Environmental Immigration in Mexico: A Literature Review

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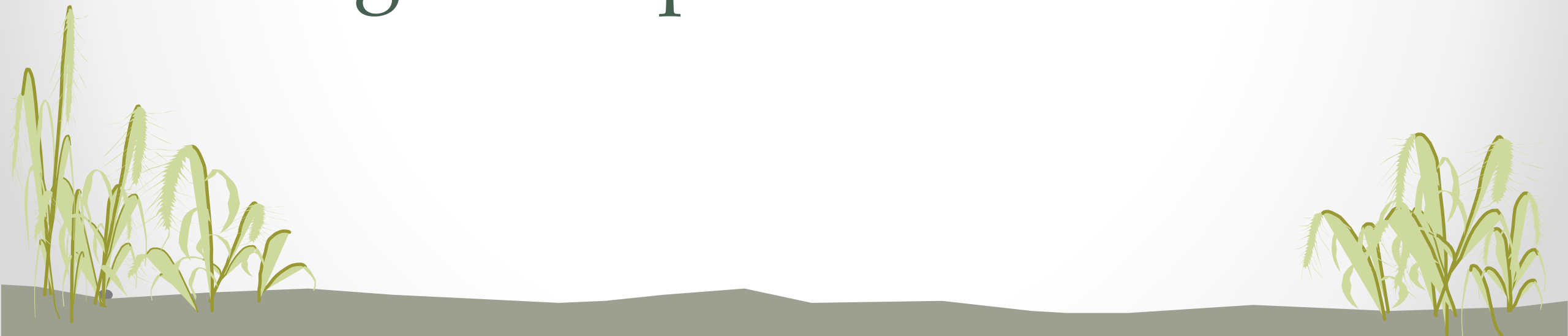
Research Question

How have droughts that are driven by climate change affect immigration patterns in Mexico?



Abstract

Climate change has become one of the biggest issues facing humanity in the 21st century. Mexico is a susceptible area due to its diverse climate, ranging from tropical to semi-arid; the direct result of climate change in Mexico is often droughts. Much of the population relies on water for agriculture whether it be working in farms, subsistence farming, or rearing livestock. Drought conditions affect the livelihoods of those who rely on agriculture and have become a push factor for immigration. This paper aims to examine and comprehend the relationship between droughts caused by climate change and immigration patterns in Mexico. In order to analyze this relationship primary and secondary research was evaluated and concluded that the lens which we view immigration and climate change needs to change as immigration caused by climate changes continues to increase. This research brings together these two areas of current research and aims to provide data to inform policy on climate, migration, and U.S. and Mexico relations.

Background

- Immigration is defined as the act of moving to a different country to live there permanently
- There are a variety of circumstances that lead to an individual or household choosing to immigrate
- Mexicans account for the largest percent of immigrants in the United States with the population being almost 10 million

International Organization for Migration

"Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment that adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad" (IOM, 2007:33).

Methods

- Keywords: environmental, drought, immigration, migration, Mexico, climate change, climate
- Databases: JSTOR, ScienceDirect, EBSCO

Data

- General consensus is a positive correlation between drought and immigration, but environmental factors are just one of the many factors taken into consideration
- Rural household's dependent on subsistence farming are at a higher risk of being affected by a drought
- Droughts and migration are difficult to link due to the unique aspect of droughts

NELM Theory

"The new economics of labor migration (NELM) theory posits migration as a household strategy of livelihood diversification aimed to minimize risks associated with lack of credit, capital, and insurance markets (Stark & Bloom 1985). The motivations of Mexico-United States migrants, in particular, have often been usefully explained through the NELM framework, as households send migrants to garner remittances that diversify household income sources (Lindstrom & Lauster 2001, Massey & Espinosa 1997, Taylor & Löpez-Feldman 2010)"

Mayan Society Collapse Case Study

- Mayan society was one of the most advanced Mesoamerican societies dating from 2000 BCE into the 1600s
- It is theorized that the collapse of Mayan society was caused by extreme environmental degradation to their water sources and management
- Mayan Society can be used as a case study to warn of the consequences of mismanaged resources

Conclusions

- Climate change “could lead 216 million people around the world to move within their countries by 2050".
- The lens in which the U.S views Mexican immigration need to change
- International migration laws need to change in order toguarantee the safetyof current and future climate migrants

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