

A group of people are in a boat on a body of water. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn. The water is dark with some ripples. The people are silhouetted against the light. One person is at the back of the boat, possibly rowing. The others are sitting in the middle of the boat. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

The cost of migration

A research plan about the impacts of migration on migrants' livelihood in the urban poor areas of Bangladesh

Research Plan

Master of Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

Graduation Studio: Global Housing 2023/2034

Veda Heparik
4837169

Prof.ir. Dick van Gameren
Marina Tabassum
Dr. Nelson Mota
Dr. Rachel Lee
Rohan Varma

introduction

This research plan focuses on the impact of migration on the livelihood of rural-urban migrants living in the urban poor settlements of Bangladesh. Livelihood, the scope of this topic, is the strategies for migrants to sustain their lives and well-being through financial and economic factors. Examples in this area are the available job opportunities, housing situation, and the cost of living for migrants and their households. Due to urbanization, cities are overcrowded, and new migrants commonly end up living in informal settlements. The search for a better life leads to mass migration from rural to urban areas and is currently a common trend in Bangladesh. A self-held interview with a rural household, located in the Haors of Bangladesh, made clear that the main reason for migrants to move from rural to urban areas is to seek a better livelihood. This research plan aims to understand the impacts of migration on migrants' livelihood who end up living in the urban poor settlements (informal settlements) of Bangladesh. By analyzing several topics regarding livelihood, this research plan hopes to understand if the livelihood of migrants does improve or if migration has had a negative impact on a migrant's life. The final aim of this research plan is to use these found understandings to make an integral and spatial urban design for migrants, and therefore, improving their livelihood.

content

Background information	2
Problem statement	4
Research questions	6
Methods and methodology	7
Theoretical framework	8
Relevance	10
Diagram of research plan	12
List of references	13



Figure 1: The Sweepers Colony in Sylhet, an urban poor settlement habited by former migrants. *Own picture.*

1 background information

Urbanization

Since 2007, more than half of the world's population has lived in highly dense cities, and this is even increasing as we speak (Ritchie et al., 2018). A common reason for cities to grow tremendously is urbanization, a mass migration of populations from rural to urban areas (also known as rural-urban migration or RUM). But this phenomenon varies between countries, across high-income countries (West Europe, the Americas, Australia e.g.) more than 80% of the population is currently living in urban areas, whereas in lower to middle-income countries, the majority still lives in rural areas. Another accurate representation of the state of urbanization is the rate at which urbanization is increasing in different parts of the world. A nicely defined interactive map published by the UN in 2021 shows the increase in urban populations defined by the country. It shows distinctively the difference in population in urban areas between countries with different income averages. However, an even better representation of the term urbanization in this context (architecture and the built environment) is the ratio and proportion of people living in dense urban areas, rather than exact absolute numbers (Tacoli, 2015). There are many consequences that humanity faces due to urbanization. In the long term, the United Nations also projected recently that urbanization is expected to significantly impact the quality of life negatively (Cohen, 2015). The rate of urbanization in developing countries

is the world's fastest. The population in both rural and urban Bangladesh was increasing until the mid-2000s when the rural population started to stagnate. Still, more people are living in the rural areas of Bangladesh than in cities. Since the 1960s till 2023, Bangladesh's urban population has increased by more than 2,500%, making it the 18th fastest-growing urban population in the world. The rural population in Bangladesh has increased only by 116% in the same period. (UN, 2021).

Migrants

There is not a universally accepted definition for "migrants" on an international level yet. "An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from their place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons." (IOM, 2017). This definition is cited by the International Organization for Migration, written in a report about a migrants' profile in Sylhet, Bangladesh. But this term includes several categories of people, such as migrant workers and international students. This research plan will focus on internal migration, where people move within the country they currently live in, specifically work migrants. Several pull and push factors determine the choice to migrate, migrants must adapt to new environments, and sometimes face



Figure 2: Streets of Old Dhaka show the clear effects of over crowded cities. Own picture.



Figure 3: The Sweepers Colony in Sylhet, where waste is not properly processed. Own picture.

difficulties regarding their financial and socio-economic status. Additionally, this research plan will focus on the impact of migration on the migrants and their (adaptive) livelihood strategies, for living in urban poor areas of Bangladesh.

Housing crisis

An effect of rapid urbanization in combination with poverty, the market to provide affordable housing, and de inability of the state, causes over 1 billion people to reside in informal settlements (Williams et al., 2018). The city of Dhaka, Bangladesh, is growing significantly and one of the common causes is internal migration. The four largest cities of Bangladesh - Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Khulna – are lacking decentralizing opportunities and services regarding the massive stream of migrants. Many of these migrants now live in slums, and due to a lack of programs policies, and money, no other option is available. Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, and it has experienced rapid urbanization in recent decades (Choguill, 2002). This population growth and urbanization have led to an increased demand for housing in urban areas, where people often migrate in search of better economic opportunities. Many urban areas in Bangladesh have seen the proliferation of informal settlements or slums due to the inability of the government and local authorities to provide adequate housing for the growing population. These settlements often lack basic services like clean water, sanitation, and access to healthcare, leading to poor living conditions. More aspects of the housing crisis in Bangladesh are lack of housing quality, vulnerability to natural disasters, affordable housing shortage, and lack of governmental initiatives. The housing crisis in Bangladesh is complex and ongoing. (Rahman, 2003).

The former life of migrants

The formal life of rural migrants in Bangladesh can vary widely based on factors such as individual circumstances, skills, education, and the opportunities available in urban areas. Most of the migrants from rural areas were commonly engaged in agrarian activities,

livestock herding, or other “low-skilled labor” (17%). In the rural areas of Bangladesh, additional common occupations are street vending or small-scale trade (informal sector) (8,6%) or domestic work (particularly women practice domestic work, performing tasks such as cleaning, cooking, or childcare). Findings indicate that about 24 percent were unemployed before migration. Surprisingly, 35% of the internal migrants in Bangladesh are students. (Hossain, 2012). Rural areas often experience lower average incomes compared to urban centers. Limited economic opportunities and dependence on traditional agricultural practices can contribute to lower income levels. Access to education can be constrained in rural areas due to factors like the distance to schools, lack of infrastructure, and financial constraints. This can lead to lower literacy rates and educational attainment. (Shameem et al., 2014).

2 problem statement

Everywhere in the world, migration has been the focus of intense political debate in recent years. But why does the livelihood of migrants in urban poor settlements matter in the context of architecture and urban planning? The consequences of migration have a major impact on migrants' livelihoods and create many (negative) impacts on their quality of life, especially in developing countries like Bangladesh which is one of the most densely populated countries in the world (Nahar, 2020). The reasons for people to migrate can vary, some people want to seek better work or education opportunities, but some people see it as no other choice and are forced to migrate (climate migration). Migrants can face displacement, loss of livelihood, and inadequate support systems when moving to an urban poor, dense area (Hossain, 2012). Several schemes from different articles give a clear overview of the push and pull factors that convince migrants to migrate from rural to urban areas (see Figures 6 and 7).

This research plan focuses on the most common overarching pull factor for migrants; the search for a better livelihood by work-related opportunities. According to a health survey on urban migration by

Raaj Biswas, more than 85% of men move to urban areas for work-related reasons (Biswas et al., 2019). It is important to understand the general ways of urbanization, the causes, and the consequences that many migrants face. Rather than prohibiting or restraining migration, this research plan aims to get a better understanding of the effects of migration and livelihood, and eventually understand how to tackle the problems migrants face. In addition, the scope of this research is understanding a part of the migration and the livelihood of migrants who are now living in poor urban areas of Bangladesh. Therefore, this research plan focuses only on migrants. However, it is important to also understand every aspect of migration and the whole community in which migrants may live. This will be suitable for other research in the future. The final aim of this research plan is to create an understanding of the previously mentioned topics, to at last, make an integral urban plan and spatial design for migrants and the urban poor and improve their livelihood, and therefore, quality of life. In the future, this will be applied for a design plan in more resilient communities in transitioning urban areas, of other developing countries, while keeping traditions and heritage.



Figure 4: The Sweepers Colony in Sylhet, with a little shop on the right (street vending). Own picture.



Figure 5: Sugercane cart, sold whole or only the juice, on the market of Dhaka. Own picture.

Push Factors	Pull Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlessness • Adverse person to land ratio • Frequent and severe natural disasters (drought, flood, munga, river bank erosion) • Homelessness • Loss of income sources • Unemployment and poverty • Absence of industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job/Earning opportunities • Easy access to informal sector • Higher incomes/Rural-urban wage differentials • Rural urban disparities in social amenities and services (education, health care, recreation) • Positive information about the city (garments factory jobs) • Better livelihood

Figure 6: Islam, M. (2015). *Causes and consequences of rural-urban migration: A study of migrant street vendors in Dhaka city.*

Push Factors	Pull Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlessness • Adverse person to land ratio • Frequent and severe natural disasters (drought, flood, munga, river bank erosion) • Homelessness • Loss of income sources • Unemployment and poverty • Absence of industries • Law and order situation • Village politics • Lack of social and cultural opportunities (education, health care, recreational facilities) • Do not like village (particularly rural rich) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job/Earning opportunities • Easy access to informal sector • Higher incomes/Rural-urban wage differentials • Rural urban disparities in social amenities and services (education, health care, recreation) • Positive information about the city (garments factory jobs) • Better livelihood • Fast and colorful life in city • Joining families/relatives • Willingness to change and see new places

Figure 7: Jahan, M. (2012). *Impact of rural urban migration on physical and social environment: The case of Dhaka city.*

3 research questions



Figure 8: The Sweepers Colony in Sylhet, waste management is not common. Own picture.

The main question of this research states: *What is the impact of rural-urban migration on the livelihood of migrants in informal settlements/urban poor areas?*

To answer this question, several sub-questions will be answered regarding this topic.

1. *How does rural-urban migration affect the employment opportunities available to migrants in informal settlements?*
 - a. The financial situation of migrants beforehand
 - b. The effect of income levels and economic situation of migrants and their households
 - c. Discernible patterns in the types of jobs or economic activities that migrants engage in
2. *What are the average costs of living for migrants in poor urban settlements?*
 - a. The demographic of migrants and their households
 - b. Housing situation and costs
 - c. Additional living costs of migrants
3. *What are the adaptive strategies of migrants that contribute to better livelihood?*
 - a. Education and skill development
 - b. Additional employment strategies
 - c. Informal, renting, sharing, and other housing strategies

These sub-questions will help to answer the main question by scoping the multifaced effects of migrants' livelihood in urban poor settlements of Bangladesh.

4 methods & methodology

Different sorts of literature will be used for each chapter or to answer a sub-question. The most used method for this research plan will be **literature reviews**, which will form most of the theoretical framework. Existing papers and articles about migration and urbanization will give a general overview of the literature. The literature review will be suitable for all three sub-questions.

Also, **secondary data collection** found by other researchers will be used to get a more comprehensive understanding of hard numbers and conclusions. This includes surveys interviews and focus group discussions with both migrants and potential migrants, and the urban poor in selected study areas (Bangladesh or developing countries, when needed).

This will in a way, coexist with **statistical analysis**, which will help to understand more about the demographic, economic, and social characteristics of the migrants and affected urban poor areas. This method will help to understand the spending habits and living costs of migrants (second sub-question), for example.

Besides the literature review, examining different **case studies** will help understand the lives of migrants in urban poor areas in developing countries. Specific neighborhoods or communities that fit in the profile of this research plan will provide a richer understanding of how immigration affects. This method is also suitable for every sub-question, to make found data more applicable and trustworthy.

Fieldwork on this matter is possible, but it is not certain how much information and possibilities there will be for the sake of this research topic. When the opportunity arises to visit a community or village where migrants live (willingly or unwillingly), interviews but also photographs will help conduct more thorough and realistic research.

This research does not only need hard numbers to conclude but also heartfelt feelings of real people. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as spatial analysis, will provide in this case the best understanding of this issue and will also help in addressing the challenges that are faced.



Figure 9: Woodworker on the market of Dhaka, this man told us that it took months to complete one cabinet. *Own picture.*

5 theoretical framework

There are three main topics of existing literature relevant to this research plan and several theoretical frameworks of other reviews that help structure this research plan.

Life of migrants: Livelihood

The top half of this conceptual framework about rural out-migration shows a clear overview of which topics are relevant for household livelihoods (Qin and Flint, 2012). This conceptual model below (figure 11) is a great tool for communication across disciplines and helps to develop the sub-question: How does rural-

urban migration affect the employment opportunities available to migrants in informal settlements? Most of the people who migrate from rural to urban areas are looking for better work opportunities, meaning that their financial status is not great. They mostly end up in informal settlements or low-income housing settlements, where rent is cheaper. Some articles state that people prefer job opportunities before housing. Different industries where people who migrate internally work are in the readymade garments industry, transport sector (rickshaw pullers), or as workers for higher income households. (Hasan, 2019).



Figure 10: Street vendor selling Fuchka on the riverside of Syllhet. Own picture.

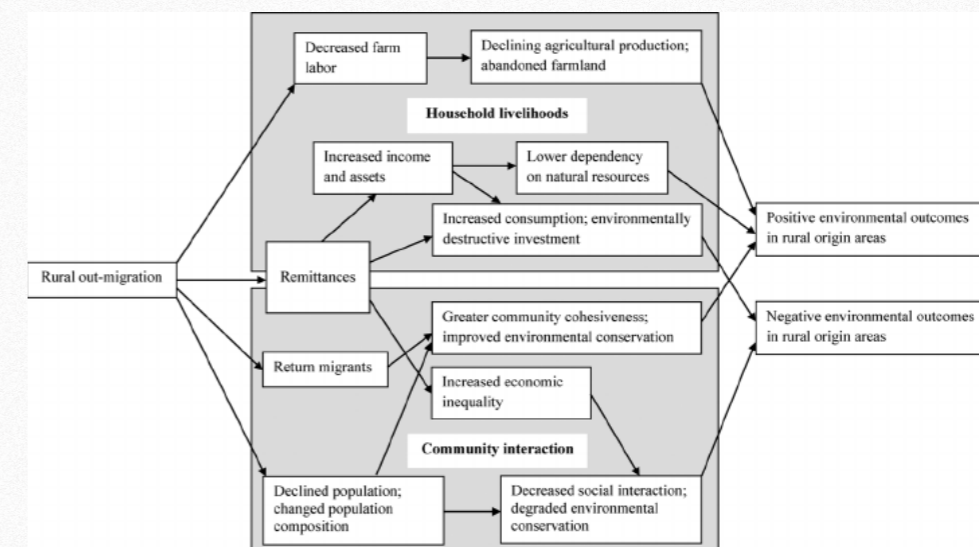


Figure 11: Qin, H. et al. (2012). *Conceptual framework of rural out-migration in Society and Natural Resources*.

Life of migrants: Housing and living costs

This survey framework shows the different topics regarding households and relevant subjects of the refugee influx (Ullah et al., 2021). Although it is not the same target audience, it still shows similar topics that also can be applied to migrants. Forming the conclusion for the second sub-question, these topics are insightful to get a complete understanding of factors regarding housing and living costs. This research first explains the target demographic and household complexity of migrants. Thereafter, the type of land they own or rent and the expenses it comes with. Lastly, it describes their average annual income related to their profession.

Life of migrants: Adaptive strategies after migration

Migrants in urban poor areas often employ adaptive strategies to navigate the challenges associated with livelihood and income. Migrants facing poverty

often employ coping strategies to navigate economic challenges and improve their livelihood. This is a common phenomenon in settlements that face urban poverty and specifically, in context with migration. Some adaptive strategies migrants apply are informal employment, small entrepreneurship, multiple job holdings, (additional) education or skill development, and housing adaptation. A paper on urban poverty in Bangladesh describes the causes and consequences, but important for answering the third sub-question, the coping strategies. (Banks, 2012). Coping strategies for migrants facing poverty often involve a combination of immediate income-generation activities, long-term planning, and reliance on community and social networks. These strategies reflect the resilience and adaptability of migrants as they navigate economic challenges in their new environments.

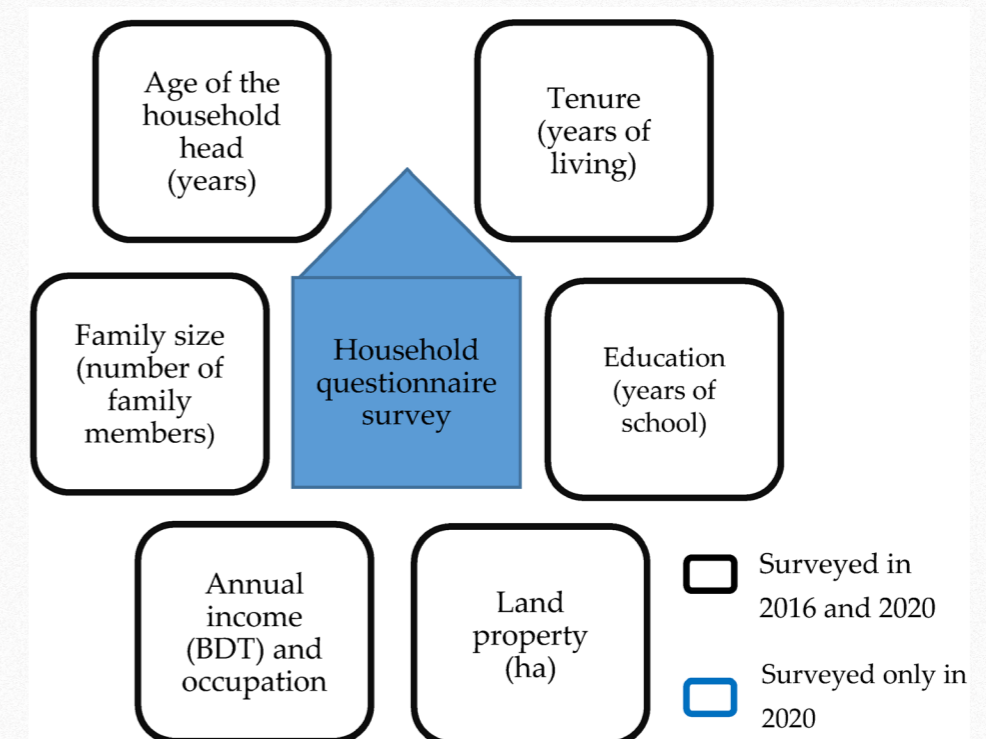


Figure 13: Ullah, A. Et al. (2021). *Community household survey framework* in Sustainability.

Figure 12: A man bringing bread (literally) on the table, at Dhaka station. Own picture.

6 relevance



Figure 14: The Sweepers Colony in Sylhet, an urban poor settlement inhabited by former migrants. Own picture.

The understanding of the effects on migrants in poor urban areas and their livelihood is relevant for several reasons:

Socioeconomic development: Examining the social and economic contributions of migrants and related urban poor is crucial to forming strategies to help improve these factors. This research is relevant to eventually form strategies on how migrants can potentially contribute to society for economic and social development. This can also result in an improvement in their livelihood.

Housing and services improvement: Examining their current living conditions and services can give an overview of what they need and value in a community. It addresses what is missing or is a lack of, but also what they already value and how to keep that tradition.

Community integration: Improving the quality of life in the first period/process of migration. A better understanding of improving social cohesion in communities, but also diversity and cultural dynamics. The integration of migrants is important in highly dense areas where a lot of other communities are already living, so conflict can be prevented, and migrants can settle in more easily and humanely.

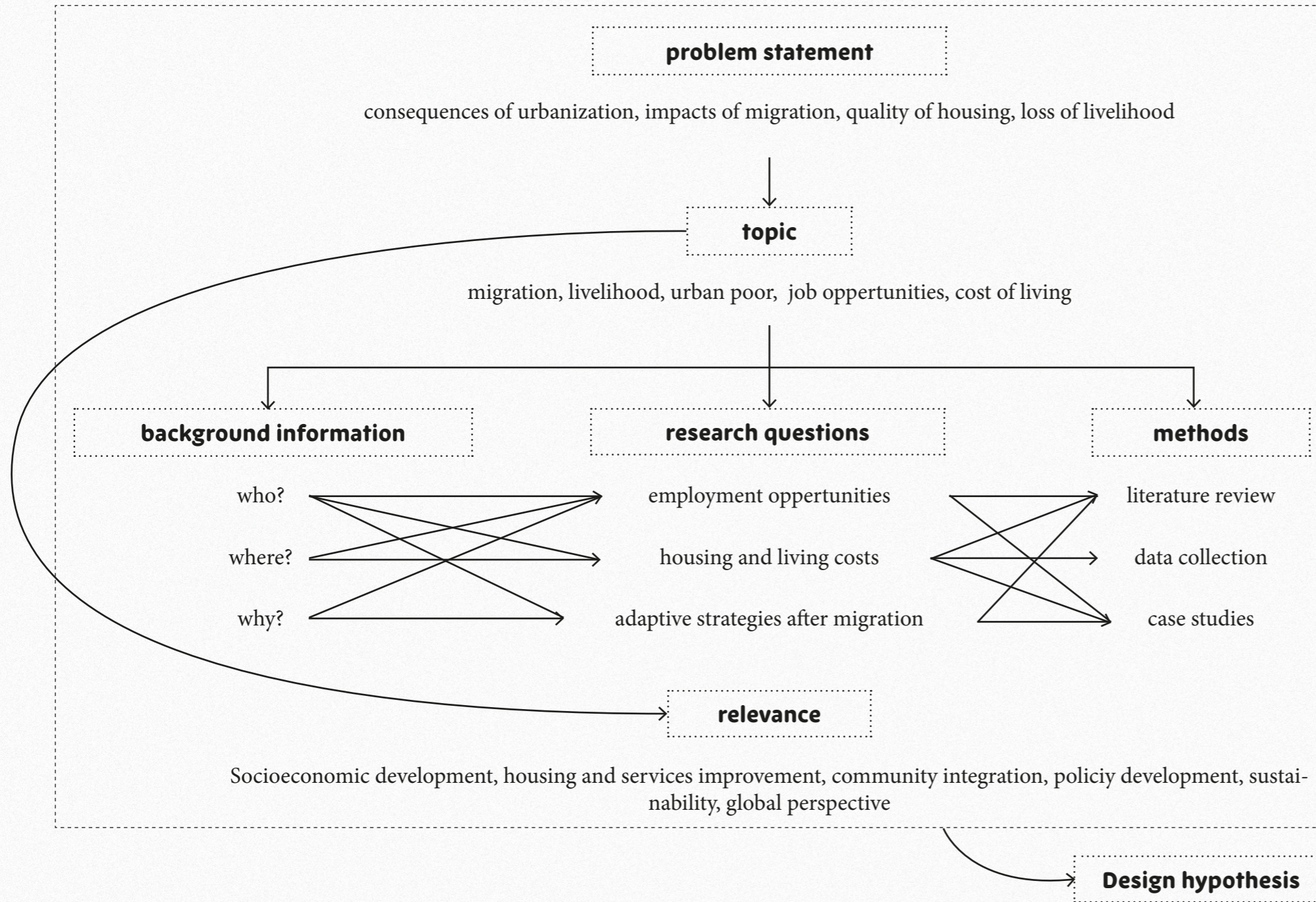
Policy development: Understanding of challenges and how to improve living conditions and opportunities

by developing new targeting policies. For future and potential rural-urban migrants, new policies or programs can help improve their migrating process and their living conditions. The improvement of policies and the help of government and NGOs can be of relevance for other relevant topics (or also directly related to other topics).

Sustainability: This research can give solutions on how to make this type of community more sustainable in the future and how to be more resilient in urban planning to prevent future difficulties. Getting an understanding of the spending habits of urban poor migrants will help with a realistic design hypothesis. The conclusions of this research plan will help us to understand and design a more plausible urban project in the built environment.

Global perspective: Because the effects of migration are a global phenomenon. This research can contribute to an already rising issue everywhere in the world, which makes it quite relevant to research. It is also important to understand the migration processes in other parts of the world in various contexts. This will eventually contribute to cross-country learning and collaboration. Some of these reasons are directly affected or related to each other, so it is important to understand the relevance of multiple approaches this topic brings. Together, they take a comprehensive total picture of what makes this topic relevant.

7 diagram of research plan



Future research topics related to this research plan:

- Street vending and other informal businesses
- Community integration for migrants
- Mixed-use buildings in urban poor settlements
- Transistion process of migrants from rural to urban
- Socioeconomic adaptation for migrants

List of references

- Banks, N. (2012). Urban poverty in Bangladesh: causes, consequences and coping strategies. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2166863>
- Biswas, R. K., Kabir, E., & Khan, H. T. A. (2019). Causes of urban migration in Bangladesh: Evidence from the Urban Health Survey. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 38(4), 593–614. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11113-019-09532-3>
- Choguill, C. L. (1988). Problems in providing low-income urban housing in Bangladesh. *Habitat International*, 12(3), 29–39. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-3975\(88\)90059-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-3975(88)90059-8)
- Cohen, B. (2015). “Urbanization, City Growth, and the New United Nations Development Agenda”. *The Official Journal of the World Coal Industry*. pp. 4–7.
- Hossain, M. Z. (2001). *Rural-Urban Migration in Bangladesh: A Micro-Level Study*. Shahjalal University of Science & Technology.
- Jayanthakumaran, K., Verma, R., Wan, G., & Wilson, E. (2019). *Internal Migration, Urbanization and Poverty in Asia: dynamics and interrelationships*. Springer.
- Nahar, M. A. (2020). Gravity of rural-urban migration and its impact on Bangladesh. *The Financial Express*. <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/analysis/gravity-of-rural-urban-migration-and-its-impact-on-bangladesh-1579272481>
- Qin, H., & Flint, C. G. (2012). Integrating Rural Livelihoods and Community Interaction into Migration and Environment Research: A Conceptual Framework of Rural Out-Migration and the Environment in Developing Countries. *Society & Natural Resources*, 25(10), 1056–1065. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2012.656184>
- Rahman, M. Z. (2003). Urban policy in Bangladesh: the state, inequality and housing crises in Dhaka City. <https://doi.org/10.11575/prism/16420>
- Ritchie, H., & Roser, M. (2018). Urbanization. *Our World in Data*. <https://ourworldindata.org/urbanization>
- Shameem, M. I. M., Momtaz, S., & Rauscher, R. (2014). Vulnerability of rural livelihoods to multiple stressors: A case study from the southwest coastal region of Bangladesh. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 102, 79–87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2014.09.002>
- Tacoli, C. (2015). Urbanisation, rural-urban migration and urban poverty. *International Institute for Environment and Development*.
- Ullah, S. M. A., Asahiro, K., Moriyama, M., & Tani, M. (2021). Socioeconomic status changes of the host communities after the Rohingya refugee influx in the southern coastal area of Bangladesh. *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4240. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084240>



Figure 15: Man carrying a wicker basket, on the markets of Old Dhaka. Own picture.