

Patterns and Drivers of Human Migration and Displacement

Dr. Seema

Assistant Professor in Geography Government College Nalwa, Hisar

ABSTRACT

Migration is the movement of people away from their usual place of residence to a new place of residence, either across an international border or within a State. There is no universally agreed definition of “migration” or “migrant”, but there are several widely accepted definitions that have been developed in different settings. For example, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs define a long-term migrant as a person who lives outside their country of origin for at least 12 months. For demographic purposes, there are two types of migration: international and internal. International migration occurs when people cross State boundaries to live in another country for a minimum length of time. Internal migration is when people move within the same country. Rural-urban migration is when people move specifically from rural areas to urban locations within the same country. Both climate change and migration present key concerns for global health progress. Despite this, a transparent method for identifying and understanding the relationship between climate change, migration and other contextual factors remains a knowledge gap. Existing conceptual models are useful in understanding the complexities of climate migration, but provide varying degrees of applicability to quantitative studies, resulting in non-homogenous transferability of knowledge in this important area. This paper attempts to provide a critical review of climate migration literature, as well as presenting a new conceptual model for the identification of the drivers of migration in the context of climate change. It focuses on the interactions and the dynamics of drivers over time, space and society. Through systematic, pan-disciplinary and homogenous application of theory to different geographical contexts, we aim to improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on migration. A brief case study of Malawi is provided to demonstrate how this global conceptual model can be applied into local contextual scenarios. In doing so, we hope to provide insights that help in the more homogenous applications of conceptual frameworks for this area and more generally.

Keywords: climate change adaptation, migration, climate migration, environmental migration, migration typology, global health, planetary health

INTRODUCTION

Human migration patterns involve complex movements driven by "push" (war, poverty, disaster) and "pull" (jobs, freedom, family) factors, spanning voluntary and forced types, with drivers including economic needs, political instability, socio-cultural ties (networks, norms), and environmental changes, often interacting to shape decisions from rural-to-urban shifts to international border crossings, creating distinct patterns like skilled migration or refugee flows. Nomadic movements usually are not regarded as migrations, as the movement is generally seasonal, there is no intention to settle in the new place, and only a few people have retained this form of lifestyle in modern times. Temporary movement for travel, tourism, pilgrimages, or the commute is also not regarded as migration, in the absence of an intention to live and settle in the visited places.

1.1 Definition

Migration

Human migration is the movement of people from one place to another, with intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily, at a new location (geographic region). The movement often occurs over long distances and from one country to another (external migration), but internal migration (within a single country) is the dominant form of human migration globally.

Displacement

Displacement specifically is the forced movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to, avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters. There have been displaced persons spread throughout history as long as there has been natural or man-made disasters, climate change, conflict, war, persecution, and political instability. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), at the end of 2022, 53.2 million of the 108.4 million 'forcibly displaced' people globally were internally displaced (UNHCR 2022), that is, they had not left their country. 35.3 million were refugees, and 4.6 million asylum seekers across the globe. Currently there are more displaced persons world-wide than there have been at any time since the end of World War 2.

Migration Typology

From the challenges identified in the above critical analysis, a new conceptual framework of climate migration is provided. Migration, as a subjective concept, cannot carry one single definition and is highly contextualized. However, this is often neglected within most quantitative studies. In particular, the terms 'environmental migration' and 'climate migration' lack unanimous definitions across academic, NGO and political actors. Migration exists as a normative behavior in most communities globally but may also manifest as forced displacement and other involuntary or voluntary movements. Furthermore, often overlooked in climate migration literature is the possible inhibiting effect of climate change on migration, resulting in reduced mobility rather than driving migration events.

Types of Migration

Internal Migration

"The movement of people within a State involving the establishment of a new temporary or permanent residence. Internal migration movements can be temporary or permanent and include those who have been displaced from their habitual place of residence such as internally displaced persons, as well as persons who decide to move to a new place, such as in the case of rural-urban migration. The term also covers both nationals and non-nationals moving within a State, provided that they move away from their place of habitual residence."

International Migration

"The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence and across an international border to a country of which they are not nationals." As for internal migration, this can be temporary or permanent and includes those who have been displaced from their "habitual place of residence", and people who have chosen to move to a new country. It excludes movements that are due to "recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimages"

Reasons for Migration

Climate Migration

"The movement of a person or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment due to climate change, are obliged to leave their habitual place of residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a State or across an international border. "

Labor Migration

"Movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment." This includes migrants moving within the country and across international borders.

Irregular Migration

"Movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination." It is generally used to "identify persons moving outside regular migration channels." These migrants may have had no other option but to use these irregular migration channels. It may include: asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, or unaccompanied migrant children.

Forced Migration or Displacement

"The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters."

Migration Drivers

Non-climatic drivers of migration. Drivers are split into five classes: social, economic, political, demographic and environmental. Societal level refers to the societal scale at which drivers typically impact. Some drivers may exist both as micro and macro factors.

Economic: Lack of jobs, low wages, poor living standards (push) vs. better opportunities, higher income, education (pull).

Social/Cultural: Family networks, desire for freedom, persecution, discrimination (push/pull).

Political: Conflict, violence, lack of rights (push) vs. stability, democracy, human rights (pull).

Environmental: Natural disasters, climate change impacts, resource scarcity (push) vs. safe climates, resources (pull).

Demographic: Youth bulges, aging populations, labor shortages, or surpluses.

Voluntary Migration: Driven by choice, seeking better life (e.g., skilled workers, students).

Forced Migration: Displacement due to conflict, persecution, or disasters (e.g., refugees, asylum seekers).

Internal Migration: Movement within a country, often rural-to-urban for work.

International Migration: Crossing borders for any reason.

Brain Drain/Gain: Movement of highly skilled individuals.

Multicausal: Decisions rarely stem from one factor; climate change, for instance, often worsens economic or security issues, making migration more likely.

Network Effects: Existing migrant communities facilitate new migration.

Development Paradox: Economic development can increase migration by giving people the means and aspirations to move, not just poverty.

Carlos Sluzki's Model of Migration

The process of migration can be divided into the following discrete stages. Each step has unique features that trigger different coping mechanisms and showcases different kinds of conflicts and symptoms.

Preparatory Stage:

The first stage begins with the decision 'to move' made by the members of the family. It involves the exchange of letters, a request for visa applications, or any other act that substantiates the intent to migrate. It has a varied time frame. The stage is marked by a course of ups and downs, a short period of euphoria followed by a brief period of dismay. The poor performance of individuals seen in this stage is due to the result of efforts, tensions, and emotions.

The Act of Migration:

The migrant undergoes a painful journey with little or no celebrated custom upon arrival. The act of migration may take a considerable amount of time. War-displaced people may have to stay in transient camps in various countries before making it to their final destination. The mode of the migratory act may also vary considerably.

Period of Overcompensation:

The stress following the migratory act is generally not seen in the weeks or months following the migration. Most of the time, the participants are unaware of the stressful nature of the entire experience and its cumulative influence. In the period immediately following migration, the priority of the family is absolute survival, i.e., the satisfaction of the basic needs. The new immigrant may show a clear focus of attention-of-consciousness, but the overall field of consciousness may be blurred or clouded. Many families manage to establish a relative halt on the process of acculturation and accommodation for months, so the conflicts tend to stay dormant in this period.

Period of Decomposition or Crisis:

The reshaping of the new reality, identity, and compatibility with the environment takes place in this phase. This stage is marked by conflicts. There is a frequent need to retain certain family habits though they differ from the new context while

letting off other traits as they differ from the original culture. This phase is delicate and often challenging but is unavoidable. It creeps into the family, leading to clashes. The family coping effects express themselves in the course of the months, sometimes years, after the migration.

Tran generational Impact:

Delay in the adaptive mechanism becomes evident in the second generation of migrated families. An environment similar to the country of origin generally slows down the adaptive changes, and no consequences are seen if the second generation socializes in this secluded environment. However, if the process of socialization occurs in diverse habitats, then whatever has been avoided by a first-generation will appear in the second one. This is generally expressed as a clash between generations called an intergenerational conflict of values.

Factors effect Migration

(Forced) displacement and migration are shaping the 21st century. The boundaries between displacement and migration are blurred, the reasons for both are varied: climate change that destroys the livelihoods of whole populations, environmental pollution, natural disasters, violent conflicts, as well as the widening gap between winners and losers of globalization. The notion to clearly separate between displacement and migration does not adequately reflect the complexity of the challenges. Therefore, it is similarly problematic trying to divide migrants and label them based on the cause of migration - war, economic reasons, poverty or environmental disasters.

Poor countries take in the highest number of refugees

While the number of international migrants is steadily rising, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons has increased exponentially in the last few years. So far, Europe is neither the primary destination for migrants, nor does it bear the brunt of taking them in. However, for a long time, the public in Europe and Germany has for the most part turned a blind eye to the magnitude of human mobility.

There are no short-term solutions

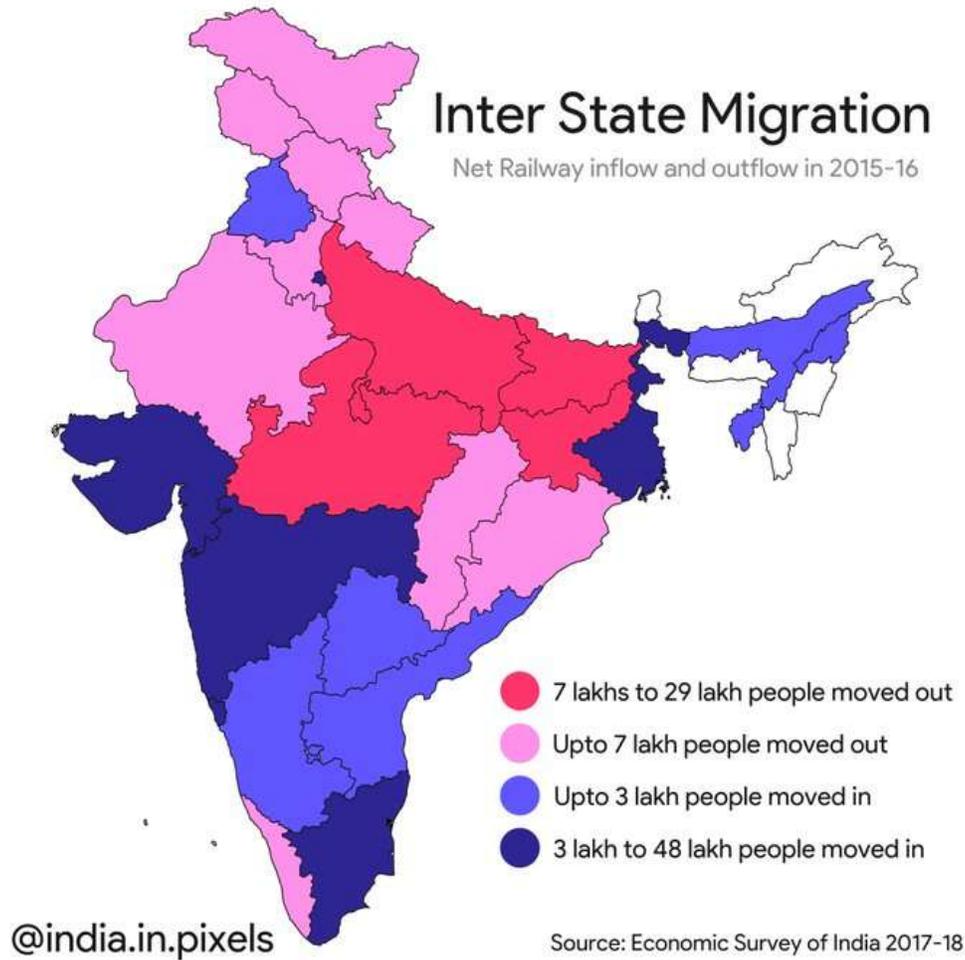
Instead of finding long-term solutions, European politics is still largely focused on preventing migration, rather than shaping it. Policies that promise quick solutions are often not sustainable. The focus must therefore shift to the central conflict causes and the reasons for why people leave their homes.

Europe must assume its share of responsibility

In order to tackle the causes of displacement and forced migration, an understanding of Europe's and in particular Germany's historical, political and economic share of responsibility is crucial. Trade agreements, the conduct of transnational companies as well as climate, agricultural, and commodity policies, and arms exports: Europe must assume stewardship. It must begin treating displacement and migration as a global phenomenon that is relevant across EU borders.

International migrants, 1970–2015[20] Year Number of migrants Migrants as a % of the world's population

1970	84,460,125	2.3%
1975	90,368,010	2.2%
1980	101,983,149	2.3%
1985	113,206,691	2.3%
1990	152,563,212	2.9%
1995	160,801,752	2.8%
2000	172,703,309	2.8%
2005	191,269,100	2.9%
2010	221,714,243	3.2%
2015	243,700,236	3.3%
2020	280 598 105	3.6%



Demographic and Migration

Up until the 19th century, the world population grew very slowly. The 20th century marked an era of “radical changes in human survival and reproduction” and “revolutionary demographic developments”. By 2015, the world’s population had reached 7.4 billion. Based on projected fertility levels, the world’s population is projected to grow to 9.1 billion by 2050 (UNDESA 2018a). This development is mainly owing to globally decreasing death rates and will take place despite the expectation that annual growth rates will decrease from 80 million to 48 million between 2020 and 2050. Already now, 95 percent of world population growth is taking place in countries of the Global South, and this trend is set to continue. In contrast, a total of 45 countries are projected to experience declining population between 2009 and 2050, many of them in the European region. This trend has started to result in demographic ageing and decline in many of the countries of the Global North. There is a lively discussion on the impact this will have on labour markets and social security systems, always linked to the question of whether labour markets should be more open towards immigration. Less discussed is the expectation that demographic aging will affect countries in the Global South as well. Today, 60 percent of all persons aged 60 or above live in countries of the Global South, a share expected to increase to 79 percent in 2050 (UNDESA 2017b: 4). The share of persons aged 60 or above among the total population in these countries will increase from 8 percent to 20 percent over the same period. These projections are particularly important with regard to migration. The need to financially support parents and other economically dependent family members back home is one of the main motives for migrants. In the absence of functioning pension systems, the significantly higher revenues that can be generated in high-income countries are often the only way of securing the well-being of elderly family members. Thus, demographic ageing in both high- and low-income countries will increase the existing demands for emigration and immigration

CONCLUSION

Migration has always existed, and will continue long into the future but the term "migrants" has become more politically loaded over the years, and remains a contentious point of discussion. Consistent public debate is challenging when multiple definitions exist and terminology is used interchangeably. While many individuals migrate out of choice, many others

migrate out of necessity and for many they are forced to leave their home. Every migrant is a unique person protected by human rights. Some migrants may have specific vulnerabilities and, as a result, have particular rights because of who they are or what they have experienced (e.g. children, people with a disability, survivors of trafficking, stateless persons and refugees). The use of ‘migrants’ as a label for all should always go hand in hand with recognizing and protecting the rights of each of the specific groups identified above

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