

Unsettling Settlements: Cities, Migrants, Climate Change

Rural-Urban Climate Migration as Effective Adaptation?

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The nexus between climate change and migration is complex and its investigation leads to crucial implications for mitigation, adaptation and development policies. In developing countries the general trend of rural-urban migration may be amplified by the negative effects of climate change on agricultural production as sources of livelihoods in the countryside, and on human health and safety. In Asia and the Pacific many people are highly vulnerable to climate change. Deltaic regions such as the Bay of Bengal and island nations like the Marshall Islands are at the forefront of expected climate impacts. Already, in many cities informal and poor settlements are growing, leaving little capacity to absorb migrants with no skills for the urban labor market. This leads to the question of this dissertation: **Is migration an effective adaptation to the impacts of climate change?** Following a Grounded Theory approach, a theory building multilevel qualitative systems analysis, which takes into account empirical data from two case studies, is carried out. As different actors employ different criteria for effectiveness, three levels of analysis are included: the individual migrant, the sending community and the receiving community. Methods include semi-structured qualitative interviews with migrants, sending communities and relevant experts, focus group discussions, participatory observation, a literature review and a critical discussion of the existing scientific debate. A key insight of this study is that individual agency in migration decision-making and in shaping migration outcomes is strongly limited by the vulnerabilities of the social group to which the individual belongs. Therefore, migration effectiveness is determined by wider structural inequalities. The study also arrives at the conclusion that migration should only be categorized as adaptation if it is of a preventative nature. If it is a reaction to the already occurred effects of climate change, it should be seen as an impact response. This study intends to inform policies of climate mitigation, adaptation and migration management.