

Internal Migration, Urbanization, and Governance: An Issue Paper

For every international migrant, there are many domestic migrants. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimated that more than 38 million people were internally displaced in 2014. A 2016 United Nations report estimated that 77 million people migrated annually to cities between 2010-2015; the world's urban population now exceeds its rural population. Yet greater humanitarian assistance tends to be offered to those crossing international borders. Even if one is solely concerned with international migration, it should be remembered that a large proportion of international migrants begin as domestic ones, as crossing borders is sometimes a consequence of a failure to integrate into new domestic host communities. As a result, deeper insight towards improving systems of integration promises to improve the lives of many people.

Domestic migrants are a diverse group, including persons displaced by conflict and natural disasters, those relocating with state assistance, and persons seeking new opportunities. One of the most important forms of internal migration, certainly by volume, is urbanization, as most urban migrants relocate within national borders. Although cities throughout the world contribute to economic, social, and technological transformation, urbanization has led to an increasing incidence of urban poverty and inequity, deteriorating quality of the urban environment, and deficiencies in access to basic urban services, including water supply and sanitation, urban shelter, waste management, energy, transport, and health.

Despite being citizens of their countries, internal migrants commonly experience a denial of basic rights including voting and property rights, and lack of access or unequal access to basic social services. They often suffer special segregation – sometimes in refugee settlements that mimic conditions in international camps – and negative, hostile stereotypes. The rise of nativist populism is often accompanied by “othering”; that is, the creation and dissemination of negative ethnic and religious stereotypes on which to base their political hostility. These stereotypes may include the following: “they breed like rabbits”; “they engage in criminality”; “they take advantage of our welfare system”; “they don’t share our values”; Very often, such popular attitudes do not distinguish between internal migrant communities that may have had citizenship for several generations, other migrants who are also legal, but may have arrived more recently, and undocumented migrants who may lack legal citizenship. As a result, internal migration too often represents a cause of ethnic tensions and even armed conflict.

To better understand linkages between internal migration, urbanization, and governance, the Pacific Basin Research Institute (PBRC) and the East-West Center organized an international workshop on Governance, Internal Migration and Urbanization held from March 17 – 18, 2017 in Honolulu. Eleven case studies of internal migration were presented for discussion. This issue paper highlights main conclusions of the studies and discussions in the workshop.

There are many forms of internal migration, at least as many as there are forms of migration
Studies of migration have long divided migration motives in terms of things pushing migrants out or pulling them somewhere else. Of course, reality is typically more complex; an individual living in a region with high crime rates may be pushed by insecurity and pulled by a promise of greater security. Still, this provides a useful heuristic, especially since push and pull factors tend to overlap with structure (forces beyond an individual's control cause them to leave) and agency

(individuals choose to leave for promise of something better). Push and pull factors speak to the degree to which migration is voluntary or not. Academic and policy reports often speak of “forced migration”, although some criticize the term as overlooking important decisions made even in the worst circumstances. As a result, it makes sense to speak of migration which is less voluntary, namely persons pushed out by larger forces, and migration which is more voluntary, with persons pulled by various opportunities

Several of the case studies explore some of the complexities of forced migration in the context of armed conflict. Marek Brzezinski and Lee Seymour explore various cases in the Caucasus, in countries that feature some of the highest concentrations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world. Here, ethnic and secessionist violence have pushed minorities from their homes, with many finding refuge in territories dominated by co-ethnics, representing a sort of ethnic sorting process solidifying regional national strongholds. In her vignette, Alicia Luedke explores the complexities of governing large IDP camps in South Sudan, a country home to some 1.7 million IDPs pushed from their homes by intense ongoing violence. Luedke focuses on high rates of sexual violence against women living within the camps, and how women have worked to navigate the harsh realities of camp life. With little hope of returning to their homes, camps intended to be temporary appear to become permanent settlements. Also speaking to conflict IDPs, Juan Esteban Zea focuses on Colombia. As various rebel groups have clashed with state forces in rural areas, some 6.9 million people have been displaced, with many relocating in urban areas to start new lives. The Colombian state officially provides compensation for IDPs, but in reality, such persons struggle to prove they are IDPs and collect this support.

Similar to armed conflicts, natural disasters forcibly push people from their homes, forcing them to relocate. Both types of IDPs are discussed in Shane Barter’s vignette. In Aceh, Indonesia, armed conflict and a massive tsunami displaced different communities across the province. As the conflict was resolved in 2005, the task was to resettle and reintegrate communities displaced by man-made and natural disasters. Barter shows that various agencies focused on resettling disaster IDPs rather than conflict IDPs, and that physical infrastructure is a clear priority over social reintegration.

Another type of internal migrant pushed from their homes more or less involuntarily are people relocated by states. Of course, many conflict IDPs are pushed from their homes by state forces, for instance purposefully relocating civilians seen to be supporting a rebel group. Even some disaster IDPs may be responding to state development efforts, leading to landslides or flooding. For a variety of reasons, states may relocate their own people, creating a category of state-induced IDPs. States may displace people to protect them, removing them from conflict or disaster areas, or they may do so to gain access to their land, as in the case of expulsion from areas to make way for “special economic zones”. In urban areas, this is seen in slum evictions, which tend to be carried out ostensibly for reasons of sanitation and safety, but may also be land grabs. In rural areas, states may evict “squatters” from national parks or ecologically sensitive areas, as in Thai state efforts to restrict slash and burn agriculture among indigenous communities. There are many examples of state megaprojects representing a sort of human-made disaster, displacing their own people in the name of economic development. Perhaps the most famous

example is China's Three Gorges Dam, in which over a million people were forcibly displaced in order to generate electricity for China's rapidly growing cities. Forms of development-induced displacement also include smaller projects such as transportation infrastructure, shopping areas, military installations, and plantations.

Other forms of internal migration are more voluntary, where migrants are pulled to a different area of a given country. Urbanization represents the most widespread form of voluntary internal migration. Most commonly, rural youths are drawn to the excitement and perceived opportunities of urban life, relocating to cities and sometimes sending remittances to rural families. Sometimes, urban migrants can create better lives for themselves, although many end up living in shanty towns. Over half of the world currently lives in urban areas, as rural areas suffer from underdevelopment and few economic opportunities. They play a vital role in productivity gains through innovation, trade, globalization of capital and the growth of service industries. Mega urban regions, urban corridors, and city-regions reflect the emerging links between city growth and new patterns of economic activity.

However, cities are facing five sets of challenges to effectively respond to rapid urbanization which is partly attributed to internal migration: urban service delivery and access, the urban environment and climate change adaptations, urban planning and land use, peri-urbanization and "smart city" solutions through ICT. Governance structures and national policies often limit reform and innovation capacity, and most urban centers in Asia are financially dependent on higher tiers (central and/or state/provincial) of government which control the bulk of tax revenues and are often reluctant to share with urban authorities. These issues burden typically already strained budgets and service loads that cannot keep pace with increasing urban density. The management of urban services often suffers from lack of coordination, as functionally oriented central government departments compete with geographically truncated local/urban authorities. Furthermore, formal government programs can come into conflict with the interests of people living in informal settlements because administrative and legal reforms are not effectively adjusted to grassroots realities. Rampant corruption, disputes over land tenure and widespread human rights abuse, can lead to socially explosive situations.

Given the immense strains faced by megacities, many countries have worked to decentralize political and economic power, so as to create a series of more livable, smaller urban areas. It is important to understand that many domestic migrants pulled towards cities are also pushed by other factors, meaning that urban squatters may simultaneously exist as IDPs.

Because of the enormous pace of urbanization in Asia (by 2020, 2.2 billion of the world's 4.2 billion city dwellers will be in Asia; twelve out of twenty one mega-cities of the world are already in Asia), the East-West Center researchers, in collaboration with partners of Tongji University, reported on overall urbanization patterns, the classification of peri-urban areas, and urban governance. Li Zhang, Richard LeGates, and Min Zhao presented findings from their exciting new book, *Understanding China's Urbanization*, which details new approaches to urbanization in China. In the Red River Delta of Vietnam, Jeff Fox concluded that large scale investments in industrial estates have attracted young people from rural areas to migrate for employment. He concludes that this supports the argument of scholars that suggest that migration threatens the decline of farming.

Migration for economic opportunities sometimes unfolds between rural areas. This may be a result of new lands being opened up through territorial acquisition, employment in local resource extraction economies, or to populate frontier regions. This may allow states to expand or solidify their borders, as with historical expansion south in Vietnam, west in the United States or China, or east in Russia. Rumela Sen's vignette demonstrates this in India's tribal areas, where migration has led indigenous groups to band together and resist their loss of power, in this case demanding the creation of their own state. Vineeta Yadav's vignette explores governance and integration efforts for migrants attracted to SEZs in India. India is home to strict compensation laws for displaced peoples, but these laws have not been applied to SEZs. Yadav shows how SEZs both displace local residence and attract new migrants, thus simultaneously looming as push and pull factors, involving involuntary displacement and voluntary resettlement. In Northeast Cambodia, Fox showed that the migration of rubber tappers to work on the plantations in Steung Treng Province as well as farmers looking for comparatively inexpensive land, will increase the population of the province by up to 30 percent of its 2008 population level. This will have extensive impacts on land use throughout the region.

The state also plays a role in structuring incentives for voluntary migration. In many cases, the state facilitates voluntary internal migration, subsidizing the costs of relocation by providing transportation, equipment, or land. Although in some cases, transmigration is involuntary—for instance disaster or development relocation—in many cases, it is voluntary. Or at least it is voluntary on the part of the internal migrant, as host communities typically lack a voice in transmigration projects. Tensions are exacerbated by the fact that transmigrants typically arrive to culturally distinct regions, and are frequently drawn from more settled, developed regions, leaving natives at a disadvantage. Indonesia is especially known for its transmigration programs, in which farmers from densely populated regions were supported by the state to colonize sparsely-populated islands such as Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua. Isabelle Côté's vignette explores how communities have handled tensions in Lampung, a province where transmigrants represent two-thirds of the local population, but where community relations have in large part remained amicable.

Ivan Small's vignette highlights the role of states in driving migration, with the Vietnamese government working to attract the Vietnamese diaspora to “return” and become engines for development. Despite crossing borders, Vietnam in some way considers such groups to be internal, privileging those born abroad over local people.

Wherever conflicts take place, the struggle over scarce economic resources is a basic cause. Nativist populism is put forward as the basis of a claim that the resources in play belong rightly to one group and not others; jobs, land, and opportunities should be for those who were there first (or in some cases, there more recently). It is important to recognize that conflict is rooted in scarcity. It seems undeniable that were it not for scarcity valued goods and opportunities – along with the sharply unequal distribution of the goods that are available - the phenomena we are addressing might not be taking place.

In the Indian context, the national government has largely taken a hands-off approach to governing domestic migration, leaving this to subnational governments. Rikhil Bhavnani and Bethany Lacina document how Indian state governments are expected to support their own residents, prioritizing them over migrants. States are able to restrict the rights of domestic migrants for the sake of stability, use affirmative action policies to help poor natives, and may not recognize the educational rights of migrants. States may refuse to provide ration cards to migrants or may use local police to intimidate migrant groups. They note that Indian state efforts to control and exclude migrants depend in part on political alignments with national politics, namely that state governments aligned with Delhi have more resources and opportunity to discriminate against migrant communities from other states. Again, the extent to which migrants face discrimination depends largely on political factors, not simply state capacity to act.

In the tribal areas of India, Rumela Sen highlights the importance of political parties in managing native / migrant tensions. As migrants arrived in tribal areas, various tribes came together, mobilizing against migrants in defending their land rights. These ethno-nationalist movements mobilized against outsiders, excluding domestic migrants in defense of sons of the soil. However, in the 1970s, communist groups sought to transform this narrative, highlighting how native elites benefited from industrial growth and linking poor tribal communities with poorer migrants. By the 1990s, this again shifted to tribalist sentiment, and efforts to create a tribal state, separating migrants from natives.

For Cambodia, Erin Lin points to the importance of the lowest administrative rung, of village governments, in supporting resettlement and reintegration. In the aftermath of the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia and the return to private property, the process of recreating land ownership was highly localized. This led to varied levels of equitable land distribution across villages. Lin shows that villages home to mostly continuous residents distributed land more or less equally, including to migrants within their communities. In other words, where village identity was somewhat intact, more egalitarian norms prevailed. Meanwhile, villages primarily comprised of displaced persons were home to more unequal distribution of land. In such locales, repatriates and migrants were able to secure more land, sometimes even higher-quality, fertile land, while continuous residents allotted smaller parcels. This suggests that, with greater levels of displacement, there are greater challenges in terms of local governance and integration.

Policies to ameliorate the cycle of poverty among the poor need not have an indefinite lifespan. This could prove to be an important selling point. The children of families that have ascended to the middle class through a kind of affirmative action system that pro-actively distributes opportunity more widely, may not need that system in place to assure themselves the ability to remain there. In other words, once the cycle of socio-economic inequality between culturally defined groups has been broken by an adroit governmental intervention, it is likely to remain broken. Conversely, unless governments intervene to break the pattern of convergence between ethnicity and class, that pattern is likely to remain a deep source of civil strife.

Even the most local of conflicts may have its genesis in global trends and therefore the solutions to these conflicts must include global as well as local approaches. Seemingly local conflicts

between “sons of the soil” and more recent migrant arrivals have their ultimate roots in global economic phenomena including the geographical relocation of industrial production, and the rapid automation of industrial production – both of which in some cases drain the energy—and the economic opportunities that would normally go along with it—out of the industrial process in a host of developing countries.

There are several reasons why foreign governments should be concerned about internal migration in other countries. The international community can respond by providing direct assistance, but also by pressuring domestic governments to fulfill their responsibilities. Several new international agreements are now seeking to provide guarantees for internal migrants, strengthening a global norm for protection. In South Sudan, the United Nations created Protection of Civilian (POC) Camps were created to save civilians from armed groups. Luedke shows how UN camps have been unprepared for the volume and duration of IDPs, becoming semi-permanent villages with poor living conditions. Inside these camps, the United Nations has struggled to maintain order. The result has been sexual violence within and just outside of the camps. The UN has a responsibility to provide order and to investigate abuses within areas under its control, however the UN has also signed an agreement to respect the sovereignty of South Sudan. The UN lacks the powers to serve as police forces or judges, only to provide humanitarian aid, resulting in chaotic, violent camp life.

The search for remedies must begin with subnational political institutions. This could include efforts to strengthen local democracy, especially by finding ways to promote on-going (and peaceful) dialogue between aggrieved groups. It is also impossible to disengage from the idea that economic solutions must be on the table, such as policies and programs that would more equitably distribute resources. This is not likely to be an easy task. Social groups that believe their present level of economic well-being and their prospect of a better life in future have already been eroded by the arrival of migrants are unlikely to welcome policies that call upon them to share their meager resources more broadly.

In reflecting on this difficult dilemma, many of us were taken with the counter-intuitive, yet compelling, observation that the local solution begins with the need to address ourselves more fully to the causes and factors that are propelling the tormentors of immigrant communities. For it is only by assuring the well-being of groups that feel victimized by immigrants, that the economic safety of both sons of the soil and immigrants is likely to be assured.

There are serious questions about how the democratic process affects internal migration and related tensions. The challenge in free societies is what to do about political entrepreneurs who seek – and gain – advantage by exploiting the economic jealousies strains between diverse ethnic groups. Is it possible, democratically, to limit and channel the intolerant voices that arise in a democratic environment? Governance needs to be both effective in terms of service delivery to internal migrants and democratic to provide voice and accountability mechanisms. Increasingly, government’s capacity to effectively manage economic development and respond to citizens’ expectations has been declining. The need is to continue the process of building democratic institutions, norms and practices recognizing peculiarities of each country with the objective of striking a balance between political stability and political pluralism and democratic governance.

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