

The four migration systems

A **Migration system** is a set of sending and receiving countries closely connected by a web of population movements that persist over time and involve socio-economic and political relations, flows of goods, capital and ideas.

A. MIGRANT TYPOLOGIES

(I) European East - West migration system

(Poles and Ukrainians in Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary and Poland).

Migrant typologies:

- (a) Poles are both men and women seeking better life chances
- (b) Ukrainians are predominantly women who aim to complement family income
- (c) Ukrainians tend to engage in circular migration
- (d) formal networks are important among Poles
- (e) For both Poles and Ukrainians borders and proximity play a salient role

Migration policies do not appear to be particularly relevant in stemming flows. They mainly divert entrants into the informal labour market. Integration policies seem to have a greater impact after arrival.

(II) North-Africa - Europe system

(Moroccans in Belgium, France and Spain)

Migrant typologies:

- (a) legal migrants and family unification prevail in France and Belgium
- (b) undocumented migrants and seeking employment prevail in Spain

Migration policies fail to prevent undocumented migration and attract highly skilled individuals in part because of the lack of surplus of qualified workers in destination countries and in part because highly qualified Moroccans move to countries where they are not stigmatised.

(III) Middle East - Europe system

(Turks in the Netherlands and the UK)

Migrant typologies:

- (a) In the Netherlands: Turks form the largest migrant group of non-Western background face varying types of visa requirements family formation remains the main motive for migration

(b) In the UK research focuses on how national and local levels of migration policies affect Turkish Cypriots, mainland Turks and Turkish Kurds, preventing valid comparisons.

Turks have access to more information before arriving to the Netherlands than to the UK and select the Netherlands by virtue of the high standards of the educational system.

(IV) South/Central America - North America system

(Mexicans in the USA and Canada)

Migrant typologies:

- (a) large (even growing) presence in both areas
- (b) migrants fall both within the documented and undocumented status categories
- (c) migrants “ignore” policies that intervene too much in their goals
- (d) pre-migration nodal points (family circumstances, decision to explore other options) appear to be fairly consistent in all cases.

For undocumented Mexican immigrants the draw has less to do with immigration policies and more with the lack of opportunities in their homeland. A mix of federal, state and local level policies and enforcement practices delineate their daily lives.

B. FLUIDITY OF MIGRANT TYPOLOGIES

In the four migration systems we address the ways in which the migration project is informed by policies, while at the same time it is influenced by immigrants' characteristics.

The rule is fluidity and change, especially with regard to:

- historical relations with host societies
- varying definitions of migrants (legal/illegal)
- access to citizenship rights (foreign nationals/ethnic origin migrants)
- forms of mobility (permanent, temporary, shuttle etc.)
- living standards
- migration categories (i.e. from family reunification to family formation).

Two dimensions of the migration project remain relatively stable:

- gender (migrant women move on their own right, are embraced by female networks seek gender linked jobs)
- networks (these become increasingly important in gathering information before, during and after migration, criteria to entry and residence, planning and

implementation of movement).

In a word, next to the remarkable similarities observed between the four migration systems, within each of them there are different migrant typologies.

The picture concerning policies however is much more heterogeneous. Although everywhere migration policies reflect the reluctance of the host societies to welcome ethnically diverse groups, police and control authorities exhibit different degrees of strictness in enforcing legislation.