

Getting By after Internal Migration. Scenes from the Life of a Day Laborer Family in Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan

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Summary

This article centers around the study of spatial mobility as a response to the uneven distribution of chances and risks. In present-day Afghanistan, moving within the country can be one strategy by which to avoid aggression in certain places and/or to benefit from the better employment opportunities and general life prospects of other locales. The grand strategy of migrating, however, needs to be supplemented by the adoption of certain survival tactics in response to the unexpected, ever-changing mundane realities of day-to-day life in new and unfamiliar surroundings. Whether or not migration will be the key to a better life depends on many different factors.

Based on the example of one migrant family that came to the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e Sharif, this article looks into the concrete features of internal migration. The case study shows how people try to get by, which problems come along with their relocation, and in what ways these people represent their migration experience in their narrations.

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Introduction

Spatial mobility is often regarded as an answer to the regionally uneven distribution of chances and risks. Moving can be a strategy for avoiding the aggression found in certain places and/or benefiting from better employment opportunities and the general life prospects of other locales. This is also the case in present-day Afghanistan. Many people are currently fleeing the ongoing or increasing violence in certain parts of the country, and hence come to the cities in the hope of finding work and a stable livelihood. They thus become mobile in order to cope with the ongoing hostilities in Afghanistan.

In this article, I will look into the concrete features of Afghan internal migration. I want to show how poor migrants handle the problems that come along with their relocation to a supposedly better place, and what difficulties may still complicate their lives in a location in which they have set their hopes. The ways in which those on the move represent migration and continuous struggle in their narrations allow