University of Tehran

Research priorities in international migration and mobilities: Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and its legacies: Synthesis

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Take-home messages

- **International migration has:**

  - **become one of the main policy challenges of our time,**

  - **attracted the attention of demographers and other experts in related disciplines,**

  - **needs to be reconceptualized and measured innovatively, and**

  - **has significant implications for research, training and policy during**

Why is demographic research on international migration needed?

- International migrations have increased substantially in scale, complexity and diversity in recent decades (272 m , 3.4% of the world population).

- It presents major multinational, national, subnational and community challenges

- The growing volume of human mobility is a key driver to the disease outbreaks due to COVID-19

- The pandemic has caused challenges for international mobilities and created opportunities for data collection, measurement, and policy interventions

- Traditional approaches to management of international migration have

A Continuum of Migration

Voluntary Movement — Forced Movement

Research questions on int'l migration

- Who is voluntarily or forcibly moved? How and why?

- What are the sources of information for migrants?

- The decision making process for migration (networks vs family members)?

- Reasons for choosing and the planned pathways to the destinations

- Social and demographic characteristics as well as adaptation patterns of migrants

- Role of diaspora in the development of home countries

- The implications of the pandemic on int'l mobilities

- Policies for support of migrants at the origin or destination places

Re-conceptualisation

- New forms of mobilities

- Im/mobilities post COVID-19

- The need for a new and comprehensive framework for the explanation of international mobilities
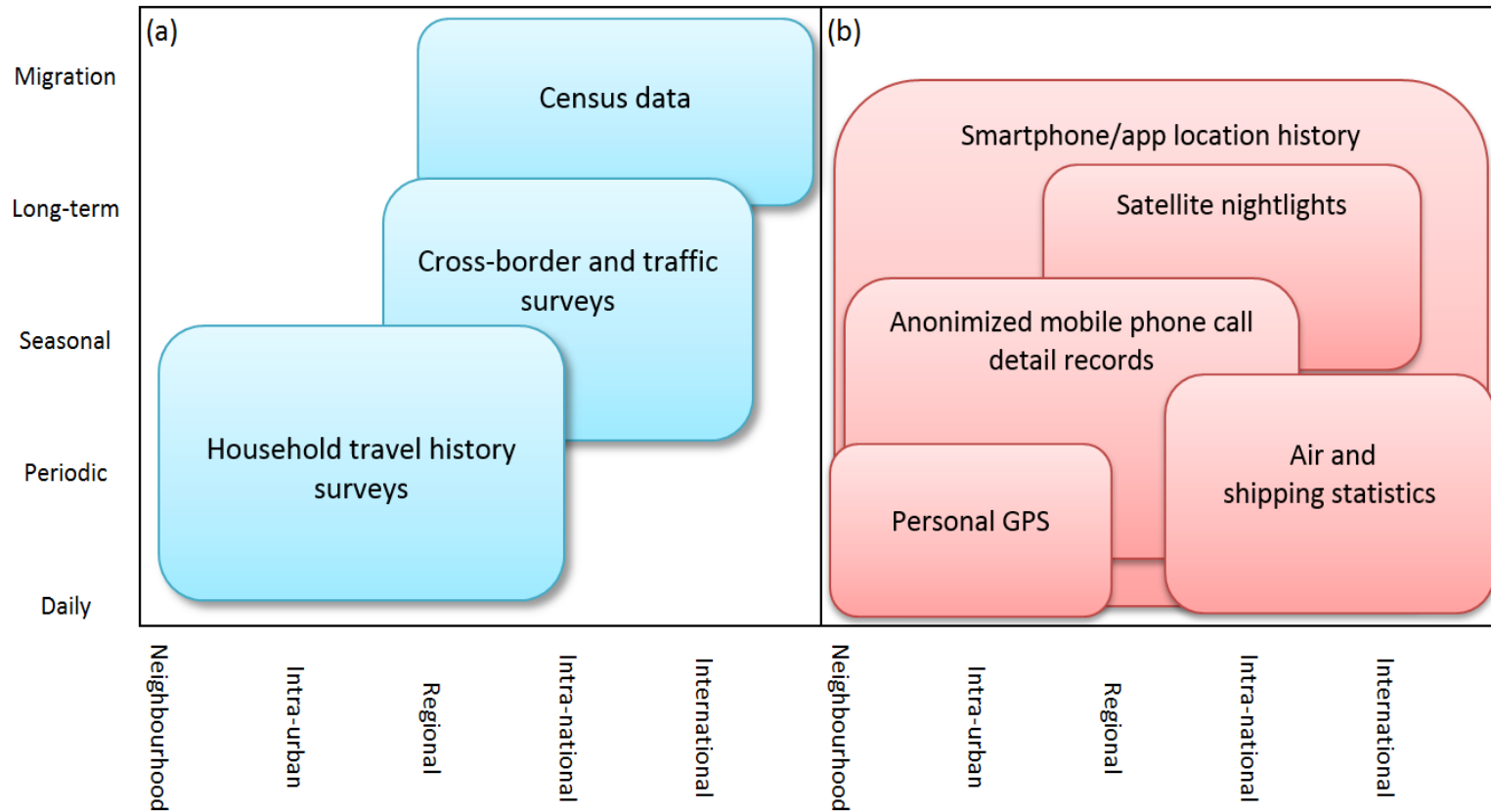
Methodological challenges with international migration data

- **What event?**
  - Different actors categorize events differently.

- **What numbers?**
  - Sometimes we might get multiple sources; which one is the most accurate?

- **Which numbers to take, and when?**
  - Migration numbers change over time. When is the best time to take the number that accurately reflects instances of movements?

- **Lack of disaggregated data** (age, sex, location, and duration of movements to monitor regular intervals over time)

Data for measuring population movements

Tatem, *Int Health*, 2014; Ruktanonchai et al, *IJHG,* 2018

The need for dynamic and innovative measures of migration (Ayman Zohry)

- Measures of mixed migration
- Measures of circular migration
- Measures of seasonal migration
- Measures of irregular migration
- Measures of crises-related migration

Impacts of COVID-19 on the situation of undocumented migrants and refugees

- Lack of documentation hinders their access to services (i.e. online services, banking, education, health, etc)

- Economic situation and the rise of unemployment and job losses affects both low and middle-class natives and migrants, and has significant implications for their wellbeing.

- National priorities vs migrants (particularly undocumented ones) in every host country

- The economic situation post COVID-19 pandemic may be worse with low prospect of recovery

- Thus, studies on the situation of disadvantaged migrants in the destination places is important

Research priorities during and post COVID-19 (**Marie McAuliffe**)

- Mobility restriction impacts
  - Beyond acute health crisis, new mobility regimes? Intensifying inequality?

- Protections/vulnerabilities
  - Trafficking, displaced persons, social protection, etc

- International remittances
  - Improving analysis of remittance data, behavioral aspects of crisis and tech

What can Demography add to the understanding of international migration?

- Development of better systems of data collection and the integration of new forms of geography and demographic data (i.e. mobile phones, GPS, apps etc) [i.e WorldPop]

- Measuring and modelling the scales and new patterns of international mobilities

- Analysis of characteristics – gender, age, education, socio-economic status, language, ethnicity

- Developing a more nuanced understanding of the drivers of international migration

- Understanding the impacts of migration on both origin and destinations

The way forward

- The need for reconceptualization of international migration and human mobility post COVID-19

- The need for dynamic data and innovative techniques for measuring and modeling international im/mobility

- Need for multidisciplinary approach and comprehensive theories

- The need for offering demographic courses including new migration theories and methodologies for training of junior demographers

Thank you

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