



What's Happening in... Geography

What does migration have to do with global climate change?

Geographers at LEC will discuss the links between climate change and migration in the upcoming United Nations climate summit in Paris.*

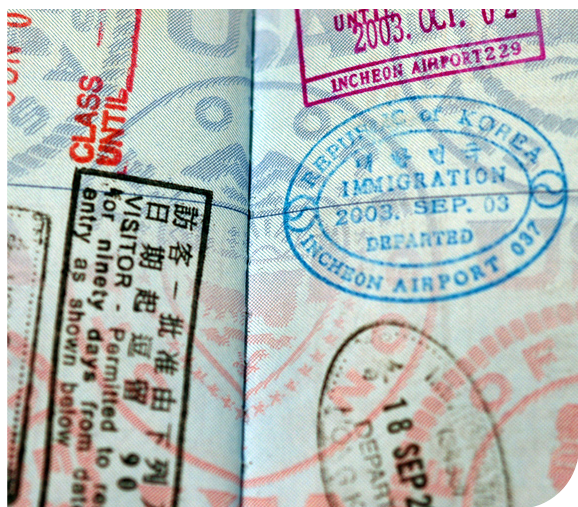
During the first two weeks of December, diplomats from more than 190 countries will gather in the shadow of the Eiffel tower to negotiate a new climate agreement. The current commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions end with the Kyoto Protocol in 2020, and after a number of fiascos in previous negotiations, this might be the last call to prevent dangerous and irreversible climate change.

On the table are questions on how to cut emissions (mitigation), how to help affected populations adjusting to climatic changes (adaptation), and how to address the harms that will materialize despite mitigation and adaptation efforts (the Loss and Damage mechanism). All in all, the stakes are high and the challenge daunting – as witnessed by the deadlock in which climate diplomacy has been for years. Hopes are the Paris meeting will represent a turning point and create the momentum needed to ignite the rapid decarbonisation of the world's economy required to avoid runaway climate change. If you want to know more about what happened in Paris, you can pick one of LEC's modules on climate change, or why not writing your dissertation on it?

By now you probably wonder: what does human migration have to do with this? Some fear that climatic changes will lead to mass displacement, with ensuing humanitarian emergencies and international instability. The media portrays the Syrian tragedy as an anticipation of what could come in a warmer world, referring to studies that link the Syrian conflict and related "refugee crisis" to a drought they attribute to climate change. Others advocate the view that migration can represent an adaptation strategy: the remittances migrants send home are a financial buffer in times of crisis (for instance, when extreme weather events strike), and in the long run migration could contribute to fostering socio-economic development and thereby enhancing the resilience of vulnerable areas.

And what does Geography in LEC have to do with this? The linkages between climate change and migration are an example of contemporary global challenges whose ecological, political, economic and cultural dimensions are indissolubly linked. Geography offers many tools to address such problems, and you can grapple with them in our modules on geographical theories, environmental and political geography, environmental change, and international development. Last but not least, LEC is going to be at the Paris summit, where we are involved in an event that promotes the contributions geographical perspectives offer to the understanding of complex issues such as climate-induced migration.

*Lancaster Environment Centre (LEC)



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