitative studies found that networks led to a self-selection of migrants with lower education and skill-levels (Beine et al., 2011; Bertoli, 2010; McKenzie & Rapoport, 2010). Also recently researchers have started to investigate the heterogeneous network effects on women and men with respect to their migration decision: men's networks seem to be larger and more diffuse than those of women (Liu, 2013; Toma & Vause, 2014). On the other hand, networks at home are thought to enable people to stay and cope more easily with the implications of conflicts (Adhikari, 2012; Harpviken, 2009; Wood, 2008). Conflicts can also strengthen social networks in the place of origin and increase social connectedness.

Overall, there is a general agreement in the literature that migration networks and culture have a significant impact on migration aspirations and decisions. Whereas it is clear that they reduce the cost and risk of the undertaking and herewith trigger migration, the impact of transmitted information – containing encouraging or discouraging content – is yet to be further researched.

5.2 Technology

Technology has changed access to social networks and how they operate. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) – traditionally television, radio and mobile phone technology but recently also particularly social media – have shaped the way networks are built and sustained. They make it possible to maintain strong ties with family members and friends while at the same time enabling people to build weak (that is, temporary) ties helpful to organising and facilitating the migration process. They function as a means of

communication, especially mobile phones which are of vital importance on the migration route and through which important information is shared (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Schaub, 2012). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of migrants use some form of ICTs for their migration process, starting in the country of origin, during the route and upon their arrival in transit or destination countries (Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). Collyer (2010) suggested that access to modern technology is likely to lead to longer-tem fragmented migration patterns with long overland journeys also allowing poorer individuals to consider migration an option.

ICTs not only influence the migration process by making it easier to access information and establish different types of networks but have also become drivers of migration themselves (Hamel, 2009; IOM, 2005). It has been suggested that modern technology, such as television or the internet, influences the way people think about borders and strengthens their global interconnectedness (Pries, 2005; Timmerman et al., 2014). They are likely to shape ideas and, as Hamel (2009, p. 10) puts it, "the act of migration begins in the mind". The images on global media are important sources in forming migration aspirations, often based on an idolised "paradise" which shapes expectations (Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). Particularly for those who already consider migration as an option, these pictures can have an important impact on their final decision to move (Hamel, 2009; Schapendonk & van Moppes, 2007). Simultaneously, some qualitative research has suggested that access to ICTs increases peoples' awareness of the difficulties of the migratory process and supports a more balanced and nuanced understanding (Horst, 2006).

As a side note, the ICT sector itself has led to major labour migration, for example of engineers and computer scientists. The movement is then often in response to a concrete job offer (Hamel, 2009). More generally, online job postings offer more certainty by facilitating the search for employment in the country of destination beforehand. Also, the use of social media for recruitment purposes has recently been documented (McAuliffe, 2017).

While there is extensive anecdotal evidence on the relationship between international (in particular irregular) migration decisions and the use of ICTs, there is generally still very little empirical research on this (Cummings et al., 2015). Also its interrelation with other determinants of migration, such as its heterogeneous use among different types of migrants or its impact on networks as well as its application during conflict situations or the shaping of economic aspirations, are potentially interesting gaps in research.

5.3 Migrant smugglers

As recent research suggests, migrant smugglers can often be seen as part of the migration network. There is not necessarily a clear distinction between social and smuggling networks; they can overlap in the course of the migration process and the relationships that emerge are highly complex and less black and white as often displayed in the media (Sanchez, 2017; Schapendonk, 2012; UNODC, 2018). Smugglers are important if irregular migration is to take place and several studies have reported the frequent use of smugglers during the migration process as well as their influence on the routes and destinations (Jandl, 2007; Koser & Kuschminder, 2015, 2017; Kuschminder et al., 2015; Wissink et al., 2013). However, there is very scant empirical research on smuggling and its relationship to migration (Sanchez, 2017). The globalisation of transport and increasing

access to communication technologies have been put forward as reasons for the professionalisation of smuggling services (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012). It is important to acknowledge that the need to rely on smuggling services can also be seen as evidence of how stricter immigration policies and fewer possibilities for legal migration push people (including asylum seekers) towards irregular means of migration and their need to search for and rely on alternative means of travel (Bhabha & Zard, 2006; Kassar & Dourgnon, 2014; Sanchez, 2017). This increasing demand for alternative routes naturally gives rise to an increased supply of these services. Additionally, there is anecdotal evidence that it is also smugglers themselves who proactively recruit and (sometimes) misinform migrants (UNODC, 2018).

Due to a large gap in the literature there is a need to investigate inter alia access to migrant smugglers, the migrant-smuggler constellations, the specific role of these networks for the migrant decision-making process, and the selection effects induced by them. In this respect it is also important to pay attention to the often not so clear distinction between smuggling and trafficking[3] (Bhabha & Zard, 2006). Moreover, the relationship of smuggling networks with other determinants of migration such as technology are likely to be interesting research avenues. As Sanchez (2017) pointed out, most smuggling activities rely on some kind of communication technology.

5.4 Geography and infrastructure

Leaving the home inherently involves travelling, which is not only impacted by infrastructure, such as roads or transport, but also by certain geographical features, such as mountainous terrain. Impassable terrain or destroyed roads are obstacles to flight and likely to impact an individual's decision to move (Adhikari, 2012; Edwards, 2009). However, Schmeidl (1997) and Moore and Shellman (2006) did not observe any significant effect of terrain characteristics upon the movement of refugees. Although mobility and transport are closely linked in more general terms, there is neither theoretical nor empirical consensus on the impact of transportation. Mixed results of transportation costs were found by Czaika and Kis-Katos (2009) in Indonesia. Improvements in the road system in Tanzania and Nepal were found to significantly decrease the individual probability of migrating (Fafchamps & Shilpi, 2013; Gachassin, 2013). While improved availability and access to transport lower the cost of movement, they are also often simultaneously linked to better livelihoods or to greater state presence. There is agreement, though, on the fact that distance deters international as well as internal movement (Lucas, 2001; Mazumdar, 1987).

In general, the evidence suggests that geography does not seem to play a major role in migration. While distance is an important factor, difficulties in transport do not generally stop people leaving their homes. There are several literature gaps, for example with respect to movement aspirations and decisions in conflict areas and the importance of ease of moving.

3 Generally, defined legally, smuggling describes a consensual transaction between smuggler and the smuggled person, whereas trafficking refers to a situation where some form of force is used without the consent of the victim being necessary. However, it is debated whether this dichotomy is applicable to the real-world setting (Bhabha & Zard, 2006).

6 Determinants of migration: the micro-level

Micro-level determinants have often only recently been acknowledged in quantitative studies (Engel & Ibáñez, 2007). While they have been investigated in more detail in more established research fields, such as those studying rural-urban migration flows, they have not been taken into consideration in the majority of other studies. In addition, it would also be necessary to integrate them in a stronger way into theoretical models. Investigating demographic distributions among migrants worldwide, it becomes obvious that certain people seem to be more likely than others to leave their homes.

While it is important to take individual characteristics into account, they should in general not be regarded as *primary* drivers but as factors that nevertheless have a significant influence on migration decisions and lead to the self-selection of migrants. Only a selected set of individual characteristics will be discussed below.

6.1 Age

It is well-documented that the majority of migrants are of working age. This applies to those moving both within and across borders, including people who seek refugee status, as well as those entering as labour migrants (IMF [International Monetary Fund], 2016; Kassar & Dourgnon, 2014; van Dalen, Groenewold, & Schoorl, 2005). Working-age migrants have the highest probability of successfully overcoming the burdens they encounter both before and during the journey and of making a living at the destination, which is often part of a risk-diversification strategy of households (Dasgupta, Moqbul Hossain, Huq, & Wheeler, 2014; Lauby & Stark, 1988; Schwartz, 1976). What is more, those of working age are the ones subject to disappointment and despair if the local opportunities are too limited to enable them to earn a living both for themselves and their households (Holtemeyer, Schmidt, Ghebru, Mueller, & Kosec, 2017).

Generally speaking, there is evidence showing that, and explaining how, increasing age affects the intention to migrate and migration decisions negatively. However, few quantitative studies focus on the role of age within their research setting. This is particularly true of irregular migration flows. Varying selection effects across different factors, such as the role of age in conflict versus non-conflict settings or across distance, would be interesting to study.

6.2 Educational level

With respect to traditional labour migration, there seems to be a positive relationship to education (IMF, 2016). The inability to find adequate employment that fits their education is a major motivation for skilled, educated migrants to leave their home (Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). Having said that, there seem to be heterogeneous effects across countries: While van Dalen et al. (2005) found that higher educated people tended to migrate more often in Ghana and Egypt, the opposite was true for Morocco. This migration of lower educated individuals has been reported by several authors in recent studies covering various different world regions. They argue that, in countries with dense migration networks, the costs of migration are reduced significantly, which leads to a

selection of lower-skilled migrants (Beine et al., 2011; Bertoli, 2010; McKenzie & Rapoport, 2010). Furthermore, irregular migration seems to be dominated by people with lower levels of education as those with higher skill levels have greater opportunities to migrate legally (Mbaye, 2014). Grogger and Hanson (2011) use a large cross-country dataset on emigration in OECD countries to show that, in general, it is the more educated who emigrate and that they also settle in countries with high rewards for their level of skills.

All in all, the evidence suggests that there is an initial positive sorting with respect to education for the first movers but, as migration costs are reduced with increasing networks, less-skilled migrants also decide to move. It would also be interesting to consider the combined effects of skill levels and gender as underlying motivations for migration have been shown to differ across sexes.

6.3 Gender

Descriptive studies suggest that women are less likely to migrate across country borders than men and that they seem to be more sensitive to migration costs (Beine & Salomone, 2010; Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). Women are more risk-averse towards irregular migration as they face higher risks than men on the route, such as violence (Donato & Patterson, 2004). Added to this, they are more often constrained by a lack of financial means (Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). As a result, they frequently rely on close family networks to migrate internationally while men also trust friends and less dense network relations (Beine & Salomone, 2010; Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003; Toma & Vause, 2014).

While domestic labour migration, particularly for poor women, is common in several countries (for example, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, see Afsar (2011)), cultural and social norms might prevent them from rural-urban as well as international movements (Fleury, 2016). Women's and men's decisions to leave the home seems to be driven by different factors (Heering, van der Erf, & van Wissen, 2004). While men are more frequently driven by individual, economic factors, women's motivations to move are often to help the family or due to family reunification, but also to escape gender-based violence or discrimination (Afsar, 2009; UNFPA, 2006; van Dalen et al., 2005). Gender-based structural inequalities are another factor mentioned by several studies (Erulkar, Mekbib, Simie, & Gulema, 2006; Ferrant, Tuccio, Loiseau, & Nowacka, 2014).

In general, there is already a well-established evidence base on the role of gender in migration. Further particularly useful investigation might relate to its interaction with other determinants of migration, such as whether gender effects have a different importance in conflict and non-conflict settings.

6.4 Risk aversion and personality traits

It is a well-known fact that economic, demographic and sociological factors are important in explaining the variation in migration intentions and decisions. But variations in personality characteristics are also likely to be significantly related to the heterogeneity of movement. It is a well-established fact in psychological research that risk aversion as well as personality traits impact the decision processes of an individual (Beyer, Fasolo, de

Graeff, & Hillege, 2015). Migration is a major decision that starkly affects an individual's life as well as the household or even community. While previous studies have established the importance of risk aversion for typical (regular) labour migration, only recently have scholars investigated its role for those travelling on irregular routes. The evidence suggests that risk aversion is lower for all types of migrants in high- as well as low- and middle-income countries (Jaeger et al., 2007; Mbaye & Arcand, 2013; Mbaye, 2014; Wissink et al., 2013). Knowing of the risks involved in travelling on dangerous routes, they still make a positive migration decision. Along with this, time preference seems to be lower for migrants than for non-migrants[4] (Goldbach & Schlüter, 2018; Mbaye & Arcand, 2013). Due to a lack of reliable data the empirical evidence on time and risk preferences, however, remains scarce. Theoretical considerations remain underdeveloped and there is a need to integrate these factors into migration theories.

Interest in the field of "migration psychology" has grown of late. There have been research attempts to look at the influence of different personality traits on migration decisions. Canache, Hayes, Mondak, and Wals (2013) investigated the effects of openness to experience and extraversion on migration intentions using a large cross-country dataset in the Americas. Both personality traits showed a modest positive influence on the intent to migrate. This is supported by Silventoinen et al. (2007) for migration between Finland and Sweden. Fouarge, Özer, and Seegers (2016) studied the relationship of the "Big Five" personality traits on individual migration intentions among German students. Also they observed a positive impact of openness and extraversion on migration intentions while agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability are negatively related with intentions to move abroad. Also, sensation-seeking and preference for meeting new people has been found to be positively related to migration undertaken by Indian men (Winchie & Carment, 1988). While there is still very scant research on this point, there is an even larger gap with respect to the potential impact of personality traits on migration in and from developing regions.

Studies have also revealed heterogeneous effects with respect to additional individual characteristics such as ethnicity, marital status, and household size (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2009; Root & de Jong, 1991; Rosenzweig & Stark, 1989). However, more specific evidence on their impact on migration aspirations and decisions is limited, particularly in the field of studies on forced migration, and often they are only used as additional explanatory variables that are not further discussed.

All in all, it seems that the micro-level factors do play a significant role but are likely to be mediated through economic, social, and political factors at the macro- and meso-level. There are several research gaps to be investigated with respect to the role that the individual and household characteristics play in the migration decision process, for instance: Does skill-level play a different role in settings with human rights violations in comparison to those with economic pressures? Or: What role do personality traits play in irregular migration?

4 "Time preference" is a term used in microeconomics referring to the relative valuation of an individual to consume a good. High time preference means that an individual prefers to receive the good sooner than a person with lower time preferences.

7 Why do people decide to leave – an easy answer?

This overview has shown the multitude of factors that can determine the desire of an individual to migrate and his/her decision to do so. Whereas all of them can influence the aspiration to migrate, it is important to acknowledge that the aspiration to migrate does not automatically lead to the intention to migrate, nor to a final movement as these depend on individual *capabilities* (de Haas, 2011). Here, social (other people), economic (material), and human capital (knowledge and skills) play a significant role (de Haas, 2014). Few poor people are able to realise long-distance moves as they lack the capabilities to do so. Hence, they are underrepresented in international migratory flows and, if confronted with conflict or disasters, they often only move short distances while the extremely poor are forced to stay (de Haas, 2014). Acknowledging these non-moves is important, as these population groups are often not less vulnerable than those that have actually moved. A limited number of studies have investigated migration aspirations; the majority focused on movements of population groups that had actually taken place. To further the understanding of determinants of migration, there is a need to investigate their effect on migratory aspirations in order to separate this effect from that of individual capabilities.

In order to account for the complexity of migration decisions I argue for acknowledging the soft boundaries between voluntary and forced movement. This also applies to the development of new theoretical approaches that should deter one from strictly following the dichotomy of migration categories and instead consider the full spectrum of migratory movements. Herewith, I do not challenge the fact that certain decisions to move are taken under circumstances characterised by a greater urgency and less voluntariness than others, which in turn increases the individual's vulnerability demanding greater protection and support structures. At the same time, however, it is important to acknowledge the agency of migrants and the choices people take. These are a result of the interplay of the multitude of factors presented in this study, including their own individual and household characteristics (age, skill-level, wealth, and so on), the size of their network, access to technology and means of transport, as well as the respective political and economic environment.

While a systematic comparison of the impact strength of factors across the spectrum of migration types is still lacking, this overview suggests that certain determinants have a more pronounced impact on movement decisions than others. For all migration types, economic factors seem to matter greatly (directly and indirectly) as well as environmental changes and threats, even if they seem to trigger differential movement types depending on the characteristics of the event. Migration governance regimes do not seem to affect the total number of migrants or refugees. They do, however, seem to influence the choice of routes and the legality of entry as well as the use of smuggling networks – for both migrants and refugees. Technology and networks are likely to play an important role for all migration decisions. Overall, a comparison of the relative importance and potential hierarchy of these determinants for the migration types would be an interesting avenue to take: Which factors are more or less important for wanting and deciding to move? Furthermore, there is limited evidence on the interaction of the factors shown to have an influence on the migration decision; the relationship between violence and migratory moves is (also) mediated through the effect of violence on economic conditions, for instance. Understanding the interdependence of factors influencing decisions to move offers interesting future paths for research. Up to now, the determinants at the micro-level

have rarely been the centre of investigation in explaining heterogeneous movement decisions and the self-selection of migrants. Does age have a less pronounced effect in more pressing situations, such as in countries with high levels of violence or strong human-rights violations? Here, taking a household-level perspective might offer additional and interesting insights into explaining the mixture of reasons why people decide to migrate: if household members jointly support the migration of one family member who would send back money or goods, this would enable the other members to stay. The new economics of labour migration (NELM) theory takes this interdependency across families or social groups into account and, in doing so, points to possible future research options (de Haas, 2014; Dustmann, Meng, Fasani, & Minale, 2017). Integrating migration studies further within other fields such as social or cultural psychology and behavioural economics might offer advanced insights into people's aspirations and choices. Additional promising research areas could address how determinants affect migratory patterns in different ways, such as short- versus long-distance moves, moves across or within national borders, or moves for short or longer periods of time.

Trying to simplify a complex decision-making process, de Haas proposes the following: "[A]s long as aspirations in origin areas increase faster than the local opportunities, this will motivate people to migrate […]" (de Haas, 2018, p. 21). While the relative importance of factors driving the decision to move varies for every individual – migrant or refugee – they share the common "desire for a better life" (Özden & Wagner, 2018, p. 9), which suggests that macro-level factors dominate the desire to migrate.

The framework applied offers a helpful way to acknowledge the variety of determinants shaping the emigration environment. However, it does not establish a hierarchy or the relative importance of the factors presented.

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