

The Language of Migration

Tawona Sitholé & Heaven Crawley
University of Glasgow *Coventry University*

with Dereje Feyissa, Tebkieta Alexandra Tapsoba,
Mouoboum Marc Meda, Gabriel Sangli, Seng Guan Yeoh *and* Alison Phipps

Words are a dangerous game. They don't just describe a reality; they also create it. At the same time, words are one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal to change dominant, dehumanising, migratory narratives.

This piece was inspired by a conversation between MIDEQ colleagues in the early stages of thinking and writing for this volume. During the conversation it became clear that whilst we appeared to be talking about the same thing, in reality, we weren't. For each of us, the language of migration reflects our own experiences and engagement with the concept of “migration.” It reflects our understanding of what it means to “migrate” and who is viewed, understood, or represented as “a migrant.” These understandings, individual and collective, are shaped by our personal experiences and those of our family and friends, our engagement with the “scholarly literature” on migration from a range of disciplinary perspectives, our work and play as writers, artists, linguists, advocates and campaigners, doers and thinkers. These understandings are formed at the intersection of our complex and interwoven identities.

Our conversation revealed the many ways in which the core ideas of “migration” and “migrants” are conceptualised in the various languages spoken, known or used by those working in or otherwise associated with, the MIDEQ Hub. Several contributors mentioned that in the contexts where they live and work, the word “migration” has a very different meaning – or no meaning at all. And that even within countries, different groups use the term “migrant” or “traveller” or “foreigner” to mean many different things, both positive and negative. The significance of this and the potential implications for the work are both exciting and challenging. When we write for a particular journal or audience, we often default to the dominant ways of representing migration linguistically without stopping to consider whether these meanings are the same for others. This piece is the product of that original conversation and our subsequent engagements, woven together in ways that we hope provide a meaningful starting point for better understanding of the multiple meanings and significances of “migration,” as used in this volume.

Multiple Meanings

Language itself is a resource to draw on to assist in the building of the MIDEQ Hub. This is a fact that is sometimes acknowledged, but not always utilised. The Hub's research is ongoing in at least 12 countries, with partner institutions and associated colleagues based around the globe. MIDEQ is indeed a multilingual Hub, and yet, its foundational idea and frame – migration - appears thus far not to have been treated in a way that reflects this quality. In an effort to draw, or drink,

from the *tsimé* (well) of language that is the MIDEQ community of researchers, administrators, participants and affiliated people, we invited short pieces or vignettes capturing the complexities of language as it relates to “migration” and “migrants.” Exploring the meaning and perception of migration in this way reveals how language affects not only how migration may be explained or described by different peoples, but also how migration is inspired, experienced, imagined and reimagined. A recurring example of this is the importance of time – not just the time at when the migration occurs but also the length of time over which it takes place. What follows in this section are reflections on the multiple meanings of “migration” and “migrant” in different geographical, cultural and historical contexts.

To Stroll, To Wander, Go Out

Dereje Feyissa, Peace and Development Centre, Ethiopia

Most of the Ethiopian migrants in South Africa are from Southern Ethiopia, particularly the Hadiya area. There is no native Hadiya term for migration as we understand it currently in academia and among policy makers. Some Hadiya have adopted the Amharic term *sidet* to mean migration. *Sidet* carries negative connotations of migration as understood in the Global North. Traditionally, the Hadiya used the term *darfirma* to describe the flow of people, which is positively signified and part of the “natural order of things,” not “an aberration” which needs to be controlled or managed. Many of the Hadiya we talked to during the fieldwork mentioned that Hadiya are not migrating to South Africa primarily because of economic reasons (though this is acknowledged as a contributory factor). Etymologically, *darfirma* means “to stroll, to wander, go out.” The code of masculinity encourages the male youth to go somewhere, not stay in the same village. It is said that even joining the military is much more appreciated than staying in the same village forever and succeeding. A Hadiya student would be unhappy if he is assigned to a nearby university – the further the better. The preference is Meqele University – the farthest from Hadiya in the northern Tigray region despite the fact that there is Wachemo University located in Hosanna (Hadiya). Contemporary labour migrations are understood as the latest iterations of *darfirma*. The *darfirma* to South Africa has now added a spiritual dimension in the self-understanding of migrants; “a prophecy fulfilled,” recasting migration as an enactment of a divine script. In this spiritual framing of the movement of people, the Hadiya are in South Africa despite a perilous journey and precarious existence in destination places because “they are meant to be there.” This has injected into migratory processes a new sense of entitlement. Interestingly, what is encouraged is not disappearance into a foreign land but rather an exploratory mindset. In fact, parents often carry out rituals to make sure that their loved ones will one day come back home.

The Importance of Time and Space

Tebkieta Alexandra Tapsoba, Mouoboum Marc Meda and Gabriel Sangli

Higher Institute of Population Sciences (ISSP), Burkina Faso

Migration is embedded in Burkina Faso’s history as its population is the fruit of mobility from neighboring countries. One of its largest ethnic groups, the Mossé, settled in the country after

migrating from Ghana around the 10th century. Nowadays, national censuses show that the regions of Sud-Ouest, Centre-Ouest, Centre-Est, Hauts-Bassins and Plateau Central are the main providers of international migrants in Burkina Faso. In these regions, the Mossé, Bissa, Dioulas, Gourounsi, Gourmantche, Birifor, Dagara and Lobiri are the main ethnic groups. Each of these ethnic groups have a way of designating migration, but one common thing is the absence of a single word to say migration or migrant, and the communality of the term “bush” in the way of designating migration. In fact, the majority of them say “going into the bush” to say migration. They place themselves as being the home and the rest of the World being the “bush” or the unknown. The Dagara will therefore say *mouon-yob*, the Lobiri *a-gal-houono*, the Gourounsi-Kasséna *gavèlè* or *gaavèna*, the Mossé *woé logré*, the Birifor *ntchè nan moon* or *mon yorba* and the Bissa *pula*. When going further into understanding the term, we noted that migrating is not necessarily a bad thing. In these locals, migrants are being seen as people who went to seek a better life. However, migrants who stayed abroad for too long are depicted as people who walked away from their country, tradition and family.

The Afterlives of Merantau

Seng Guan Yeoh, Monash University, Malaysia

In the expansive space of maritime and mainland Southeast Asia, there exists an ancient tradition of the mobility of persons, particularly for men. The linguistic fact that there are numerous words in the Malayo-Polynesian language to signify different kinds of archipelagic mobilities indexes this important socio-cultural legacy celebrated in popular modern culture today.

One of the most well-known is *merantau* - a voluntary journeying to the “outside world” for short periods of time and then, equally important, returning home to share newfound experiences, stories of adventure, novel knowledge, prestige and even wealth. Particularly for matrilineal and matrifocal societies, like the Minangkabau found on the island of Sumatra, this was a *de rigueur* rite-of-passage for unmarried men before they are deemed to be desirable partners.

In these cases, one could characterize *merantau* as a prescribed wanderlust. Moreover, returning to kin and place is key to this circular journey. Apart from dying in a foreign place, staying away too long in the *rantau* runs the risks of being forgotten by those back in the homeland.

Over the past few centuries, the combined impacts of European extractive colonialism, postcolonial nationalism and predatory global capitalism have transfigured rather than erased this socio-cultural practice. New colonial-inherited technologies of rule, regimes of mobilities, and the international division of labour have extended the travel networks to far-away places and for longer periods of time. In many cases, the circular journey has become short-circuited as individuals, whether through choice or force of circumstances, have decided to settle down permanently in their places of study and work.

More recently, as heavy-in-demand migrant domestic and factory workers, more and more women in Southeast Asia are also now allowed, in fact encouraged, to *merantau* in order to bring in remittances to families and the nation-state coffers. This has changed the nature and texture of gender and kin relations as women can also seek to become “modern” through work abroad. For large sending countries in the Southeast Asian region like Indonesia and the Philippines, this has

the effect of transfiguring *merantau* into a more gender-varied, nationalised and monetised socio-economic imaginary detached from its local moorings. And in its wake, generating a romanticised yearning of what it was imagined to be like before.

Kupinda Musango

Tawona Sitholé, University of Glasgow, UK

In the folklore of the non-nomadic peoples of Zimbabwe, there are two reasons one would leave the homestead. There is a clear distinction between *kushava*, endeavour, and *kutama*, relocating. Except for extreme situations such as war or irreconcilable differences with kin or neighbours, *kutama* would not happen too readily. This was because of the ties to the land-ancestors' burial grounds, and certain rituals attached to the homestead such as *rukwhute*, umbilical cord, being buried in the homestead. On the other hand, *kushava* was a regular occurrence for hunting and searching for medicine, food and firewood gathering. It was also part of *kuyaruka*, rite of passage, where young men would spend some time in the *sango*, forest, learning to survive before they returned to the homestead to complete the ceremonial aspects of being introduced to adult life.

Ndongosienda nesango, I just go with the forest, is more than just a lament of one who has given their fate to the *sango*, a mysterious and dangerous place. It is often a brave hope that holds the *sango* also as a place of life-sustaining abundance. Movement into the *sango* is not only necessary but natural, as suggested in the proverbs: *chitsva chiri mutsoka*, gifts are in the feet; *churu hachifambiri nyoka*, the anthill does not seek the snake; and *sango rinopa waneta*, the *sango* rewards you when you're near exhaustion. The folk song *musango ndozungaira*, expresses the frustrations and hopelessness of the one who has not managed to achieve what they set out to do, and is now reduced to wandering in the *sango*.

Toenda kuchikuwa tonozvisiira ikoko, I'm going to speak at the *chikuwa*, announces one about to go on a journey. *Chikuwa*, resembling a grave, is the space between the wall and your head where you sleep. Because sleep and death were seen as related, spiritually, the *chikuwa* was seen as a place where one was in direct presence of the *vadzimu* ancestors. *Mufambi*, the traveller, would seek guidance on the journey, as *vadzimu* were able to intercede on behalf of *mufambi* to other spiritual entities found in the land, air and water places. With this guidance, *mufambi* would be directed clear of danger and also shown clear omens of impending danger ahead such as a mongoose crossing the path in front of you, or sighting *tsvukukwiri*, small snake with a head at each end of its body. Journeying into the *sango*, *vavhimi* were skilled at the hunt of antelope, gazelle and other prey. They were also adventurers, risk takers and mystics who went into the unknown and often dangerous realm of the *sango* — a place where they not only had to survive potential attacks of wild animals but also had to avoid the wrath of the *varidzi vemasango*, custodian spirits of the *sango*. To journey into the *sango* meaningfully, one had to know the etiquette of moving through the forest, what could be killed and what shouldn't, how to respectfully find food for sustenance and even how to relieve oneself, respectfully. More importantly, this etiquette highlighted what was sacred and should not be disturbed. Above all this, hunters were orators — able to do the *deketero*, speaking to the spirit world, whether it was speaking to *vadzimu*, ancestral spirits, or *mashavi*, roving spirits, especially those of the *sango*.

At the end of the journey, upon return to the homestead, *mufambi* would once more kneel

at the *chikwa* and speak to *vadzimu*, thanking them for the safe travel to, within and from the *sango*. Hunters were storytellers, regaling the homebound masses with their tales of bravery in the midst of the physical and mystic realm of the *sango*. They were the praise poets, able to exalt in song, other hunters, the *sango* itself, majestic wild creatures, and our magnificent nature. Because they went where others didn't, saw and experienced things that others didn't, *vavhimi* were also the bringers of new words and meanings — new language nurtured by the *sango*. These stories often encouraged others, especially the young, to want to emulate *vavhimi* by also embarking on similar journeys. In modern times, we still use sayings and words brought to us by *vavhimi*, to describe our modern experience of travel into our own specific versions of the *sango*.

The Power of Language to Exclude and Marginalise

The words “migration” and “migrants” clearly have multiple meanings. Many of these meanings and the different ways of understanding the movement of people are flattened out in “migration studies,” which typically reduces migration to the process of movement itself or presupposes that money alone is the reason why people move. In so doing, there is a tendency to ignore the cultural, geographical and historical contexts within which movement takes place as well as the deeply personal, symbolic, ritualistic, emotional and other meanings with which migration is associated – for the individual, family, community and wider society. Moreover, as noted elsewhere,¹ there is a wide gap between the study of migration and the studies of empire, coloniality and racism. These “inadequate histories”² mean that some people have the present-day privilege of “citizenship” and others – “migrants” or “refugees” – are denied, even though many of the latter two categories of people were at one time citizens of European empires. Like Brambra, Tuley argues that the whole concept of migration is racialised and reproduces racist hierarchies.

This is reflected in the fact that the language of migration has become an important and powerful tool to exclude and marginalise those considered “other.” There are huge inequalities not only in the right to travel but in the ways in which we talk about movement depending on the geographical contexts in which migration takes place and the direction of travel. Those moving between the countries of the Global North are not “migrants” but rather “entrepreneurs” and “expats.”³ The movement of (wealthy) white people is not labelled “migration” but rather “mobility”⁴. Those moving from the North to the South are “adventurers,” “explorers” and “discoverers” drawing on centuries of colonising narratives to explain their needs to work and play in the countries of others, taking what they want and need for their own pleasures whilst all too frequently seeing themselves as bringing “civilisation” to others in the process. Meanwhile, those who travel from the countries of the Global South to the North, sometimes to escape poverty and human rights abuse,

¹ Tuley 2020.

² Bhambra 2017.

³ See also www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/mar/13/white-people-expats-immigrants-migration and www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/10/expat-immigrant/570967/.

⁴ Tuley 2020.

are represented both visually and linguistically in completely different ways.

Migrants are not just people who move.
They are “outsiders.”
“Foreigners.”
“Immigrants.”
“Asylum seekers.”
“Refugees.”
“Illegal.”
“Irregular.”
“Aliens.”

This use of language is not simply descriptive. It is inherently political; reflecting the power of those who speak/write to exert authority and will over those whose voices are all too often silenced or marginalised. Skin colour makes a difference of course, but the use of these words is also highly differentiated by gender, religion and age. And all too often concealing (albeit very thinly) racism, sexism and other forms of injustice, prejudice and discrimination that lie just beneath the surface.

The use of language to exclude and marginalise those who move is long-practiced and familiar. As a result, it doesn't take much to turn the “good migrant” into a “bad migrant,” just a few little letters sprinkled here and there.

The human being at the heart of the story (I, me) becomes the subject to be;
Contained.
Controlled.
Objectified.
Dehumanised.

Each of these terms have come to dominate popular discourse by positioning individuals outside the legal and social bounds of acceptability – as in il-legal or ir-regular – or somehow lacking. Lacking not just papers, but the authority and right to be present – as in un-documented or un-authorised.

And then there is the use of the word “stock,” used across the UN system and by a myriad of other organisations as well as numerous academics across a range of disciplines, but especially economic and migration studies, to describe the population of migrants living within a given country at a given moment in time⁵. Add a few little letters and the human beings whose lives, relationships and emotions are wrapped into the decision to move become “stock,” numbers to be managed, cajoled and herded by policy.

⁵ See, for example, www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp.

The Little Letters That Make a Difference

Heaven Crawley

Am I a patriot?
Or an ex-pat?
A migrant?
Or an im-migrant?
Traveller?
Nomad?
Alien?
From this world
But not

It's the little letters that make the difference.

Ex-
Im-
Out
In
Il-legal
Un-documented
The small words that set us apart
That tell others
Who or what we are
Even when we don't know ourselves

The little letters that mark us out
That tell others
You do not belong
You are not “native”
You are “stock”
“Migrant stock”
As in “the number of migrants in a given area on a certain date”
As in “the store has a very low turnover of stock”
As in “the value of the company's stock rose by 40%”
As in “all cattle other than beef cattle and steers over three years of age”
“Migrant stock”
Like cows
Or money
Or goods

Herded
Corralled

Invaluable
But not of value

And then there is
The shock
Of too much stock
When the numbers go up
Not down
When the colour is not white
But brown

It's the little letters that make the difference

imMigration⁶

Tawona Sitholé

i'm not the stillness
not the quiet
i'm the restless
i'm the sound
i'm the quickening
of heartbeat
the deepening
of breath
i'm the slowing
of motion
i'm the distance
endurance
i'm a thousand hooves
thundering an open plain
i'm a thousand wingbeats
buffeting a yawning sky
i'm an ant
crawling up a giant tree
i'm the flower to flower
stripes of a bee
i'm a worm digging
fish swimming
upstream
i'm the current
i'm times and places

⁶ Phipps, A & Sitholé T. *The Warriors who do not Fight*. Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow 2018.

songs and stories
i'm a young pip
an old ship
i'm the source of spices
the course of crisis
i'm legs outstretched
flying business class
i'm limbs tucked in
riding as underclass
i'm trains and platforms
waves and sandstorms
i'm the trickle of a stream
through a desert floor
i'm the burst of a flood
through a land of war
i'm the free flow
of goods and cash
i'm the see-saw
of moods perhaps
i'm wine bars
i'm jail bars
i'm official
unofficial
i'm security
insecurity
i'm on the mind
the agenda
i'm on the menu
i'm news
i'm a nuisance
i'm an instinct
i'm water crossing skin
words leaving tongues
i'm breath leaving lungs
breath leaving lungs

Alien Nation

Heaven Crawley

I first watched *Men in Black* in 1997. It was intended to be a light-hearted distraction from the challenges of my PhD research, but I was immediately struck by the use of the word “alien” to describe so-called “illegal immigrants” travelling across the Mexican border to the US.

The opening scenes of the movie⁷ play with this terminology in ways that are not exactly subtle.

US immigration officers stop a coyote's truck as he attempts to smuggle people across the border. The term "coyote" itself represents a particular use of language to stigmatise migration. Colloquially, a coyote is a smuggler but the word "coyote" is a loanword from Mexican Spanish that usually refers to a species of North American wild dog *canis latrans*.

The script plays with the word "alien." This is a legal term that has been used to describe non-US citizens living in the United States for centuries, but increasingly used to describe those without papers.⁸ It turns out that whilst all of the people in the truck are "aliens," one of the travellers is an actual alien called Mikey who has previously claimed to be a "political refugee." The immigration officers are sent on their way by the Men in Black with the words "you fellas can hit the road, keep on moving."

Mikey, meanwhile, is blown into oblivion.

"Migration" and "Migrants"

Alison Phipps, University of Glasgow, UK

It's not my language but it is my mother tongue, and my father's tongue, English. They were migrants. They moved from Lancashire and Lincolnshire respectively, to train as teachers in Sheffield. I was born in Yorkshire. "I could have played cricket for Yorkshire" my maternal grandfather would tell me, alongside his own stories of taking on and laying off the economic migrants from the Indian sub-continent in the loom factories of the cotton mills of Lancashire.

I was brought up to believe that migration for education would be necessary; that I'd "go away" to university and then stay away. My stay in Yorkshire would be passing through for around 18 years. And away I went. County Durham, Baden Württemberg, Auvergne, then back to Sheffield for a PhD for which the majority of the time was spent as a migrant in Swabia doing fieldwork, amongst Swabian migrants and displaced people, and the indigenous of those lands.

Migration. It comes from Old French – so it came in with the conquest and brutal settlement of the lands laid waste to the North. If you dig into the history of where I lived for some of life on the south side of Sheffield, you will find – yes – an exquisite old English church with serpents on the baptismal font, but you will also find Anglo Saxon coffins. People were here who migrated too – the Saxons. They settled, spoke Anglo Saxon and wrote Chronicles of what it was like living through the Viking raids and the Norman Conquest.

Migration came into old French and English from Latin. Roman. Also a product of migration as a conquest of knowledge through language.

Lines of flight and lines of occupation as Ingold and Deleuze and Guattari have spoken of them.

Those are the lines into "migration" and my own endings carefully working an allotted piece of common land in Glasgow, a migrant arrival and emigrant departure city. We're all fae

⁷ Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-bjPqMMLN4>.

⁸ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/27/illegal-alien-a-short-history/>.

somewhere. Making myself indigenous, with a migrant daughter from Eritrea and a grandchild who is born to this city and its patterns of speech. Indigenous indeed, as she plants peas with me and learns of ladybirds in my garden. She will spend her life being asked “where do you come from?” I don’t get that response on sight but when I open my mouth the question “where are you from?” will inevitably come forth, or I’ll be told I’m not from here.

There are other words for migrant that swirl around my daily life – Refuweege; Sassenach; and politely, New Scot. I’ve lived more of my life in Glasgow than anywhere else. I moved here and stayed. Put down roots with the rootless.

Learning Gaelic and I find words for migration and migrant: *neach-imrich* or *neach-falbhain*.

They remind me of *manuwhenua* and *manuhiri* in te reo. The words for those who live on ancestral land, and those who live on the land ancestrally of others.

Neach meaning person; *imrich* meaning “fitting” or the act of migration; *falbhan* meaning the habit of walking, locomotion, leaving, departing.

I learned the languages of the settlers and colonisers of the land where I was born as my first foreign languages. French and German. To me these were about Europe and escape from the stultification of the suburbs.

Les immigrants, les migrants – already in French I could hear the contempt in the former and the gentleness in the latter.

Einwanderer, Auswanderer – the ones who wander in and those who wander out. I love this. The sense of wandering not purpose; not some colonial intent here but just wandering, following your own star as pressure, circumstance, inner and outer need and possibilities offered a trajectory for artistry and soil good enough to grow in.

My daughter laughs and calls me *tsada* ... fair skinned person; *pakeha* I translate in my head into te reo. *Obruni. Muzungu*.

And here we have it. Race intersecting with the ins and outs of place and force and possibility on a palette.

Migration.

I am done with this word.

A New Language?

The study of migration is increasingly the focus of academics from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, working within and across the Global South and North. The MIDEQ Hub includes researchers from geography, anthropology, creative arts, development studies, economics, political science, linguistics, law, digital technology, sociology and social policy. In undertaking this work, MIDEQ’s researchers come together and speak the language *of the field in which they work*. Using the language *of the field* is necessary if they are to be taken seriously by their academic peers and for their work to be read and engaged with. But as the work of the MIDEQ Hub has served to demonstrate, time and time again, the dominant ways of doing and seeing in “migration studies” are often those associated with the Global North: key concepts, words and ideas reflect the knowledges and language of the Global North. These ways of seeing often serve to reduce, marginalise or render

irrelevant the voices and experiences of those living, working and moving in the Global South.

For this article, we invited MIDEQ scholars to speak the language of home, the language of their respondents, the language of people who move or don't move. There is an intellectual sense of making home or being at home linguistically and culturally. The vignettes they gave us are illustrative of the different ways in which the movement of people, from one place to another, is understood and represented in different contexts, and the meanings attached to that movement by others. A vignette is defined as "a brief evocative description, account of episode."⁹ While the vignettes emphasise the idea of something small – as denoted by the suffix "-ette" – they provide a clue to the bigger picture within which the movement of people takes place, an evocative one of histories and lived experiences of civilisation. Time is a recurrent theme across the vignettes as is the idea of moving to learn, to get a different perspective on the world, to bring something back when you return that is more than money. The quality of being unenclosed within or by a border, not only challenges dominant assumptions that migration is about crossing borders: the aesthetic of fading or shading off into the edges sits well with the indistinctiveness of each tributary when they become part of the river.

As such, the vignettes in this article should not be read as a side path off the main course of migration studies. Rather they should be read as tributaries to a river that flows along with all these pourings that become invisible in the main body of water as the river courses along. The writers of the vignettes have uncovered their own language and understandings as a resource that feeds, albeit sometimes silently, into examination and engagement with thinking and research activity. The process of eliciting vignettes, even using a borrowed word for what these are, points to the fact that the use of a new word tracks a new way of working. The used language recognising the utilised language or languages to build a poetry of deliberation:

merantau
darfirma
mouon-yob
a-gal-houono
gavèlè
gaavèna
woé logré
ntchè nan moon
mon yorba
pula
neach-imrich
neach-falbhain
manuwhenua
manuhiri
einwanderer
auswanderer
kupinda musango

⁹ See <https://www.lexico.com/definition/vignette>.

It’s the little letters that make the difference.

But it’s not only the little letters that make the difference, it’s also the accents and inflections, the tonality and impression, the atmosphere and terrain, the history and the current.

We need to reflect on our use of language and engage with the ways in which language can (and all too frequently, does) reinforce and perpetuate certain ways of conceptualising migration and the lives, experiences and aspirations of those who move. The terms “migration” and “migrant” remain firmly in our description of human movement around the world. Whilst it is difficult to get away from using these terms as shorthand, we need to be cognisant of their power to control and contain, to limit our thinking, to reproduce inequalities in how we understand and represent migration. Reducing the inequalities associated with migration requires us to think, talk and write about migration in more nuanced ways. The terms “migration” and “migrant” mean very different things to different people, in different contexts and at different times. The term “people on the move” is increasingly being used as a way of moving us away from the connotation of migration as a thing, an event or a process towards a view of migration simply as an activity – perhaps just an ordinary activity, perhaps even a natural one.

Perhaps, as a consequence, it will be possible for those categorised and defined as “migrants” to be emancipated from the dungeon of negative public perception, fortified by misunderstanding.

Perhaps, this term can slowly move us away from a situation in which “migration” is a weapon wielded against peoples of particular geographic or economic backgrounds, to being one which everyone can relate to.

Perhaps, the term migrant can be re-fitted. It can move from being a tight blindfold worn by those restricted by a sensational story, to a loose garment that can be comfortably worn by anyone, anywhere by their own choosing.

Perhaps, this attempt at a more inclusive and universal sense of language can reduce the inequalities between words like “migrant” and “expatriate,” “foreigner” and “alien.”

Perhaps.

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