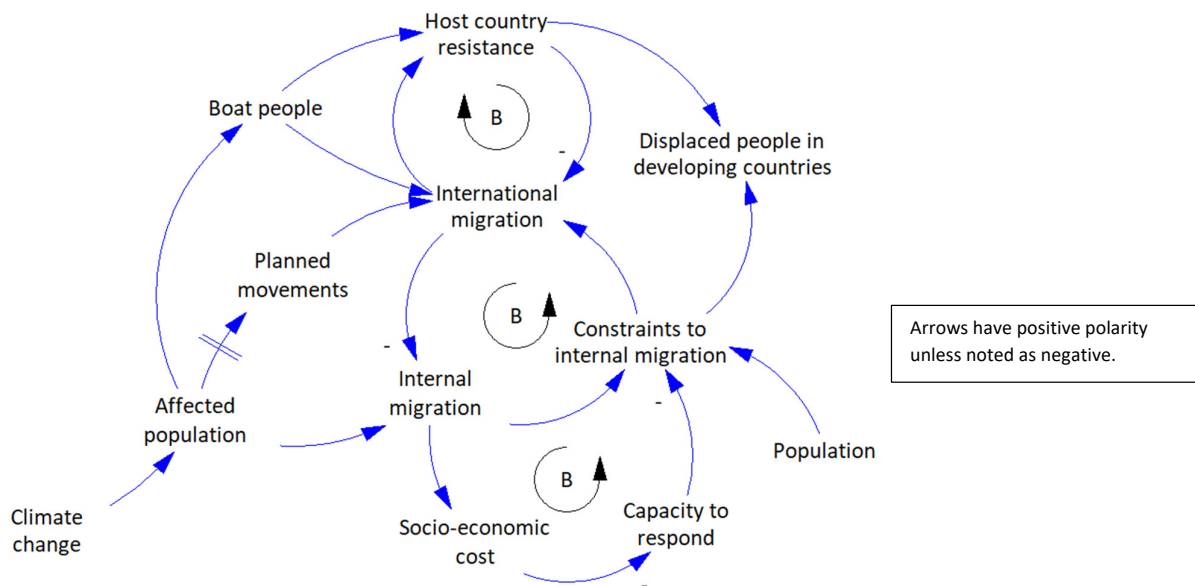


### The dynamics of climate change migration

The inevitably increasing impacts of climate change (sea level rise, diminishing rainfall, dangerous heat stress, fire, floods, cyclones) on the poorer countries of the world will lead to a large affected population over the coming centuries, with estimates ranging from 200 million to 1 billion. The countries of Asia are predicted to be particularly hard hit. Some of the affected people will be internally displaced within their own countries, and some will become migrants, through either internationally planned processes or people smuggling. The former will not occur quickly or easily given the recent experience of European countries' hostility to Syrian war refugees, and Australia's hysterical response to the small numbers of refugees seeking asylum. This inevitably means significant increases in the number of so-called 'boat people'.

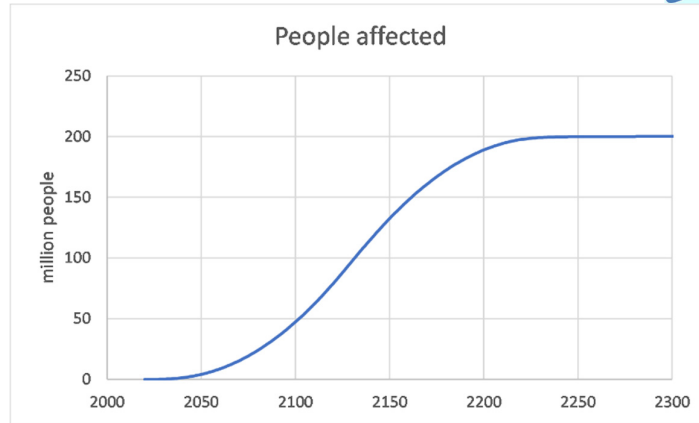
The numbers that will be dealt with internally will be constrained by the ability of the affected country to cope. The larger the numbers over time, the greater these constraints will become, leading to increasing pressure on the rich world to receive migrants, which will be resisted for a variety of reasons including xenophobia, and that resistance is likely to grow in proportion to the numbers. This resistance will therefore likely contribute to large numbers of people being displaced in third countries that themselves will struggle to cope (as exemplified by countries such as Jordan and Lebanon in respect of the Syria crisis). This will increase pressure on the developed world to accept migrants, but that will take time and remain politically divisive in the host countries.

The following causal loop diagram identifies the dynamics summarised above.



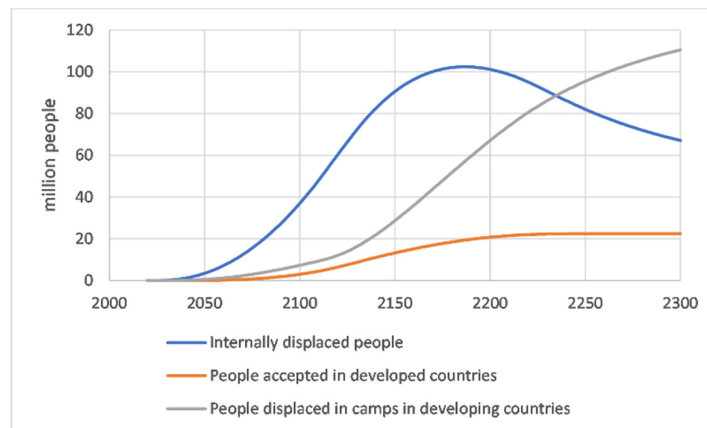
It is possible to model this scenario with some guesses about the numbers and the timing.

1. Assume that 200 million people cannot remain in their location because of one or more of the effects of climate change and this crisis evolves over the next 200 years.
2. Three quarters of these people are initially internally displaced in their own country but this eventually overwhelms the capacity of those countries and as numbers exceed 50 million, people leave those counties to join the other quarter who seek refuge elsewhere.



3. Three quarters of these people are initially internally displaced in their own country but this eventually overwhelms the capacity of those countries and as numbers exceed 50 million, people leave those countries to join the other quarter who seek refuge elsewhere.
4. Accordingly, the number of displaced people in camps in developing countries grows as the numbers affected grow, the host countries struggle to cope.
5. Initially, the developed world does nothing, but over time the pressure mounts and they agree to take some of the people who have left their countries and to process those people more quickly. However, this takes decades to occur and the processing takes years.

The result of this thought experiment is depicted in the following graph. The vast majority of people remain displaced, with only a fraction accepted in developed countries.



Without urgent action in the coming decades by the rich world (who have created the climate crisis) to proactively plan for this mass migration, the likely outcome is that most displaced people will end up in camps either in their own countries or in other countries that struggle to accommodate their presence, but are not able for one reason or another to prevent their arrival. Many will undoubtedly perish.

The existing and growing resistance of the rich world to deal with people who have been displaced due to war or poverty (e.g. Trump's United States and Morrison's Australia) does not augur well for the (potentially) hundreds of millions of people displaced by the climate change they did little or nothing to create.

Bill Grace

Jan 2020