

VID Colloquium

Quantifying and Visualising Bilateral Migration Flows Around the Globe

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Compared with fertility and mortality, little attention has been given to understanding the patterns and trends in international migration flows at a global level. This reflects the variation in the ways migration flows are measured, impeding robust comparisons of migration across countries and regions. Stock data on the number of foreign-born are more widely available and easier to measure across time and countries. The United Nations recently published bilateral stock tables for more than 200 countries for 1990, 2000 and 2010. However, this static measure cannot capture movements over a fixed interval (as required for population projections), and thus give little insight on contemporary patterns of migration. In this presentation, we summarise our work on quantifying and visualising global bilateral migration flows, which will be published in a top-tier journal on the same day that this colloquium takes place (lack of details due to embargo guidelines...). We present our new methodology for estimating bilateral flows from sequential UN stock tables. Linking flows to stocks while accounting for changes in populations due to births and deaths enables us to estimate the number of people who changed their country of residence over 5-year periods. Our estimates are fully comparable across 196 countries and 4 time periods, 1990-95 to 2005-10. Contrary to conventional wisdom that migration is increasing rapidly because of globalisation, we find that the global flow of people has been relatively stable at about 0.6% of world population since 1995. While the global volume of movement is characterised by temporal stability, the spatial structure of movements has changed much more profoundly. We developed the circular migration plot to make changes in complex global patterns more easily understandable and visually appealing. We present a series of plots at region and country levels to highlight the main trends, and we consider the effects of income and education levels of origin and destination countries .

About the presenter

Guy Abel and Nikola Sander are research scholars at the Vienna Institute of Demography. Guy is a social statistician focussing on international migration and statistical demography. He holds a PhD from the University of Southampton, UK, (2009) and joined the VID in 2011. Nikola is a population geographer focussing on internal & international migration, population projections and data visualisation. She holds a PhD from the University of Queensland, Australia, (2011) and joined the VID in 2010. They have co-authored several papers and book chapters on international migration and global population projections in recent years.

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