

Terminology and Data Bias of Climate Migration

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Abstract

Climate-induced mobility emerges as a defining global theme of our century, with the potential to reshape geopolitical structures, transform economic models, and exacerbate social disparities and tensions in vulnerable regions. However, the available information on climate-induced migration is heterogeneous, as research outcomes coexist with numerous ‘grey’ publications, such as policy reports, advocacy papers, and conference proceedings. With climate changes increasingly giving rise to extreme events, that trigger waves of human mobility, often ‘grey’ literature develops faster than scientific publication to fill the gap. Such discrepancies shall be promptly tackled as to safeguard accumulation of systematic scientific knowledge and of reliable, traceable and consistent data that currently are missing. The paper explores how the research shortages materialize in data discrepancies, preventing knowledge advancement and evidence-based policy making and suggests ways forward. The research is based on meta-analysis of scientific and ‘grey’ sources, tracing the discussion over the last twenty years on the main concepts of the relationship between climate and migration, as well as methodologies and databases used and comparing different estimations and projections. The study outlines the main sources of disagreement - between assessment of climate change impact and factors for migration, as well as between mono causality and multiple causality of climate-induced migration. As the contradictions are fuelled by methodological divergence in research and the insufficient use of quantitative methods, the article seeks for opportunities for convergence of theories, which will help developing consistent climate induced migration policies.

Keywords: climate-induced migration, big migration waves, evidence-based policy making

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