

RETHINKING GROUNDS: MIGRATION, ANTHROPOCENE AND COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Thesis. The paper highlights Anthropocene challenges during Covid-19 and student's struggle. The Anthropocene is debatable because to its emphasis on human primacy and humanism, as well as the ways in which it conceals problematic aspects of human diversity, such as gender and cultural disparities, and the close ties that exist between people, technology and other creatures along with its relationship with migrations.

Concept. A rising number of individuals now depend on migration for their livelihoods on a global scale. However, the migration processes of industrialised and developing nations have significantly differed. In contrast to industrialised countries, where migration is more driven by pull reasons like wealth, safety, and freedom than by push causes like poverty, unemployment, regional inequities, family movement, marriage, and natural disasters, such as those in India. The greatest modern challenge is figuring out how to lessen the effects of the physical and biological changes brought about by human activity on a global scale in a new geological era known as the Anthropocene.

Results and Conclusion. The paper confirms the significance of interactions between humans and the environment is underappreciated in the present definitions of globally linked systemic risk. This leads to a bias in favour of solutions that downplay the Anthropocene's new realities. The present study confirms a comprehensive understanding of the dangers associated with the Anthropocene and migration, or hazards that arise from processes of human-driven migration, interact with the world's social-ecological interconnection.

Keywords: Anthropocene, Covid-19, migration, education, student

INTRODUCTION

Literally, the term *Anthropocene* means *Humankind Era*. The Anthropocene describes the effects of human societal activities from an analytical standpoint in the planet's ecological processes. The majority of scientists agree that we are in the Anthropocene, a period when people have had the greatest impact on the planet. According to scientific predictions, a greater than 1.5 degree shift in climate would result of rising mean temperatures, drought, elevated sea levels, multi-year sea ice melt, reduced biodiversity, extinctions, and ocean acidification, with the effects of these changes already being seen now. Whether or not people change their capitalist consumption, food production, and pollution practises, the consequences will eventually catch up with them and lead to increasing social and economic disparity. Whether you like it or not, the Anthropocene is becoming an unavoidable term for (and of) the present. The term *Anthropocene*, made popular by Paul J. Crutzen & Eugene F. Stoemer (2021) refers to a time when human industry has surpassed or even equaled the processes of geology, and when people have unintentionally contributed significantly to the degradation of nature in their quest to dominate it. Nature is not what conservative science formerly thought it to be in the Anthropocene (Kobylarek, Plavčan et al., 2021). This era is characterised by nuclear bombs and tests of nuclear weapons, contamination with plastic, and a sharp rise in the frequency of natural disasters, the effects of which are already being felt by the growing number of people mobilised. The Anthropocene may force us to fundamentally reevaluate what nature, humans, and their political and historical relationships might mean at the end of the world. It regulates the prediction

of worldwide ecological extinction with its hope of scientific regrowth (and universal longevity) through trans-disciplinary interaction. For some, this dual message of fresh science and an emerging politics in the middle of destruction is thrilling and seems to have arrived just in time (Nealon, 2012).

One such excessive Anthropocene outcome was Covid-19 and among migrants travelling between locations within cities and nations, a worse threefold effect of these two was observed. In order to find the golden spike, the Anthropocene task force has started the process of choosing samples of worldwide changes to the Earth ecosystem to undergo examination. Two to three years is the estimated time for the entire process. A certain point in the middle of the 20th century is a possible candidate due to the unique signals, which include synthetic radionuclides from nuclear explosions, plastic, aluminum, and a notable change in the global climate, the rise in sea level, and chemical perturbations to the cycles of carbon, nitrogen, and other elements (Steffen et al., 2011).

It's reasonable for the writers to be wary about forecasting the influence of mobility on population trends due to a lack of high-quality data, a problem mentioned in the UCL-Lancet Commission's 2018 study on migration and health. Additionally, because of their interactions and the paucity of information on their overall impacts on population migration, causes of forced displacement including wars, natural disasters, and climate change all of which are expected to get worse over time are much less foreseeable. The WHO claims that the Covid-19, which initially emerged in December 2019, caused an unthinkable crisis and ongoing uncertainty that affected the entire world. This resulted in numerous deaths, a generalised slump in economies, joblessness, restrictions on travel, inevitable lockdowns, all that was implemented worldwide as a necessary measure to manage the pandemic.

Although Cathryn Van Kessel (2020) is an exception, there isn't much discussion among our academic and professional colleagues about whether shifting environmental or uncertain conditions are influencing new approaches to mobility, education, or work-life balance. The migrants were discovered to be one of the population's most vulnerable segments during this lockdown, since their very means of subsistence came to an end.

MIGRATION TRENDS

Migration is one of those trends that has persisted throughout the history of the human race. In every age throughout history, there are notable tales of human migration, and many of those upheavals were greatly influenced by climatic changes (Fang & Liu, 1992). According to some estimates, abrupt alterations to the climate that may have deemed large portions of North, East, and West Africa unsuitable for hominid occupation are to blame for the exodus of Homo Sapiens from Africa more than 100,000 years ago. Distant parts of the world could now be connected and these contacts were

redefined as a result of the Second World War's acceleration of globalisation due to the advent of new technologies. The world grew smaller, yet as trade borders showed greater flexibility and reduced obstacles to global trade, people's ability to travel became more restricted and selective (Best, 2021). The nation's federal government has taken action as a result several strategies for preventing unlawful cross-border immigration enters the nation. Regional inequalities and migration are closely related, and the amount of migration within a particular territory fluctuates depending on the degree of variety of the places included in that territory, the diversity of the population, the difficulty of overcoming hurdles in the way, and changes and checks in the economy. In the meanwhile, migratory patterns are predicted to ascertain how people are distributed across national boundaries (Abubakar, 2020).

Not to be deterred, we began the study that formed the basis of this paper with the supposition that there must be something important about the real-problems that may help to solve the challenges associated with migration in the era of Anthropocene. The study wonders if other researchers or policy-makers have similar concerns as they re-evaluate the political governance strategies in turbulent times (Kobylarek, 2021; Martin, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Arjan de Haan (2020) has shown that the Covid-19 epidemic and the associated lockdown or conscription practices have escalated economic, social, and gender disparities. Migrants, notably the millions of labour migrants in Indian cities, have been put in a particularly vulnerable position as a result of the government's reaction to the health issue. This essay offers an interdisciplinary and historical point of view on the circumstances of migrant workers and students, claiming that the setbacks they experience are deeply ingrained in social and economic frameworks and have only recently come to light as a result of the pandemic. (Hašková et al, 2020; Svoboda et al., 2024; Tkáčová et al., 2024).

Leonardo Freire de Mello et al. (2020) discusses in their paper that 'Humankind era' is what Anthropocene literally means in 21st century. The Anthropocene, from an analytical standpoint, sums up the influence of human social activities on the ecological patterns of the entire universe. Numerous mechanisms, including the environment, the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, the production of greenhouse gases, the variety of plant and animal species, soil and water consumption, and others, regulate the planet Earth's energy consumption. The authors explain the challenges related to environmental changes that may result from these processes in combination with societal dynamics like agriculture and urbanisation. The Anthropocene demonstrates that humanity has evolved into a tremendous force for change, and this is evident in the changes the world is undergoing, such as the increase in average temperature and

the frequency and severity of disasters, to name a few. They concluded that Anthropocene either means that human society must deal with its effects and confirms on how one of these effects is migration or displacement, which is impacted or brought about by transnational environmental.

There are arguments given by Boris Heizmann and Nora Huth-Stockle (2021) that the sociopolitical signals and media influences also claim that the Covid-19 pandemic's extensive attention has a stifling effect on immigration issues and unfavourable migration attitude. They have used data obtained from a longitudinal investigation conducted in eleven European nations from November and December 2020 to examine their given hypotheses. As outcome factors, they discriminate between generic migration-related hazards and blaming the epidemic on immigration. (Cobo et al., 2020), The findings imply that pandemic-related worries elevate both danger perceptions as well as assumptions that immigration is causing the epidemic, with the latter effect being more pronounced. On a larger scale, the study discovered that participants were less inclined to blame immigrants in locations where the epidemic is increasingly serious. Stefania Panebianco (2021) explored the conceptual discourse of the European Commission, according to qualitative discourse research, tries to form the views of European Union (EU) policy-makers by highlighting strategic goals and principles established in EU treaties rather than just serving as a coordinative discourse among policy players. This study has provided the opportunity to connect it to potential South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) outcomes. Thus, the Covid-19 situation may present the European Union with an opening to begin new migratory governance that is structured within a compassionate approach.

Erik Swyngedouw (2014) and stated that the Anthropocene, or 'Age of Humans', is actually better characterised as the Oligoanthropocene, or the age of few men and many women. In the event that humans have surpassed natural forces of change and taken the lead in bringing about change on Earth, then the majority of people are really the victims of these changes rather than their agents. While certain people have emerged as the primary forces for change on our planet, most people also see these changes as the primary forces behind the changing of their everyday lives. (Jarmoch et al., 2022; Pavlíková et al., 2023; Petrovič et al., 2023; Sirotkin et al., 2023),

The paper that helped in comprehending the conceptual clarity of Anthropocene and migration and its relevance as a research in 21st century is discussed by Leonardo F. Mello et al., (2020) highlighted that in order to find the past and recent surge, an Anthropocene working group did start the process of choosing samples of worldwide disturbances to the Earth system for examination, mentioned in their study. Two to three years is the estimated time for the entire process. A certain point in the middle of the 20th century is a possible candidate due to the unique signals, which include artificial radionuclides from nuclear explosions, plastic, aluminum, and a notable change in the global weather, the rise in sea level, and chemical perturbations to the periodicity of carbon, nitrogen, and other components.

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research is to unfold and look closely into many challenges that people especially students across globe encountered during the pandemic and un-planned closure. Its primary goal is to highlight the difficulties and problems that have forced migrants to travel in reverse or circular patterns, as well as the obstacles that they have encountered while going in circles throughout the pandemic. The research also seeks to clarify the current Anthropocene era and how migration is affected by it. It also highlights strategies for addressing such issues and provides solutions for securing their human rights and defending their standard of living. The paper provides a thorough and qualitative examination, focusing on issues pertaining to migration and basic conceptual clarity of Anthropocene in the Indian context and the difficulties faced by migrant workers during the epidemic. The purpose of a systematic review is to help synthesise and integrate the facts related to this from all relevant disciplines so that society's professionals, elected officials, administrators, future researchers, and the general public may effectively link and raise awareness. Thus, the study's findings may be used to create fresh strategies for understanding both the concepts.

Research Questions

Through this intriguing piece, we urge other historians and academicians to think about:

- Is there any relationship between Anthropocene and Migration that can make sense in light of our worldwide desires for mobility while mobilising itself?
- What are the various challenges faced by migrants in particular, when migration was made obligatory in Covid-19 times?

Research Objectives

- The purpose of this study is to examine in depth the various forms of hardships that the migrants faced, particularly during the Covid-19 restrictions, as well as the socio-psychological effects of circular migration.
- The results shed insight on the Anthropocene's early origins and its connection to human migration. How that has been handled is the predicament of the migrants, who in spite of the severe economic downturn and travel difficulties, had to return home for protection.
- The substandard conditions of the relief camps, which provided inadequate food and services, particularly caused hardship for women and children, leading to numerous psychological problems.

DISCUSSIONS: EXCESSIVE MIGRATION IN THE ERA OF ANTHROPOCENE

Long before completely modern humans emerged, during the times of their hominid predecessors, interactions between beings and the environment in which they were entrenched may be traced. For nearly all of this time, which spans just over a million years, humans and their predecessors altered their environment (Lewis & Maslin, 2015) in a variety of ways, but they were always motivated by the desire to improve their ability to acquire the living sources of sustenance they needed or to hunt the animals they hunted by altering the natural environments (Zalasiewicz et al., 2020). They probably learned through observation and trial-and-error, gradually improving their ability to slightly alter their surroundings but never being able to completely alter the ecosystems around them (Alam et al., 2021). They could not, under any circumstances, alter the chemical makeup of the environment or the oceans on a worldwide scale. That astounding development had to wait until the Industrial Revolution, which began a few centuries ago (Islam & Winkel, 2017).

Fossil fuels were discovered and used to break that bottleneck. The immense energy reserve of solar energy that had amassed over several tens of millions of decades of photosynthesis was represented by fossil fuels (Dyer, 2010). They were the ideal fuel source since they were abundant in energy, dense, portable, and reasonably easy to get. The amount of energy used by people increased significantly. In general, those industrial cultures utilised three to four times as much energy as our prehistoric hunters and gatherers, who in turn needed four to five times as much as their agricultural predecessors. By using fossil fuels, humanity was able to greatly expand and speed up already existing activities in addition to starting new ones (Chakrabarty, 2015). Intense human activity increased from around 10 to about 25–30% of the terrestrial surface. The impact on the environment was also seen in the atmosphere, where atmospheric greenhouse gases such as CO₂, CH₄, and nitrous oxide (N₂O) were on the rise. Because it is a natural byproduct of the burning of fossil fuels, carbon dioxide in particular is directly connected to the increase in energy consumption during the industrial age. Although the atmospheric CO₂ content is a highly helpful indication for monitoring the Anthropocene's evolution (Angus, 2016). While most scientists agree that people have changed the environment, others think that establishing a single date for the new era “impedes rather than advances the scientific awareness of human engagement with Earth system change,” according to archaeologist Matt Edgeworth of the University of Leicester (Head, 2007, p. 442).

THE GREAT ACCELERATION AGE

In actuality, the influx of individuals has accelerated significantly in cities due to better facilities in health, education, and living standards. There also an onset or accelerated age of migration and Neolithic hunter-gatherers changed from pastoral animal raising to slash-and-burn farming at this time, which had a profound impact on the course of human civilisation across several continents (Larson et al., 2014). Human populations have moved at various times to better their own circumstances. There are many instances across history of migrations being linked to climatic changes. Prior to 1500, international relations were not very significant. However, as marine commerce advanced and trade across the European mainland and the new colonies was established, mercantilism began to play a more significant role in economic growth.

The invention of the steam engine ushered in the Industrial Revolution, as factories powered by steam attracted large numbers of people from rural to urban regions. Along with steamboats, railways helped spread the Industrial Revolution around the world and alter our way of life. Large distances could be traveled more easily, personnel could be transported to locations where they needed to be for the extraction of raw resources, and raw goods could be transported outside of the country for sale (Head et al., 2022).

Following World War II, mankind's endeavour changed direction. Even if the impact of our actions on the environment was already plainly visible by the middle of the 20th century beyond the trend of Holocene fluctuations in numerous significant ways the rate at which it was expanding dramatically by the middle of the century. Because of how abrupt the change was, this time period, which runs from 1945 to 2000 and beyond, is known as the Great Acceleration Age (Steffen et al., 2015).

RELATIONSHIP WITH HUMAN MIGRATION

Environmental changes have been a major contributor to global relocation in recent years, and several sources confirm that climate change will have serious repercussions on human mobility (De Haan, 1999). We benefited for a century from the heritage of quick invention, which enabled our cities to spread out and expand rapidly. Contemporary mobility was formed by a significant infrastructural transformation that converted urban areas to the automobile. Due to heavy on resources farming and means of transportation, the high demands on agriculture brought on by this population explosion and the substantial usage of goods utilised by contemporary society have resulted in extensive deforestation, water scarcity, soil deterioration, and rising levels of emitting greenhouse gases. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicted in its fifth Evaluation Report that “climate alteration over the 21st century [will] intensify [the] migration of people.” Extreme weather conditions, according to the IPCC's projections, “provide the most direct gateway from climate change

to migration,” but over the long future, “sea elevation rise, erosion of the coasts, and a decline in crop productivity will have an essential effect on migration trends.” Natural catastrophes caused a total of 140 million individuals to be relocated between 2008 and 2012 (Emami, 2020). Similar to the pandemic of 2020, the return’s timing and date were crucial as it happened in the month when workers often made their yearly trip back to see their family. Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone, and chlorofluorocarbons. When these gases build up in the Earth’s atmosphere, they decrease the amount of infrared radiation that leaves the atmosphere, raising its temperature. The most significant greenhouse gas is thought to be carbon dioxide (CO₂), whose concentration rises annually. The creation of heat, manufacturing, transportation, and power are the most notable sources of carbon dioxide emissions. According to Jonathan Harris (1997), the conventional understanding of economic growth is related to raising mass consumption to levels like to those attained by the US and some European economies. However, the widespread usage of mass consumerism has disastrous effects on the environment due to resource depletion and the absorption of environmental debris.

INFERENCES: HIGHER EDUCATION, MIGRATION, STUDENTS AND WOMEN: CHALLENGES DURING COVID-19

The Covid-19 epidemic has had a devastating impact on a number of facets of modern life. Restrictions implemented to impede the virus’s spread have forced entire sections of the business and society to cease operations entirely or drastically reduce them. Early on, it was evident that the Covid-19 issue and the ensuing shutdowns and limitations would cause significant shocks to the labor market and economy, leading to high rates of underemployment and unemployment. (Máhrík & Králik, 2024). The epidemic has had a devastating effect on society as a whole, but irregular migrants who are already a disadvantaged group in South Asian societies are likely to be most seriously impacted because they lack access to legal and medical protection. Their living circumstances have considerably deteriorated throughout the region, forcing SAARC to deal with a variety of crisis-related repercussions (Horn, 2021). The discussion around the (lack of) a SAARC region migration strategy has gained new vigour, putting human (migration) security front and centre as the catalyst for fresh initiatives and as an invigorating force for concepts like accountability or solidarity (Panebianco, 2021).

Any nation’s economic, social, and human progress depends on higher education. India boasts one of the biggest higher education systems in the world, complete with resources for instruction and training in almost every field related to creative thinking and intellectual pursuits (Kobylarek, Alaverdov et al., 2021). When examining educational migration, a range of social characteristics are taken into consideration,

including age, gender, financial status etc. Given that work opportunities for those over 30 take precedence over schooling and that elementary education is essentially accessible across the nation, young children and compared to teenagers between the ages of 16 and 30, individuals over 30 are less likely to move for educational purposes (Chandrashekar & Sharma, 2014; Vipul & Datta, 2023). Even with an increase in population, there is still discrepancy in migration based on educational attainment and gender. Approximately one-third of all educational institutions and half of all students pursuing higher education are currently enrolled in private schools. The study emphasised on language, culture, religion, identity, and other issues provide challenges for students especially women, whether they are migrants within or between states, or foreign nationals living in India (Williams, 2009). Even women student who migrate for educational opportunities still encounter prejudice and hurdles as they navigate cultural conventions, despite the empowerment that comes with it. Dinesh Bhukra & Matthew Becker (2005) highlights that despite the ways in which globalisation has affected society, particularly women, there remains a gap on the basis of the rich and the poor, the English-speaking and the vernacular, the haves and the have-nots saying', for which there is still no possibility of a verdict. Among such examples are also the "temporary migrants," or immigrants on temporary visas, who are disproportionately employed in precarious jobs with minimal access to social security and frequently the first fired during economic downturns. Given their precarious status as migrants, high levels of engagement in the labor market, and preexisting precariousness, holders of temporary visas are particularly precarious in the context of combined border and workplace restrictions that have been a part and parcel of the Covid-19 reactions. These populations need special consideration and a focused governmental response (Skariah & Sivarenjini, 2024).

In India, the Covid-19 epidemic has led to a large-scale emigration. It was the second-largest mass exodus after the 1947 partition of India, when fourteen million individuals were reportedly displaced to India and Pakistan according to their religious beliefs. The financial sector has seen widespread discontent as a result of this communicable disease (Singh, 2021), particularly in emerging and underdeveloped nations. According to the Census of 2011, 22% of Indians live below the poverty level, and according to a 2012 World Bank estimate, there is a single poor Indian for every five, with the bulk of them (80%) residing outside of urban areas. The poverty index places India at position. India is a sizable nation, and many individuals move there on a yearly basis in quest of better job possibilities in bigger cities. These worker migrations, which have been documented as a result of an increase in Covid-19 instances, are generally characterised to as reverse migrations since they involve individuals moving from where they are employed to where they were born (Drèze, 2020). Internal migration brought on by the Covid issue is over 2.5 times more than foreign migration (Doyle, 2020).

FINDINGS

- Due to shut down and lack of transportation, these terrified migrant workers and students have traveled countless kilometers in bare feet without food or drink to get to their location. Even the finest efforts made by the government were insufficient to address the catastrophe brought on by this reverse migration due to its terrible status.
- In addition to caring for roughly 600,000 migrant workers and feeding nearly 2.2 million people, the authorities have set up isolated shelters. The Delhi government's subsidised food program and the Union government's "one ration card for one nation" initiative both provided a lot of free assistance, but the million recipients still did not meet all of their needs (Menon & Vadakepat, 2021).
- It has been adequately shown that the Covid-19 epidemic and the associated lockdown or conscription practices may be escalating economic, social, and gender disparities. Migrants, notably the millions of labor migrants in Indian cities, have been put in a particularly vulnerable position as a result of the government's reaction to the health issue. (Králik, et al. 2023)

This research offers an interdisciplinary and historical point of view on the circumstances of migrant workers and students, claiming that the setbacks they experience are deeply ingrained in social and economic frameworks and have only recently come to light as a result of the pandemic. In addition to providing instantaneous social security, policies must address the structural problems that keep migrant workers vulnerable.

In order to examine what this severe disruption to circular mobility exposes about the precarity of migrant workers in everyday life, this research utilises the Covid-19 lockout as a lens. We focus on a specific flow of return migrants to provide fresh perspectives on two interconnected areas of migrant workers' lives: (a) how a stringent local labour authority regime at destination preserves migrants trapped in highly exploitative job environments, including through the Covid-19 pandemic; and (b) how this labour control system is strengthened by migrants' precarity and their both temporal and spatial division from linked resides and physical labour in sending out. It is only a temporary "care vacuum" that migrant workers experienced during the shutdown. There is a bidirectional correlation between inequality and the Covid-19 effects. Increased inequality is usually associated with declining overall health, which increases the risk of Covid-19 deaths (Sachs, 2020).

Graeme J. Hugo (1996) notes that the historical course of colonial exploitation, for instance, is linked to a large portion of the deterioration of the least developed nations. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that because of this complexity, people, households, and communities are not all impacted in the same manner (Bardsley & Hugo, 2010). Governments may find it increasingly challenging to take the required steps to halt the pandemic in the face of political division, diminished societal cohesion and trust, and inequality.

Large numbers of employees were made more vulnerable by workplace inequalities, which are frequently linked to social identity, as addressed by Ashwini Deshpande and Rajesh Ramachandran (2020) for India.

CONCLUSION

The current study primarily has investigated at the effects of a lack of recognition or “care vacuum” on those who are displaced by the environment and the connections between displacement caused by the environment and numerous precarious situations. The two main goals of the research are to theoretically advance the field of forced study of migration by elaborating on the significance of non-recognition for those who have been forced to relocate due to the environment and to investigate the real-world consequences of non-recognition by determining connections between ecological displacement and sporadic migration, as well as the development of regional clusters of precarious labour along with additional forms of exploitation. It is crucial to analyse and comprehend displacements as a collection of intricate components with varying temporal and spatial scales that interact.

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