

Accelerated displacement



1.5 million – Syrian refugees in Lebanon (population 4m)

3 million – people migrating from rural areas to urban areas globally every week

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Climate change, conflict, resource shortages, inequality and political elites unable or unwilling to bring about necessary change all trigger unprecedented migration to the North. Over the next 50 years, as many as 1 billion people could be on the move.

In 2015 more than 4 million Syrians attempted to escape the conflicts in their home country and moved elsewhere. Of these, more than 1 million made their way to Europe, sparking political crises across the continent as politicians and communities struggled to get to grips with both the physical needs of those at their borders and the political and social implications of mass immigration. International news media outlets were awash with images of an increasingly desperate caravan of people marching, literally from country to country and border-to-border hoping to find their way to a new life. And they are still moving. The Syrian exodus is the single largest conflict-driven mass migration event in living memory, surpassing even the number generated by the Afghan conflicts in 1992.

But the European story, for all its impact on attitudes towards migration in the West, masked a far bigger migration story that has been taking place right across the world; one in which the Syrian movement to Europe plays only a minor role.

For sheer scale, the number of people migrating from rural areas to urban areas around the world dwarfs Syrian out-migration. Best estimates put *this* figure at more than 3 million people every week. In China and India for example, we are likely looking at a figure in the tens of millions, in 2015 alone. And this kind of internal movement can happen suddenly, even if some of its impacts are only temporary. Typhoon Haiyan, for example, was estimated to have displaced 4 million residents in the Philippines in as little as a few hours. Many have returned to their original homes, but others have permanently relocated. Cross-border migration too is not a

phenomenon unique to the west. Whilst Europe has concerned itself with an influx of migrants from Africa and the Middle East, Indonesia and Malaysia have been coping with periods of similar daily arrival rates from Bangladesh and Myanmar, for example.

Historical and economic connections between countries also play a part in regional migration-flows that are often ignored by international media, such as those from former Soviet states to Russia. Often times the scale of this kind of migration is hidden because the receiving countries also have a high rate of out-migration, resulting in negligible net migration figures.

Furthermore, whilst citizens in Western countries often see themselves uniquely as victims of a mass migration that imbalances their populations, they would do well to understand that other parts of the world are already defined by such imbalance. Lebanon for example, is home to a far higher proportion of people born elsewhere than the vast majority of Western countries. In fact, Lebanon is currently playing host to over 1.5million Syrian refugees, yet its native population is only 4 million. We cannot yet predict how many of those will stay.

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Our habitat



The causes or triggers of this scale of migration are complex. War and conflict are certainly drivers that show no signs of abating, whilst climate change, or rather the localised effects of climate change, are also beginning to have the kinds of displacement impacts predicted over the last two decades. The UNHCR suggests that 2015 saw global records in terms of the number of people who have been forcibly displaced, claiming: "one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum." Meanwhile the factors that lie behind movements to find better economic opportunities, escape from persecution or to gain better access to natural and societal resources are all being exacerbated by regional population growth and widening wealth and access inequalities.

Often, attempts are made to categorise different kinds of migration and migrant according to those factors that push and pull. Commentators talk of 'climate migrants', 'refugees', 'asylum seekers', 'political migrants' and 'economic migrants'. But whilst some of these terms have formal legal definitions, the reality is that it is often difficult to distinguish one from another; someone migrating from a warzone may have had their home destroyed or they may be suffering from the deleterious economic impact that war is having in their region, for example.

The impacts of mass migration are manifold. The most visible perhaps, are changes in social attitudes reflected in popular and social media comment, as those in receiving countries or receiving cities vocalise perceived threats posed by immigrants to their culture, livelihood and security. These changes in social attitude often lead to macro-level policy shifts. Recent trends in Western migration policy discussion and rhetoric, from all sides of the political spectrum, for example, all seem to point towards a coming slew of ever-more draconian laws and policies designed to discourage immigration. Further weakening of immigrant rights and benefits, tougher asylum rules and tighter border controls are a given, but formal criminalisation and harsh penalties for certain types of migrant, and even military intervention in borderlands, are not impossible in the future. Some of these measures will challenge the very fundamentals of the national ideologies and constitutions that are producing them, causing anguished national soul-searching; a phenomenon we are already witnessing in relation to the plight of the Syrians.

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In other parts of the world, more measured (but no less important or restrictive) policies have been designed to slow or halt rural-urban migration, such as the implementation of China's infamous 'hukou' system of residency rights or rural tax and investment incentive schemes in places like Mozambique. And at a more local level, cities have been forced to rethink the ways in which they plan their infrastructure and services to cope with fast-rising and sometimes statistically invisible populations. Most are eager to avoid the pitfalls of the past that have manifested themselves in squalid slums and shantytowns. In these responses we may also see the sides of a more balanced approach to weighing the pros and cons of migration in specific regions.

So what of the next ten years? Well, if the consensus of those we spoke to is to be believed, we ain't seen nothin' yet! The displacement of people due to the effects of climate change looks set to become a feature of the 21st century as coastal areas become more prone to severe flooding, extreme weather events become the norm, and arable land and fresh water become ever more scarce. Rising economic inequalities will also push even more people to move in search of better jobs (even as automation and robotics eat away at traditional employment sectors in receiving countries and cities): People trafficking,

of both voluntary and involuntary migrants, is likely to become too profitable a business to prevent. And local population growths will increase pressure on localised resources, leading more governments to encourage emigration in the hopes of easing local pressures and benefitting from the remittances of overseas Diasporas.

Despite the bluster emanating from certain politicians, the scale of migration and prediction of its impacts are actually extremely difficult to measure, leaving statistical vacuums that are all too often filled with guesswork, cherry-picking and anecdote, leading to ill-informed and reactionary policy-making. However, over the next decade, as many as a billion people could be on the move and we will need to find sustainable ways of responding to this unprecedented human traffic.

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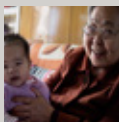
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Flooded cities



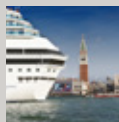
The vast majority of our cities are not prepared for flooding. Many districts and households can no longer get flood insurance and are in jeopardy. It's going to get worse before it gets better.

Imbalanced population growth



A growing population adds another billion people but it is also rapidly ageing: a child born next year will live 6 months longer than one born today. While migration helps to rebalance, increasing dependency ratios challenge many.

Rise of nimby



Globalisation of trade and travel, with geopolitical shifts from North to South and from West to East, have delivered many benefits for some - but are causing clashes of cultures and a perspective of political retrenchment for others.

Shifting power and influence



The centre of gravity of economic power continues shifting eastwards, back to where it was 200 years ago. Recent superpowers seek to moderate the pace of change but the realities of population and resource locations are immovable.