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What Is the Nexus between Migration and Mobility? A Framework to Understand the Interplay between Different Ideal Types of Human Movement

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Abstract
Categorising certain forms of human movement as 'migration' and others as 'mobility' has far-reaching consequences. We introduce the migration–mobility nexus as a framework for other researchers to interrogate the relationship between these two categories of human movement and explain how they shape different social representations. Our framework articulates four ideal-typical interplays between categories of migration and categories of mobility: *continuum* (fluid mobilities transform into more stable forms of migration and vice versa), *enablement* (migration requires mobility, and mobility can trigger migration), *hierarchy* (migration and mobility are political categories that legitimise hierarchies of movement) and *opposition* (migration and mobility are pitted against each other). These interplays reveal the normative underpinnings of different categories, which we argue are too often implicit and unacknowledged.

Keywords
borders, citizenship, migration, migration governance, migration policy, migration studies, mobility

Introduction

Human movement is a major constitutive force in societies across the world. Some of the most important political discussions of our time revolve around it. From environmentally sustainable transportation to free movement for refugees, and from gentrification to equitable access to urban spaces, the regulation of human movement is a highly contentious political issue (Blunt and Sheringham, 2019; Parsons, 2019; Sheller, 2018). 'Migration' and 'mobility' often serve as marked categories for these debates. However, while these terms are used in conjunction and sometimes interchangeably,[1] we contend that more should be done to interrogate their relationship and explain how they shape different social representations of human movement.

Ideal-typical categorisations of human movement carry powerful ontological and ideational underpinnings, including implicit distinctions between movement that is voluntary versus involuntary, desirable versus undesirable, essential versus non-essential and legitimate versus illegitimate. Categories like 'mobile citizen', for example, have been used to frame human movement as a disposable resource that can be forged by individual will (Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1991). At the same time, categories of movement like 'forced migrant' or 'low-skilled labour migrant' project and reinforce social class boundaries (Lim, 2021). Greater scrutiny of these processes of categorisations is important both scientifically and substantively. Scientifically, these categories may reflect inequalities of class, gender or race, as well as particular moral, geopolitical or governmental imperatives (Bonjour and Chauvin, 2018; Massey, 1991; Skeggs, 2013). Substantively, categories of migration and categories of mobility have powerful performative effects: they can cause 'epistemic violence' to individuals that are affected by them (Spivak, 1988) and limit or enhance their freedom. Critically analysing different categories, we can better explain why they are created and what privileges are offered – or penalties applied – to those that fall within these categories.

We build on existing work that questions categories of migration and categories of mobility, and we contend that research on human movement is often siloed. We suggest

moving attention away from a narrow focus on ideal-typical categories of migration or ideal-typical categories of mobility; and instead concentrate on their *relationships*. We introduce the migration–mobility nexus (MMN), an analytical framework that works as a set of lenses to uncover the often-hidden normative assumptions that lie behind these categories. The MMN sheds light on the existence of multiple connections between different ways of framing movement and lays the foundations for understanding how these different forms co-constitute each other.

As authors of this article, we share a reflexive approach that seeks to explain how categories of migration and mobility are constructed socially, politically and scientifically, thus contributing to establishing or reinforcing structures of power and domination. Our contribution is conceptual: based on recent calls for typology-oriented conceptual contributions to social science research (e.g. Jaakkola, 2020), we develop a typology of different interplays between the categories of migration and mobility. By taking stock and proposing a critical discussion of the hitherto scattered bodies of literature that use these categories, we shed light on some of the assumptions that are sometimes implicit in different formulations; and we discuss their performative implications. Our goal is to enable scholars to identify linkages between ideal-typical categories of human movement and advance the sociological discussion on the inequalities they produce, reinforce or reduce (Dahinden et al., 2021; Dines et al., 2018; Gillespie et al., 2012; Hamlin, 2021; Zetter, 1991, 2007).

We begin this article by discussing two strands of research on human movement: one focusing primarily on categories of migration, and the other concerned mostly with categories of mobility. The existence of these distinct bodies of literature expresses (a) the significant divergence among scholars about how to study the phenomenon of human movement and (b) the difficulty of establishing an overarching heuristic framework that makes it possible to situate the categories of mobility and migration – as they are used by researchers – in dialogue with each other (see Bauböck, 2021; Wyss and Dahinden, 2022). We argue that the MMN allows us to lay bare the complex interplay between different migration and mobility categories. We identify four ideal-typical forms of such interplay: (1) *continuum*, where fluid mobilities can change into more stable forms of migration (and vice versa); (2) *enablement*, where migration requires mobility and mobility can lead to migration; (3) *hierarchy*, where migration and mobility are used as alternative political categories that legitimise hierarchies of movement; and (4) *opposition*, where migration and mobility are set against each other. By providing specific examples for each type, we clarify how these forms of interplay can be used to explain processes of categorisation or analysis of human movement. We conclude by discussing potential applications of the MMN framework, emphasising the importance of questioning the often implicit and unacknowledged assumptions in the existing scholarship. Indeed, we argue that such assumptions should be made explicit to encourage a more transparent process of knowledge production around human movement.

The Categorisation of Human Movement: Between Migration and Mobility

The study of human movement is a highly dynamic area of research and arguably one that lies at the heart of social science debates (de Haas et al., 2019; Sheller and Urry,

2006). Although the earliest research into human migration dates to the end of the 19th century (Ravenstein, 1885), the field has expanded significantly in the last 30 years, with an increase in related degree programmes, specialised journals, research institutes and university chairs, mainly in Europe, the USA and Australia (Hollifield, 2020; Piccoli et al., 2023; Pisarevskaya et al., 2019). Because of this dynamism, distinct literatures addressing the topic have developed in parallel – sometimes with surprisingly little cross-fertilisation. The two main schools of scholarship and publishing devoted to human movement – one focusing on 'migration' and the other on 'mobility' – adopt complementary perspectives, albeit with a different emphasis. While many terms are used within these broad schools, we propose to simplify the debate by distinguishing between the two main ideal-typical categories of migration and mobility.

Historically, the focus of social science research devoted to the study of human movement was on individuals crossing across borders – usually national borders – assuming permanent (re)settlement as the intended and final outcome. However, this approach problematises and focuses on one ideal type of human movement – namely, 'migration' (however broadly defined). Defining certain people as 'migrants' categorises them according to a logic that normalises the existence of national borders and entails significant differences in the opportunities and rights granted to these people (Torpey, 1998; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002; Zolberg, 1981).

It has been pointed out that this migration-centric view of human movement is deeply embedded in the experience of the Global North, where it was developed, including the legacies of European colonialism and the logic of the modern nation-state (Favell, 2022). Moreover, this perspective only partially captures the full range of the experience of human movement, which can encompass multiple journeys motivated by various purposes even during a single lifetime (Anderson, 2019; Favell, 2007; Sheller and Urry, 2006). Furthermore, a narrow focus on migration has been criticised for naturalising rooted settlement (Dahinden, 2016), the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1992; Wimmer and Schiller, 2002) and ignoring postcolonial legacies (Mayblin, 2017; Palmary, 2021; Schinkel, 2018). As a result, migration research has largely focused on western countries as the main destination of immigration flows.

Research on mobility expanded quickly following the plea for a new paradigm to capture the diverse forms of human movement, including business travellers, truck drivers, students and tourists (Cresswell, 2006; Kaufmann et al., 2004; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). This literature has quickly expanded to examine interactions between the mobility of humans and non-human elements, such as goods and knowledge. The interest in mobility as a new analytical lens prompted greater attention on subjective and experiential dimensions of movement, and advocated a conceptualisation of social phenomena based on the notion of *flow* as opposed to traditional approaches based on the notion of *stasis*.

Just like migration, however, the term 'mobility' is controversial. The right to be mobile in the 21st century is class-specific and selective (Bauman, 1998: 9; see also Lim, 2021; Skeggs, 2013). For example, the tendency to conceptualise mobility as a normative or progressive ideal can obscure much of the contested politics entailed in border crossing and resettlement (Davidson, 2021). Indeed, globalisation and regional integration have contributed to shaping the idea of mobility as an aspirational undertaking in

contrast to the often-pejorative connotations associated with migration. For instance, the European Union (EU) defines 'free movement' as a fundamental right of EU citizenship and promotes it to achieve desirable ends – fostering interconnections, forging a common sense of European community and reducing the potential for conflict (Recchi and Favell, 2019). Tellingly, EU institutions refrain from treating even permanent resettlement in another Member State as 'migration'. In addition, research on the movement of early-career academics has shown how universities treat the experience gained from transnational mobility as central to an ideal academic career progression while ignoring how this practice rests on problematic gender norms that reinforce inequality (Schaer et al., 2017).

We do not want to add a further level of complexity to the discussion about migration and mobility. Instead, we propose a framework that can be used to articulate the two literatures and the hitherto largely separate ways of analysing these representations of movement. By postulating the existence of a connection between ideal types of migration and mobility, we adopt a reflexive posture concerning different categories of movement: how they are created in the first instance and how they reduce or reproduce inequalities in access to movement.

The Migration–Mobility Nexus (MMN) as a Heuristic Framework: Connecting Different Categories of Human Movement

The MMN is a heuristic framework that postulates the existence of a connection between the ideal types of migration and mobility. It pushes us in the first instance to acknowledge and lay bare the nature of this relationship and, second, to articulate it analytically. This idea starts from the observation that public discourses on human movement are constructed socially, economically, politically and scientifically. For example, governments and the media typically spotlight the movement of boats crossing the Mediterranean while paying little or no heed to daily movements from the countryside to the city, or across different EU borders. This can change suddenly as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led governments to produce new categories of movement (e.g. 'essential movement') and mechanisms to discipline individuals accordingly (Martin and Bergmann, 2021; Piccoli et al., 2021). By contrast, regulatory changes – such as the introduction of visa-free arrangements between two countries – can open avenues for people once unable to travel to cross borders more easily (Mau et al., 2015). Categories of human movement assume distinct value because of how they are produced and represented, which we argue occurs through language, discourse and image, and that are linked to power, in the sense of being dependent on the power to represent someone or something in a certain way (Hall, 1997). The MMN is an invitation to consider the constitutive power of these categories and how they relate to unequal access to resources.

To take this reflection further, we advance that migration and mobility are both *categories of practice*, or 'categories of everyday experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors' (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 4) and *categories of analysis*, that is, 'experience-distant categories used by social scientists' (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 4).

Brubaker (2013: 6) draws attention to the risk social scientists take by *blurring* categories and calls for a 'critical and self-reflexive stance towards our categories'.

At the most general level, migration and mobility both 'involve a human being moving between points that can be marked on a map' (Bauböck, 2021: 169). This deceivingly simple idea opens a plethora of definitions (Recchi and Flipo, 2019). Migration is generally defined as the act of 'mov[ing] away from one's place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons' (International Organization for Migration IOM, 2023). Mobility has been defined as the act of 'getting from one place to another' (Cresswell, 2010: 19) and as 'people's capability (freedom) to choose where to live – including the option to stay' (de Haas, 2022: 2). These definitions, however, are undetermined: for example, categories of 'migration' can either include or exclude so-called foreign-born individuals who now possess the nationality of the country where they live, their descendants or those who have moved away from their place of usual residence in the past and have now returned (Anderson and Blinder, 2015). Similarly, given the broad understanding of the term in the discipline, it remains impossible to demarcate when mobility begins and who could be legitimately categorised as a 'mobile individual'. It is neither our goal in this article to provide standard definitions for these categories, nor to develop a comprehensive critique of existing definitions and their limitations.

Instead, we introduce these definitions to emphasise how researchers delineate their subject of study differently driven by their respective ontological assumptions, epistemological approaches, positionality and research questions. This creates a plurality of definitions of migration and mobility, with important consequences. For example, movement appears in a different light if one adopts a processual ontology that assumes fluidity and relations as the most salient aspects of it; or a more static ontology that focuses on fixity and institutions. Similarly, some epistemologies prioritise transformations using dynamic concepts, while others tend to use static concepts (Stenner, 2017; Valsiner et al., 2009). In any event, categories of migration and categories of mobility have different values and connotations because they are inherently linked to specific logics of perceiving and regulating human movement (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018; de Vries and Weatherhead, 2021; Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, 2020; Levitt, 2012). Rather than seeing this epistemological pluralism as problematic, we contend that the MMN can be fruitfully applied to different definitions of the categories of migration and mobilities, as long as these definitions are spelled out explicitly and there is sufficient attention dedicated to the interplay between two (or more) different ways of framing human movement.

Making Sense of Different Categories of Human Movement: Four Interplays between Migration and Mobility

We argue that we cannot fully understand migration categories without considering categories of mobility, and vice versa. The act of categorising some people as migrants and others as mobile individuals reflects different understandings of the relationship between these categories. In the following, we identify and provide illustrations of four interplays: continuity (continuum), complementarity (enablement), duality (hierarchy) or

contradiction (opposition). We base the ensuing discussion of each interplay on existing research, which we use to propose a systematic approach to connect different categories.

Migration and Mobility: Continuum

One way to understand the MMN is as a *continuum* between two poles, where ideal-typical fluid mobilities can gradually change into more stable forms of migration (and vice versa). From this perspective, it is impossible to draw a binary distinction between the categories of migration and mobility. Instead, the transitions from one category to another are *gradual* and *continuous* and may change over time or depending on the circumstances.

Since the pioneering work of Hägerstrand (1975), who created a statistical time-space approach for studying movements ranging from people's daily commutes to long-distance migration, several studies have examined migration trajectories through a similar approach (King and Skeldon, 2010; Lucassen and Lucassen, 2009; Zufferey et al., 2021). The idea is that forms of human movement can occur across a broad spectrum, with permanent settlement at one end and recurrent mobility at the other. Temporary mobilities can transform into longer-term forms of migration – a single migration move can turn into more dynamic forms of movement – and vice versa. Zufferey et al. (2021), for example, have analysed movement trajectories of foreign citizens in Switzerland. Traditional approaches might have analysed data on permit types or calculated something like the average duration of residence or the share of foreign citizens acquiring permanent residence status. Instead, the authors used the MMN lens to explore various modalities of movement, including internal mobility and border crossing for work. This yields a much richer picture than binary (or arbitrary) distinctions. Just like social class, which cannot be understood in terms of economic capital alone, approaching the categories of migration and mobility as two extremes along a continuum is a fruitful method to distinguish different forms of movement in terms of their geographical distance, frequency, density, speed and time instead of using only established categories like national borders.

Migration through Mobility: Enablement

From a different perspective, migration can be understood as a factor *enabling* mobility, or the other way around. This interplay between categories is based on the idea of individuals as agents navigating different possibilities offered by their passport, gender, ethnicity and class, but also their professional status, geography and social networks. Responding strategically to their position within a global constellation of opportunities to travel, individuals may use migration to secure new opportunities for mobility. We call this interplay 'enablement' because it frames different categories of movement as *complementary*.

For example, settlement often is a precondition for mobility. Some high-class opera singers in Italy navigate migration policies by becoming permanent residents through strategic marriages, and then use their newly acquired status to continue their

international and prestigious yet precarious career (Isaakyan, 2022). This is similar to Massey (1991), who examines a group of middle-class high-tech male scientists and shows that they are based in the United Kingdom, but live international lives by communicating remotely, travelling to conferences and so on, thus using their residential localism as a springboard for mobility. In other cases, cross-border migrant entrepreneurship boosts transnational networks and the circulation of know-how, thereby enabling the movement of people, goods and ideas. Such projects rest on the interplay between migration trajectories and available permits accumulated over time with entrepreneurial mobilities in the present (Dahinden, 2010; Moret, 2020). Similarly, inclusive migration or citizenship policies enable greater mobility by reinforcing 'freedom of movement' available to those who are affected by them (Bennour, 2020; Filindra and Manatschal, 2019; Galeano et al., 2022).

These forms of enablement between migration and mobility categories clearly intersect with social inequalities: not every migrant can mobilise past experiences to the same effect (Bolay, 2021; Nshimbi, 2021), and being a citizen of some countries can limit one's possibilities to move legally (Mau, 2010). Using the lenses of the MMN, we can better understand the interplay between regulations and the subjective dimension of being on the move.

Migration or Mobility: Hierarchy

Migration and mobility may be conceived as political categories that reproduce and legitimise hierarchies of movement as part of broader governance regimes (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Koslowski, 2011). In such a reading, migration and mobility are *alternatives*, with one being placed above the other – generally, mobility is placed above migration. For example, while some people may be categorised by governments and economic actors as 'desirable immigrants' because of their economic value (e.g. highly skilled entrepreneurs) and thus afforded the right to travel to and settle in specific places, others are perceived as 'undesirable', and their travel and settlement opportunities are restricted (Fasani and Mazza, 2020; Sandoz, 2020). If we take free movement rules that make it easier for highly skilled workers to enter and circulate as forms of 'mobility', then clearly, mobility stands hierarchically above migration, which is regulated more heavily and often more restrictively. In addition, some forms of migration and mobility are clearly associated with social class: for instance, the mobility of high-skilled workers through the European Blue Card Directive allows for significant rights, while labour migrants to Gulf countries are granted fewer rights (Lim, 2021).

Thinking of migration and mobility as categories that produce hierarchies of privilege offers analytical purchase in interpreting policy change when regulatory barriers to certain forms of human movement are raised or dismantled. Examples include the positions governments take towards different groups of individuals on the move. For instance, following Brexit, hierarchy was at work with the re-classification of all EU free movers/non-national residents as 'immigrants to the UK' needing to determine new pathways for residence and recognition of settlement rights. The establishment of visa-free travel reflects this logic, albeit in a more open direction (Mau, 2010). It could be argued that

there is a continuum of mobilities, and hierarchy results from policies designating a small part of these mobilities to be legally and politically acceptable and desirable.

Hierarchies constitute national populations versus 'foreigners' or 'migrants' whose movement is to be regulated. They can also distinguish between groups of cross-border movers allowed onto a pathway as (legal) immigrants, and other groups perceived as unwanted (irregular) immigrants. Historically, figures like the nomad, the barbarian, the vagabond and the proletariat have been excluded from the state's embrace (Nail, 2015). The Chinese hukou system of household registration ties the social rights of a person to their municipality of origin and allows cities to permanently exclude non-native populations from essential services by categorising them as internal migrants (Meng and Manning, 2010). Institutional support programmes sometimes target 'migrants' and render invisible 'mobile' persons: in Switzerland, school 'integration' programmes are designed for 'migrant' children and are not adapted to the needs of children who experience recurrent mobility (Kloetzer et al., 2021; Levitan, 2019). Similar dynamics can be observed for spouses (Cangià, 2019; Tissot, 2020). Applying the MMN to such cases, we can observe how lines that shift categories of mobility into categories of migration can be drawn in changeable ways.

This approach places the focus on investigating how distinctions between migration and mobility affect and are shaped by inequalities of class, gender and race through a set of incentives, sanctions and neglect. These distinctions can be legal (e.g. the difference between someone with specific permits and someone without them), political (e.g. the line drawn between an 'economic migrant' and a 'forced migrant' or 'spousal migrant'), economic (e.g. the separation of 'self-sufficient EU citizen' and 'non-self-sufficient EU citizen') or racial (e.g. where white persons on the move are seen as 'expats' whereas others are labelled 'migrants' in public discourse). By focusing on how people are classified into different groups, we can better understand why migration often signifies 'problematic mobility' (Anderson, 2017: 1532) and unpack the mechanisms through which some forms of movement are turned into mobility that is not subject to control or restriction (e.g. free movement regimes, or mobility between provinces or municipalities within a state) or into urban mobility (e.g. in the case of sanctuary cities).

Migration versus Mobility: Opposition

Migration policies restrict the mobility of certain groups of people. For example, consular staff in charge of visa decisions use the applicant's age, origin and social class and relationship to the country as indicators of a potential 'migration risk', in which case the visa and possibility to legally travel abroad is denied (Scheel, 2019). By contrast, migration policies can also force individuals into some specific forms of mobility: many asylum seekers in Europe are forced to constantly move between reception centres and homes, making it virtually impossible to settle and participate locally (Eule et al., 2019). Paradoxically, even if granted some form of legal protection, refugees may find themselves restricted to settling in specific cities, towns or rural areas (Brankamp, 2020; Lubkemann, 2008; Tazzioli, 2020). However, while governments seek to regulate migrants' behaviour, migrants can leverage their mobility to subvert such policies.

From this perspective, migration and mobility may be understood as two *co-constitutive* types of movement, albeit in direct opposition to one another. For example, unauthorised immigrants can leverage their mobility to defy state control of migration (Ataç et al., 2021; Duchêne-Lacroix et al., 2016; Mezzadra, 2020; Moret, 2020; Scheel, 2019). Similarly, repeated and recurrent mobility following detention or deportation (i.e. attempting to re-enter after being forcibly removed from a territory) can become a form of resistance to migration policies (Rezzonico, 2021). Civil society initiatives and local policies can play into this opposition, for example through municipal identity cards that provide otherwise undocumented individuals greater opportunities to be mobile (De Graauw, 2014; Nyers, 2015). Viewing the MMN through the lens of opposition allows us to see more clearly how individuals exercise agency, alone or collectively, to navigate migration policies.

Understanding What Lies Behind the Categories of 'Migrants' and 'Mobile Individuals'

Adopting a perspective that is sensitive to the artificially created differences between migration and mobility contributes to a broader reflection on the inequalities that these categories can contribute to produce, reinforce or dismantle. The MMN makes a step in this direction by attempting to reconcile research on mobility and research on migration. On the one hand, it helps identify dynamic patterns of movement and breaks up an overtly static migration perspective. By doing this, it contributes to exposing the cognitive framing of 'migrants' as a special category of human beings (Anderson, 2017; Dahinden, 2016; Dines et al., 2018; Scheel and Tazzioli, 2022). At the same time, the MMN invites scholars to complement studies on mobility with a migration perspective that is attentive to how contemporary social and political regimes multiply borders and allocate rights and opportunities differentially across populations (Safi, 2019; Shachar, 2020). In Table 1, we summarise the four interplays we have identified and what they say about representations of migration and mobility.

These interplays show that categories of migration and mobility can be seen as constitutive of each other, either because one complements the other (*enablement*) or because the policies regulating one make the other necessary or impossible (*opposition*). On the other hand, categories of migration and mobility can also stand for different conceptions of movement and stasis (*continuum*) or political decisions that create and reproduce alternative categories of movement (*hierarchy*). All four interplays show that categories of migration and mobility are not neutral, objective or clearly distinguishable phenomena or categories. This is why they should be considered together. Through this attention to the relationship between different categories that are used to classify people on the move, the MMN sheds light on the mechanisms through which these categories contribute to the making and unmaking of structural inequalities in access to movement.

More specifically, we identify three ways in which the MMN helps uncover such inequalities. First, doing so requires social sciences scholars interested in human movement and its implications to embed a form of critical reflexivity about the categories they use in their research. While one could assume that scrutinising categories is part of every

Table 1. Summary of the four interplays in the migration–mobility nexus.

Nexus	Definition	Main focus	What does this interplay say about the representation of migration and mobility?
Continuum	Fluid mobilities might gradually change into more stable forms of migration; and vice versa	Experience of movement: physical spaces and time	It is impossible to draw a clear-cut distinction between mobility and migration
Enablement	Migration requires mobility, while mobility can lead to migration	Social networks: individual resources, capabilities	Individuals use migration to secure new opportunities for their mobility
Hierarchy	Migration and mobility are political categories that legitimise hierarchies of movement	Migration regimes: territorial boundaries, membership boundaries	Migration policies create different opportunities for people to be mobile
Opposition	Migration and mobility may be understood as two co-constitutive types of movement, in opposition of each other	Appropriation of categories: individual experiences, biographies and life-courses	Migration policies can restrict mobility, but mobility practices can be used to defeat such policies

Source: own elaboration.

researcher's toolbox, this is often surprisingly lacking regarding the two categories discussed in this article. How one thinks about migration and mobility largely depends on preconceived – and often implicit – assumptions. By focusing on a specific interplay, or several interplays, we must be explicit about the meaning we give to human movement as migration and/or mobility. Such critical reflexivity can also contribute to identifying the inequal effects of semantic classifications that sometimes reproduce the figure of a 'migrant other' (Amelina, 2021).

Second, by highlighting the importance of different categories of human movement, the MMN facilitates engagement with normative questions on what the balance between individual freedom to move, legal restrictions and collective interests in self-government ought to be. By using the MMN, researchers are invited to reflect on the different ways in which 'the combined operation of actions in institutions puts large categories of persons under a systematic threat of domination' (Young, 2007: 170), with a specific reference to the wide range of resources that are mobilised through human movement and to the structures that regulate it.

Finally, the MMN brings together different disciplines and traditions of research. Many of the assumptions discussed in this article regarding human movement (or lack of it) have their roots in colonial histories (Mayblin, 2017; Palmary, 2021; Schinkel, 2018) and can be explained through the lenses of critical race theory (García, 2017), gender studies (Amelina and Lutz, 2019; Palmary, 2021; Soto, 2018; Yeoh and Ramdas, 2014)

and by applying a transnational perspective (Dahinden, 2010; Recchi and Favell, 2019; Schaer et al., 2017). The MMN encourages dialogue among these approaches to understand the underlying inequalities of power and identify spaces for agency and social change.

The four interplays that we have identified emphasise the heuristic value of the MMN. We do not believe that researchers should choose only one of these four: in fact, they can easily be combined. We invite additional research to critically engage with these interplays and identify other forms of interaction between ideal-types of migration and mobility. Moreover, as all researchers who contributed to this article are based in Western Europe, we recognise that this reflection would benefit from additional contributions that bring in different positionalities and geographical perspectives; and hope to spark such a conversation.

At the same time, there are still significant limitations to the use of the MMN. We have developed the MMN as an overarching tool, only with human movement in mind. At this stage, we still have a limited understanding about how this could apply to immobility, as well as to mobility of non-human phenomena – ideas, culture, data, waste and pollution, and capital (Pedersen and Zittoun, 2021; Söderström et al., 2013; Zittoun, 2020). Further work in this direction is necessary.

Conclusion

Greater attention needs to be paid to the interrelations between different categories of migration and mobility, rather than siloed dimensions within them. We have conceived the MMN as a tool to move in this direction and we have provided examples of how it is possible to fully understand migration categories only by considering categories of mobility, and vice versa. The numerous exceptions to travel restrictions granted by governments during the COVID-19 pandemic show that today's interconnected world depends on the coexistence of different categories of human movement. Likewise, the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the ensuing humanitarian emergency have crystallised the difference in treatment between asylum seekers from Ukraine and those from outside Europe, including Afghanistan and Syria. The MMN can help to better understand the variety of barriers, experiences, inequalities and political struggles that are often implicit in the categorisation of human movement.

We have used the MMN to show that there are at least four different combinations of how categories of migration and mobility come together: they can be continuous (*continuum*), complementary (*enablement*), alternative (*hierarchy*) or opposed (*opposition*). The specific modes of using the MMN that we propose in this article do not add up to a coherent overarching theory but serve to illustrate its potential as a heuristic tool. The four interplays can be applied by scholars using different epistemologies or social ontologies. Our pluralist approach aims at stimulating more fruitful debates between, for example, realist and constructivist perspectives. We encourage other researchers to employ this tool in their work, refine the four ideal-typical forms of interplay that we have provisionally identified and suggest others. In this way, the MMN can contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between different categories that are used to make sense of human movement, which remain too often implicit and unacknowledged.

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Note

1. This applies to institutions (e.g. The Migration and Mobility Cluster at Sciences Po Paris, The Zolberg Centre on Migration and Mobility at the New School in New York), publications (e.g. Gamlen, 2020; McAuliffe and Khadria, 2020; Pooley and Turnbull, 1998) and regulations (e.g. the Global Approach on Migration and Mobility published by the EU Commission in 2011 as an answer to the arrival of migrants and refugees after the start of the Arab Spring).

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