

Erasmus University Rotterdam



Master Thesis

The Impact of Environmental Changes:

Sri Lankan Migration Patterns to the Netherlands

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of Sri Lankan migrants in the Netherlands regarding the role of environmental changes in their migration trajectories. While economic and political factors have been extensively studied as reasons for migration, the potential influence of environmental changes has received less attention. By focusing on the Sri Lankan diaspora in the Netherlands, the interplay and impact between environmental changes, migration, and remittances to countries of origin can come to light.

Using a qualitative approach, interviews were conducted with Sri Lankan migrants in the Netherlands to gather their perspectives on environmental changes and their migration decisions. The findings reveal that while migrants did not perceive environmental changes as the primary reason for their migration, these changes did subconsciously impact their overall migration trajectories. Economic and political factors were found to be intertwined with environmental changes, influencing the decision to migrate.

Furthermore, financial remittances, such as monetary support and goods, were frequently sent back to help alleviate the loss of skilled labour and increasing poverty. Social remittances, consisting of ideas, social capital, and identities, were also exchanged between Sri Lanka and the Netherlands, contributing to the preservation of cultural ties and aiding in tackling environmental issues.

Overall, this study highlights the complexity of migration decisions and the need to consider multiple factors, including environmental changes, in understanding migration trajectories. It emphasises the significance of remittances in addressing environmental change and suggests that policymakers and politicians can play a crucial role in engaging with the social discourse surrounding remittances to develop effective strategies for addressing environmental challenges. The study also suggests avenues for future research, including

exploring the perceptions of environmental migration among other demographics and internal migration within Sri Lanka.

Key terms: *environmental migration, transnationalism, diaspora communities, remittances, adaptation*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Sri Lanka and environmental change

Sri Lankan migration to Europe has increased significantly over the past few years, with many individuals seeking better economic opportunities and living conditions abroad (Jayawardena, 2020). Looking at Sri Lanka as a country of origin, multiple waves of migration have been observed over time. An enormous group of migrants migrated during the Sri Lankan civil war (McGilvray, 2006), while a more recent wave saw an influx of student migrants looking for a better quality of life and job opportunities (Weeraratne et al., 2022). Both waves have gotten plenty of coverage within academia, with the lion's share of research being focused on these phenomena. However, thanks to these groups of migrants being put front and centre in the academic spotlight, there is less room to pay attention to non-economic or political factors that may also influence the decision to migrate. This creates the problem that there might be a separate wave of migration, spurred on by different migration stimulants, which currently is moving under the academic radar. Current migrants are labelled a migrant category which they may not represent (Collyer & de Haas, 2012), and in order to find the right category, an expanded amount of attention from researchers is required.

As an island nation with close proximity to the equator, Sri Lanka has developed distinct tropical geographical characteristics. While these characteristics have ensured that Sri Lankans have gotten to experience a tropical climate with a wide variety of flora and fauna (Kottawa-Arachchi & Wijeratne, 2017), these are also the same characteristics that make Sri Lanka more prone towards significant environmental challenges. These challenges include but are not limited to the gradual rise in sea level and an increasing frequency of extreme weather events tied to the climate (Kuleshov et al., 2014). The problem of environmental change shows no signs of slowing down (Kemp et al., 2022) and acts as a catalyst that gradually produces more and more changes within the environment (Turner et al., 2020). Secondary by-products, like

floods and droughts, may lead to a growing number of inhabitants leaving Sri Lanka in search of greener pastures. Hence, next to economic and political migration reasons, the growth in migrants may be partly related to the aforementioned environmental changes and the consequential loss of income (Guyot, 2021; Ukwatta, 2010). Therefore, it is vital to look at environmental changes within Sri Lanka to help understand what their impact is on the country and its citizens.

Environmental change can be classified as a '*wicked problem*'. This symbolises that environmental change is a highly complex topic, consisting of many rapidly changing issues of different sizes (Levin et al., 2012). At heart, more minor problems morph into one prominent global issue (Perry, 2015) that does not know one solution, making environmental change a challenging problem to solve. Thus, as the impacts of environmental change continue to worsen, humans need to find solutions to cope with this problem. In their search for a solution, an increasingly large population segment considers migration as one potential solution (McLeman & Gemenne, 2018). This solution of turning to migration is also adopted by inhabitants of Sri Lanka and the south of Asia (Grote et al., 2006; Maharjan et al., 2020).

1.2. The call from Sri Lankans across borders

Although environmental change is prevalent, it is not the only event Sri Lankans are experiencing (Jakob, 2022). Globalisation is a recent phenomenon that has significantly influenced Sri Lanka in several ways. Global trade and economic growth have increased the demand for natural resources, which has led to the exploitation of natural environments and the degradation of local ecosystems (Sanderson, 2009). Thanks to increasing fluidity between countries (Wonders, 2006), people are able to migrate across borders in search of new sources of livelihood. When migrants acquire these new sources, they do not forget their country of

origin and the social network that was left behind. Many Sri Lankans that reside abroad send back money and goods to improve the quality of life in Sri Lanka, which may lead to the reduction of initial incentives for migration (de Haas, 2007; Ratha, 2007). A continued commitment to preserving strong social ties across international borders can thus have a direct impact on current international migration within Sri Lanka.

While Sri Lanka is already struggling with sizeable political unrest and poverty (Chattoraj, 2022), these may not be the only reasons that lead to the final decision to migrate. With other emigration incentives, like environmental factors, constantly being part of the collective discussion of the eventual diaspora community (Awori et al., 2015), non-migrants will be more likely to examine these stimuli and take them into account in the future (McMichael et al., 2020). This may lead to more migration or an increase in reducing migration triggers.

2. Problem statement & research questions: The Sri Lankan Diaspora within the Netherlands

Due to the notoriety of environmental change as a global issue, environmental migration has gained widespread attention in recent years from intergovernmental organisations and academics (Apap, 2021). With this form of migration becoming a more pressing global concern (Apap, 2021; Gemenne & Blocher, 2017), academics are increasingly studying this subject, and as a consequence, are asked to provide thorough research that can help policy or lawmakers in their respective fields. For example, not every group of migrants affected by environmental factors has the recognition that environmental factors have played a role in their migration. Not all interplay factors are acknowledged, in turn influencing the accessibility of social assistance for environmental migrants (de Jong & de Valk, 2020).

Therefore, there is still much to gain in understanding how interplay factors work regarding environmental migration. Conducting extensive research on all reasons for migration should thus be helpful for the future, especially because environmental change and globalisation will only lead to more migrants (Jakob, 2022).

The vast intranational network of Sri Lankan migrants in the Netherlands (and Europe) presents a unique opportunity to study a migrant group that is underrepresented in the sciences. By gaining insights into the experiences of environmental migrants and coupling this with the academic framework present within this study, the gathered knowledge can be translated into the real world through policy documents and treaties (Golverdi, 2021). By giving policymakers the knowledge to see 1) how environmental migration is perceived by migrants and 2) by witnessing the impact previously migrated citizens have on countries of origin, better policy can be written that improves the treatment of migrants in countries of arrival and at the same time takes into account the influence of citizens abroad in countries of origin.

Therefore, this research will focus on answering the research question, "*How do Sri Lankan migrants in the Netherlands perceive environmental changes to have affected their migration trajectories?*". For instance, there has been some research on West- and Northern African migrants and their perception of how environmental changes shaped their migration trajectory (De Longueville et al., 2020; Van Praag et al., 2021), but this research has found that they did not perceive environmental change to have much of an impact on their migrant process (Ou-Salah et al., 2022). Looking at migrants from a different region with lots of environmental change, like South Asia, and comparing the findings of migrant identity can expose the differences in culture and the differences in severity of environmental changes between different diaspora communities (Afifi et al., 2016; Zickgraf, 2019).

Furthermore, with many migrants from diaspora communities maintaining close social ties with their country of origin (Ullah et al., 2022), migrants within the Netherlands can still influence Sri Lanka from afar. As previously mentioned, migrants commonly send back remittances in the form of money to their social network in Sri Lanka (Siddique et al., 2012). How these remittances are used within the social network back in Sri Lanka can show the added value of migration and diaspora communities in the country of origin. These remittances can, for instance, help diminish the environmental changes that exist in Sri Lanka, leading to less environmental migration. Therefore, the following sub-research question has been formulated, focusing on how current citizens from Sri Lanka within the Netherlands affect Sri Lanka and its environmental changes: *“Do the remittances from the diaspora community help tackle environmental migration within the country of origin?”*. Answering this research question can help determine which adaptation strategies are used by transnational migrants to deal with environmental changes in their country of origin (Jha et al., 2017). By shining a light on the prevalence of remittances between Sri Lanka and the Netherlands, the influence that diaspora communities still have can be better explained.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. Environmental migration

Recently, there has been much political discourse surrounding the right way to categorise migrants, especially environmental migrants (Apap, 2021). Over time, a long-lasting myth has formed that states that different types of migrants are easily distinguished from each other. However, this is often not the case, with multiple different migration reasons adding up to the final decision to migrate. Migrants can, for instance, be categorised as environmental migrants even if they have economic reasons to migrate. For current migrants, environmental

factors such as droughts or floods can lead to economic hardship, pushing people to migrate in search of better opportunities (Afifi, 2011). There is causality between reasons for migration (Boas et al., 2019). Moreover, the effects of environmental change can be so pervasive and long-lasting that they fundamentally alter the initial reasons for people's migration aspirations (Van Praag & Timmerman, 2019). Consequently, most migrants do not fit into one migration category.

Within migration studies, there has been an increasing focus on migration caused by environmental changes. This type of migration is called *environmental migration*. While there has been much debate about the definition (Dun & Gemenne, 2008), environmental migration can be summarised as referring to ‘*the movement of people from one place to another due to environmental changes or degradation*’ (Black et al., 2011; McLeman & Gemenne, 2018). While environmental migration has found new interest within the social sciences, environmental migration in civilisation has been around for a while. Throughout history, people have been forced to migrate due to numerous environmental factors such as droughts, floods, and hurricanes (Boano et al., 2008). Thanks to these environmental changes, the number of environmental migrants is expected to rise. This increase in environmental migration will have significant social, economic, and political implications for both countries of origin and countries of destination (Perry, 2015).

Many organisations and scholars have tried to define environmental migration in an encompassing way. The definition used by the International Organization for Migration follows as the “*movement of persons or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are forced to leave their places of habitual residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move within or outside their country of origin or habitual residence*” (IOM, 2019). However, this does not mean that migrants identify and categorise

themselves as environmental migrants (Van Praag & Timmerman, 2019). Within African migrant communities, many migrants have had to migrate from their homes, which has partly been due to environmental change. Nevertheless, as seen in Morocco, migrants rationalise their migration as being set in motion thanks to economic reasons, while in reality, these economic reasons for migration were caused by the culmination of environmental changes over time (De Longueville et al., 2020; Van Praag et al., 2021, 2022). Because of this lack of identification, a perceived environmental migrant identity is absent within these communities (Boas et al., 2019).

While there are a lot of different environmental changes, some changes are more relevant to Sri Lankan migrants. Manifestations of environmental change like floods and droughts have already been discussed, but looking at a more artificial change like *environmental degradation* can help with finding specific reasons for why people move (Stoecker, 1991). Environmental degradation is a determinant that can lead to environmental migration. Environmental degradation refers to the deterioration of the environment, mainly due to human activities, such as deforestation, pollution, and overgrazing (Suhrke, 1994). Therefore as the environment becomes less habitable, people may be forced to move in search of better living conditions (McAdam, 2010; Suhrke, 1994). For instance, in Sri Lanka, desertification is causing people to migrate to urban areas for employment and better living conditions (George & Jettner, 2016). Next to human influence, environmental change can be a catalyst that enhances environmental degradation (Konikow, 2011).

Within South Asia, these hazards have caused significant damage to infrastructure, homes, and agricultural land, which affects people's quality of life (Grote et al., 2006; Sekovski et al., 2012). When people's socioeconomic status drastically changes, they will try to find a solution to keep them satisfied with their way of living (Chowdhury et al., 2012). This threshold for life satisfaction is influenced by cultural beliefs and social patterns (Cohen & Sirkeci, 2011)

and differs within every individual and culture. When the decreased standard of living cannot be raised in the current environment thanks to too many environmental changes, people will logically look to move (Chowdhury et al., 2012; Mörner, 2023).

Environmental migration significantly impacts the migrants and the communities they leave behind. The experience of leaving their homes can be traumatic and lead to a loss of livelihoods, social networks, and cultural identity (Gemenne & Brücker, 2015). Moreover, migrants often face discrimination and marginalisation in their new communities (Reis, 2004). For communities left behind, environmental migration can lead to the loss of skilled labour and exacerbate poverty and social inequality (Biao, 2007; Nguyen et al., 2006). Therefore many migrants send remittances home to help their stuck relatives and family survive (Biao, 2007; Nguyen et al., 2006), but these remittances are also used to decrease environmental migration reasons. This can be seen in countries with many floods, like Bangladesh, where money from remittances is used to build dams or water-resistant shelters (Banerjee et al., 2016; Giannelli & Canessa, 2022).

3.2. Asian diasporas in Europe

Throughout history, humans have behaved in a herd-like manner when it comes to migration (McNeill, 1984). When people move across borders, they tend to flock towards people that share a similar culture or ethnic background. In this way, communities of people with considerable traces from their countries of origin are formed within foreign destinations. (Wayland, 2004). Within the Netherlands, next to communities made up of European and African labour migrants (Ferguson et al., 2016; Mohamoud & Osman, 2008), some of the largest diaspora communities consist of migrants from Asia (Amersfoort, 2004; Reeves, 2013).

These *diasporas* have been the basis for much academic research (Guyot, 2021; Jayawardena, 2020; Reis, 2004), as well as increasingly loaded social discourse (Sinatti & Horst, 2015).

South Asian diasporas, including the aforementioned Sri Lankan diaspora, have become a meaningful part of the Dutch landscape (Oonk, 2007). Diaspora refers to *'the dispersion or scattering of a group of people from their original homeland to other parts of the world, often due to political, economic, or social reasons'* (de Haas et al., 2019). Many new citizens of the Netherlands thus migrate to flee from hazards in their country of origin, like political persecution or economic struggles (Black et al., 2011). Migration was used as an adaptation strategy to overcome the hardships migrants were facing. However, the Sri Lankan diasporas in the Netherlands still face several challenges here, including cultural, linguistic, and economic barriers (Jayawardena, 2020), which create difficulties for integration.

The diaspora experience can thus be challenging, as migrants may face discrimination, cultural shocks, and difficulties with assimilating into the new society. This leads migrants to perceive themselves as outsiders (Bagnoli, 2007). This led to the formation of transnational communities, where migrants in diaspora communities push to maintain strong links with their homeland while also integrating into the host society (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). The Sri Lankan diaspora in the Netherlands is a prime example of such a transnational community. In the post-independence era of colonial rule, Sri Lankan migration increased due to political instability and civil unrest (Chattoraj, 2022), with many Sri Lankans sending remittances back to provide for their remaining families back home (Siddique et al., 2012).

Hence, the history of the diaspora experience of Sri Lankans has been shaped by political conflicts (Orjuela, 2008) and continuing efforts to maintain their cultural identity in the host country (Fuglerud, 2001). However, diaspora communities are not just passive recipients of the host culture but also active agents who influence both the host and home

societies (de Haas et al., 2019). Theories on transnationalism (de Haas et al., 2019; Glick Schiller et al., 1992) can help us understand the challenges faced by the Sri Lankan diaspora, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination, which lead Sri Lankan immigrants to form an outsider perspective (Bagnoli, 2007; Jayawardena, 2020).

3.3. *Financial and social remittances*

For centuries, migrants have been sending back *financial remittances* to help out the network they have left behind (Esteves & Khoudour-Castéras, 2011). These financial remittances, which consist of money and goods, are usually used to help their family and friends' economic or social status back home. As previously stated, financial remittances are a huge beneficiary for wealth within countries with large numbers of migrants like Sri Lanka (Biao, 2007; Cohen & Sirkeci, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2006). While financial remittances are mainly intended to be beneficial on an individual basis, remittances can be used to help in a collectivistic way by receiving parties (Amadea, 2022), like in Bangladesh, where money from financial remittances is used to build dams and water-resistant shelters (Banerjee et al., 2016; Giannelli & Canessa, 2022). Remittances can also increase the accessibility to education (Aregbeshola, 2022), which in turn helps spread more knowledge about environmental change. Financial remittances can thus be a massive contributor to combat environmental migration and changing the values and beliefs within a country (Ullah et al., 2022).

Next to financial links, diaspora members try to maintain social links with their homeland. Partially thanks to the outsider perspective (Bagnoli, 2007), where migrants are scared not to be accepted by the host county, migrants keep robust social ties with their network back in the country of origin. In the modern age, social ties are usually kept up via text messages or video calls, enhancing the strength of social ties (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). In this way,

next to receiving financial remittances, the network also receives *social remittances*. Social remittances consist of norms, values, behaviours, and attitudes migrants have formed within their new host society (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011), which they send back via contact with their network. Social remittances ‘offer a rich source of insider knowledge on migration that is discrete and unofficial’ (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014), which can influence the mindset of the receiving party.

In many Tamil diasporas, community members either adopt a ‘traditional’ or a ‘revolutionary’ stance (Fuglerud, 2001). The traditional stance is rooted in tradition while embracing the nomadic lifestyle of Tamil migrants. In contrast, the revolutionary stance is fixated on the past, not considering the new culture of the destination country. Therefore, this stance forms the basis for Tamil isolation from the host culture. Sri Lankans with the traditional stance can thus influence the lives of non-migrated Sri Lankans by talking about their experiences and beliefs. In the case of environmental migration, by talking about environmental change and ways to combat it, citizens within Sri Lanka can be triggered to combat factors that positively influence environmental migration (Musah-Surugu et al., 2017).

3.4. Migration as an adaptation strategy

Looking at the migration trajectory as a whole, the process of migration has different catalysts which can lead to the movement of people from one place to another. For example, this process can be voluntary or forced (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018) and can be influenced by factors different from the environment, including economic, social, and political factors (de Haas, 2021; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Many of the eventual reasons for migration come down to how the ingrained ‘*cultural beliefs and social patterns*’ within communities of origin influence people’s willingness to move. Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) dubbed this the *culture of migration*

with migrants, for instance, using migration to raise their individual quality of life, and also the quality of life of the network they left behind. The opposite can also be true, with these cultural beliefs and traditions limiting the amount of willingness to move in certain cultures (Heering et al., 2004).

Therefore, this culture of migration can also explain why migration can be an adaptation strategy for environmental migrants. By moving to new locations, they can avoid the impacts of environmental factors such as drought, flooding, or other natural disasters (Black et al., 2011; Gemenne & Brücker, 2015). Migration can also provide environmental migrants access to new resources, such as better shelter, food supplies, or employment opportunities (Adger et al., 2020). Looking at some countries that have heavily undergone climate and environmental change, like Morocco and Senegal, not all remittances have necessarily been used as an adaptation strategy (Van Praag et al., 2022). In addition, many citizens of these countries do not correlate environmental factors with their migration, focusing mainly on economic reasons (De Longueville et al., 2020; Van Praag et al., 2021).

Shifting the perspective to Sri Lanka, a study by Mörner (2023) examined the relationship between environmental change and migration in the context of areas which experience a high level of sea rise and extreme coastal weather. They found that migration was often used as an adaptation strategy by individuals and households who experience environmental stress, such as floods. It also highlighted the importance of social networks and support systems in facilitating migration as an adaptation strategy. People that already knew diasporas were more likely to mobilise and migrate (de Sherbinin et al., 2022).

It does need to be brought to attention that migration is not one fluid, singular process (Carling & Schewel, 2018). When people use migration as a form of adaptation to the negative external factors they experience in life, their first instinct may not be to move abroad. This is

conceptualised in the fragmented migrant journey (Collyer, 2010), which posits that the experience of migration is not a singular, linear path but rather a complex and multifaceted process characterised by various stages, challenges, and transformations. For instance, many migrants make use of transit migration, which comes down to the fact that migrants migrate to one place temporarily with the belief of continuing their journey at a later time (Collyer & de Haas, 2012). How temporary the migration usually is, has to do with the experiences faced during the fragmented journey, which include economic hardships, cultural differences, and social exclusion (Collyer, 2010). The theory underscores the importance of understanding the complex and interconnected aspects of migration, providing a more nuanced framework for comprehending the diverse realities faced by migrants around the world. Suppose environmental changes are thus significant enough within the fragmented journey. In that case, they will affect the aspirations of Sri Lankans to move further, which in turn can lead to trans-border migration (Van Praag & Timmerman, 2019).

4. Research design

This research investigates the experiences and perspectives of individuals who migrated from Sri Lanka to the Netherlands. The study is exploratory by nature because Sri Lankan environmental migration to the Netherlands is a novel research theme with limited existing literature (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, data collection was entirely done through interviews, with the findings being used to develop more focused and hypothesis-driven research in the future.

4.1. Data collection

For this research, the primary method of data collection is conducting face-to-face interviews. Within a case study, this is the most optimal data collection method. Interviews can

focus directly on one particular case, like the Sri Lankan migrants, and have the benefit of providing original and illuminating data regarding the case study (Yin, 2009). In short, interviews allow for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. With qualitative interviews having the quality of spawning targeted and insightful data for academic and societal use (Peters & Halcomb, 2015), interviews have a preference over other qualitative data-collecting methods.

When selecting the type of interview, the decision was made to utilise semi-structured interviews. This means that participants had to answer open-ended questions, which should provide a more detailed and nuanced response from the interviewee in comparison to closed questions (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are less formal, helping participants feel more at ease, which can lead to acquiring more knowledge-rich answers from participants (Yin, 2009). A semi-structured template also allows more leeway in pursuing new questions during the interview process. New questions can be formulated depending on the participant's answers, regardless of already established questions on the topic guide (Price, 2002).

The final interview guide (see Appendix) consists of self-made questions uniquely formulated for this case study and theoretically inspired questions from topic and interview guides used throughout previous research on migration and diaspora communities. Thus, the interview guide is partly built up from already existing data. This strategy reduces the danger of biases thanks to omitting poorly constructed questions (Yin, 2009) while simultaneously increasing the internal validity of the measured constructs (Roberts & Priest, 2006). Ultimately, it was decided to use the following two articles to construct the ideal interview guide: '*A Qualitative Study on How Perceptions of Environmental Changes are Linked to Migration in Morocco, Senegal, and DR Congo*' by Van Praag, Lietaer & Michellier (2022), and '*Migrants and Borders - Interviews Guideline*' by Quiminal (2009).

Before the interviews were conducted, an ethics checklist was formulated to ensure that the final research considers and follows the correct set of ethical principles. This checklist also includes an informed consent statement for possible participants. The final list had to be approved by my supervisor before data could be collected.

4.2. Sampling methods

Moving on towards the actual data sample, the sampling method used for this research is purposive sampling. For purposive sampling, the sampling approach is based on selecting participants who possess specific criteria pertaining to the research topic. (Etikan, 2016). In this research, the population consists of migrants from Sri Lanka residing in the Netherlands. Therefore, the sampling strategy was to focus on migrants that migrated from Sri Lanka to the Netherlands and were willing to share their experiences. A minimal requirement of ten to twelve interviews was needed to collect a significant dataset. The interview participants were initially selected via contact through a network of second or later-generation migrants who study Tamil at a Tamil-Dutch language school in the Netherlands. Participants were also gathered via Facebook groups for Dutch-based Sri Lankan migrants and several NGOs with close ties to development in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan diaspora within the Netherlands. Therefore, the final collected sample eventually consists of 1) family members of the students in the Tamil language school, 2) Sri Lankan migrants who were not previously accessible because of their exclusion from the initial search parameters but were found through snowball sampling within this school, and 3) respondents from the Facebook group.

Regarding the selection criteria of the sample, at first, only first-generation migrants from the population were chosen to be a part of the research. During the collection stage, the final sample consisted solely of first-generation migrants. Therefore the second selection

criteria, which stated that second and further-generation migrants would be let into the sample pool if the initial sample size did not include enough willing participants, was deemed unnecessary. Furthermore, to answer the research questions while considering differences between variables like sex and age, the sample needed to consist of migrants between the age of 18 and 70, with at least two participants from each sex being included. Ultimately, this was achieved with participants falling between the ages of 32 and 62 and a spread of four women compared to seven men (see Table 1).

With the larger demographic of Sri Lanka being divided between multiple cultural demographics (Pfaffenberger, 1981), the complete sample needed to consist of at least participants from the two primary demographics, Tamil and Sinhalese. Ultimately, this was not reached, with all interviewees belonging to the Tamil ethnicity (see Table 1). Lastly, at least three participants needed to have lived in the Netherlands for more than 20 years. Most participants fell under this selection criteria, with only three participants having migrated earlier. In conclusion, all but one selection criterion was thus met during data collection.

Table 1*Overview of Respondents*

Interview	Current Age	Years since Migration	Sex	Ethnic Group	Religion	Place of birth
1	51	29	M	Tamil	Hindu	Kankesanturai
2	56	24	V	Tamil	Hindu	Kengalla
3	38	22	M	Tamil	Hindu	Makalam
4	32	10	V	Tamil	Hindu	Kopay
5	62	27	M	Tamil	Hindu	Vavuniya
6	53	24	M	Tamil	Hindu	Jaffna
7				Tamil	Roman Catholic	Kudathanai
	52	30	M			
8	39	12	M	Tamil	Hindu	Kilinochchi
9				Tamil	Roman Catholic	Jaffna
	39	16	V			
10	42	14	V	Tamil	Hindu	Puthukkudiyiruppu
11	52	25	M	Tamil	Hindu	Chunnakam

4.3. Descriptives

Ultimately, eleven interviews took place within the desired population between April and May 2023. Migration characteristics of the interviewees relating to sex, ethnic group, religion, age, and years since migration towards the Netherlands can be found in Table 1. A notable attribute of the sample of interviewees is that from the two major ethnic groups present within Sri Lanka, the Tamil and Sinhalese, all the respondents fall within the demographic of Tamil. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that no respondents were found that migrated less than ten years ago. This is in line with the migration statistics in the Netherlands that show a lower level of Sri Lankan migration towards the Netherlands during the last decade (AlleCijfers, 2022).

Some interesting observations were found regarding the descriptive variables relating to the remittances research question (see Table 2). At the time of arrival in the Netherlands, many respondents had to start from a low-paying job while being moderately highly educated. Participant 8 even acquired his doctorate in Sri Lanka, but to provide for himself, he has had to accept a less specialised job in a different sector. Many respondents are still on the lower end of the average monthly salary in the Netherlands.

Table 2*Economic Situation of Respondents*

	First job in NL	First income level in NL	Current job	Current income lvl	Completed Education
1	Production worker	1500 ^a	Foreman	2500 euro	General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level)
2	Housekeeper	0-500 ^a	Housekeeper	1300 euro	General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)
3	Stock clerk	3 ^b	Mechanic	3300 euro	MBO-3
4	Waitress	6 ^b	Housekeeper	800 euro	General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)
5	Metalworker	1700 ^a	Department chief	Almost 4000 euro	General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level)
6	Apple picker	Approx. 7 ^b	Quality analyser	2300 euro	General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level)
7	Transportation worker	Approx. 1600 ^a	Process operator	3500 euro	MBO-4
8	Call-centre employee	2400 ^a	Warehouse worker	2400 euro	PhD Political Sciences
9	Cleaner	400 ^a	Cleaner	2000 euro	General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)
10	Housekeeper	0-500 ^a	Housekeeper	1500 euro	General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level)
11	Warehouse worker	1500 ^a	Store clerk	2300 euro	General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)

^a euro a month

^b euro an hour

4.4. Data analysis

After the interviews had taken place and their audio was recorded, the data analysis process was started. In this last part of the methodological design, the collected raw data was transcribed into narrative documents, and these transcriptions were further analysed. To help make sense of the data, the qualitative analysis assist-software ATLAS.ti was used. This software rapidly finds structure in unstructured qualitative data (Konopásek, 2007) by coupling different data fragments together from the interview transcripts under shared codes and themes. Within the software, a mixed methods design was used to make sense of the data, opting between open and closed coding. Some codes were pre-formed from concepts from the theoretical framework and searching for these specific concepts within the transcriptions, while other codes were formed based on recurring intriguing data based on the research question (Creswell, 2014).

In the end, the final coding process went as follows: the process began with becoming familiar with the data through reading interview transcripts with an open mind and the pre-formed codes. Next, open coding created or refined initial codes and code properties. Following this, three transcripts were coded, and revisions and negotiations on codes and code structure were done by comparing existing and new codes. This process was repeated with five additional transcripts, making further revisions and negotiations along the way. Finally, a final code structure was created and applied to all transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2012). These final codes have the property of being presented clearly and concisely, highlighting the key themes and processes present within the transcriptions from the interviews (Konopásek, 2007) as well as relating to previously established theory.

During the coding of the data, a thematic analysis approach was used to categorise the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). After concluding this process, as is expected from a thematic analysis, specific key themes emerged. These key themes are the *initial migration*

process, the reasons for migration, and contact with the country of origin (see Appendix). Regarding self-proclaimed reasons for migration, four dominant migration categories were established from the interviews: *economic, political, cultural, and environmental*. All of these themes will be further discussed in the results section. Therefore, the final results consist of a stratified category of codes and themes which will be interpreted at the hand of the research questions. The results section uses direct quotes from the analysed data to showcase the prominent themes that were on display during the interviews. The interview excerpts in the final paper were slightly altered to enhance readability.

5. Results

5.1. Reasons for migration: A different perception of environmental change

With migrants having a plethora of reasons to migrate, it is crucial to establish what respondents themselves perceived as the main reason(s) to migrate from Sri Lanka. During the thematic analysis, it was found that there were four main categories of migration reasons: *family, political, economic, and environmental* migration reasons. During the interviews, the first three themes were extensively given as the main reason for migration by interviewees.

Family migration occurs when individuals move to reunite with their family members abroad to maintain established family connections or seek to establish new connections in the form of marriage. For some, family reunification was the main reason for migration:

‘He [my father] completed all kinds of procedures, got the Dutch nationality so he may work, and afterwards was able to apply for visas to let us get here as well.’ R3
(male, 38).

While for others, family establishment was the reason to move to the Netherlands:

'I came here for marriage. I did not know my husband at all and was set up with him by family. First time I saw him at the airport. Then we got to know each other for one year, and only after this did we get married.' R9 (female, 39).

The most prevalent form of migration found spread over the interviewees, *political* migration, is driven by reasons such as persecution, social inequality, or civil war, as people seek safety and a better quality of life abroad. After being asked what the main reason for migration is, answers like *'there is a war'* R8 (male, 38) or *'it is not equal [for different social groups in Sri Lanka]'* R5 (male, 62) were commonly used. All interviewees that migrated for political reasons emphasised how difficult it was for Tamil, and mainly young Tamil men, to live through this time. R7 (male, 52) worded it perfectly by saying:

'We had a very difficult time during the war. Every moment of life [for us] was extremely dangerous, so I had decided about a year and a half, two years in advance: I have to leave.' R7 (male, 52).

Respondent 6 also makes it abundantly clear that there is almost no way back to Sri Lanka for the Tamil that have migrated due to continuing persecution and the political struggle that is still present in Sri Lanka:

'But still, my name is within the Sri Lankan government and is sitting on a list. I cannot go back. I am banned. That means that the government thinks that I am still dangerous for the country. As a result, I cannot go back to Sri Lanka. Not yet. I have been 24 years in the Netherlands. I have yet to go back to Sri Lanka.' R6 (male, 53).

Economic migration primarily arises from the desire to escape poverty and find better job opportunities in more prosperous regions. R2 (female, 56) gives economic reasons as her primary motivation to migrate from Sri Lanka. After the death of her father at an early age and the economic troubles of her mother, she felt like she had to do something:

‘When we got bigger, we also needed to help my mother a bit. Because of that, I stopped my studies. I cannot continue because I also had to pay a lot for the study. Then I decided [to migrate]. My brother and my sister work there in Singapore. So I also want to go there and do the nice things and buy the nice stuff.’ R2 (female, 56).

The final reason for migration, *environmental*, is motivated by natural disasters like droughts or floods, compelling individuals to relocate to safer areas with improved living conditions. When probed with questions relating to the effect of environmental changes on their migrations process, interviewees vocalised that they had other problems to focus their attention on instead of the effects of environmental changes:

‘For me, then nothing. No time to think about the climate. Then just politics, run, grab some stuff, get out. It had been a different time.’ R1 (male, 51)

Next to this, respondents were unsure about the change of climate and the problems this would bring towards their environment. Comments like *‘there it is sometimes very hot, also sometimes not at all’* R4 (female, 32), *‘it is always hot, that is nice’* R5 (male, 62), and *‘I have not experienced [drought] myself’* R9 (female, 39). Thus, throughout the interview process, it quickly became apparent that most participants did not perceive environmental changes to have significantly affected their migration trajectory. The environmental changes written about in this research were not present for the participants while living in Sri Lanka. While getting a lot of *‘there were almost no real [environmental] changes’* R7 (male, 52), *‘there is only a normal climate’* R4 (female 32), and *‘I have not experienced [environmental changes] myself’* R9 (female, 39), the most damning evidence was found in the way R5 (male, 62) responded to questions about heatwaves and floods:

‘No, no, in Sri Lanka it is nice! No, it is here that you have the climate problem! ... There you have the best climate’ R5 (male, 62).

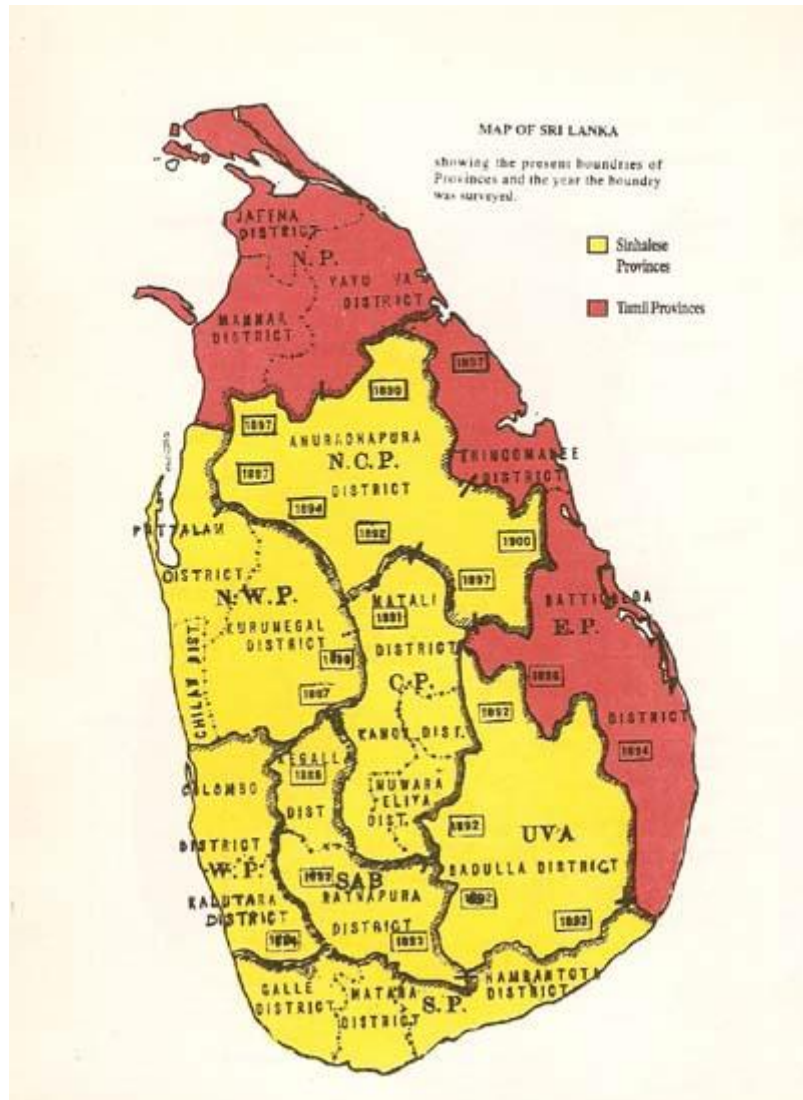
Interviewees did not perceive the climate, or the environmental changes, to have been an issue within their lives. Possible environmental changes were just an afterthought. That is to say, environmental changes in the sense that has previously been defined within this research. Interviewees from the diaspora community themselves have a different perception of environmental changes. Instead of being in the form of climate factors, like floods or droughts, they perceived them more as political issues which affect their environment. Due to the Sri Lankan civil war that raged through the country from the early eighties to only fifteen years ago, participants saw their environment disintegrate in front of their eyes:

'The war largely destroyed [the houses] anyway, so I think only about half is left.' R3
(male, 38).

For them, this was their form of environmental degradation. The population hit by these environmental issues created thanks to the civil war mainly consisted of Tamil Sri Lankans, the same embodiment as the sample group. Massive social inequality exists in Sri Lanka, especially between Tamil and Sinhalese. With the Tamil mainly living in the North and the Sinhalese in the rest of the country, the Sinhalese felt like the Tamil had the more prosperous parts of the country (see Figure 1.).

Figure 1.

Provinces of Sri Lanka divided between Tamil and Sinhalese



Note. Retrieved from Sri Lanka Guardian. (2009). The British demarcation of Tamil Homeland. Sri Lanka Guardian. <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2009/08/british-demarcation-of-tamil-homeland.html>

Social inequality was prevalent, with the Sinhalese ‘*sharing as little as possible and helping as little as possible*’ R3 (male, 38) during the civil war, and the Tamil, in turn, treating them differently during festivities:

‘*We sorted them because they are different.*’ R2 (female, 56).

A more serious accusation is that Tamil youth and labourers are being discriminated against in the number of opportunities they get:

‘This is a kind of abuse of the minority. You can study well, but you are a minority. I cannot study well, and I am majority, but I can suppress you. I should also give you a chance, but we do not get any chances.’ R7 (male, 52).

Next to this, Tamil citizens are being more regularly monitored by the Sinhalese government:

‘If I want to live there [Colombo], I have to do regular police registrations.’ R9 (female, 39).

Going even further, many respondents believe that they have been persecuted as terrorists by the Sinhalese majority. Most of their formative years have been spent being seen as less equal than their fellow citizens, which has had an enormous impact on their memories of daily life in Sri Lanka. It even goes as far as getting the feeling that the government is persecuting them for their ethnicity:

‘Yes, that’s the Sri Lanka government thinking: all Tamils are terrorists. However, it’s not just like that. We are just ordinary people. I was also a student at this time. I did not need to come because I was an engineering student there. Otherwise, I got a good job, but too bad. Nevertheless, now the good life is also here. But there is a government that thinks that all Tamil are terrorists. That’s the problem.’ R5 (male, 62).

This goes as far as taking away the land of some Tamil, which R3 (male, 38) formulates as *‘they take away our ground because if you take it away, then you show that we are no longer welcome’*. He clarified further in what way they are not meant to feel welcome by saying, *‘[they take our land] and then they are just going to put Buddhist statues everywhere without our approval, on our own land. We are actually being bullied by the government’*. Their culture

and religion get disregarded by the authorities. Therefore, many Tamils have fled Sri Lanka over the last 40 years.

While this political conflict and persecution for many is the main reason to migrate, the original struggle between the Tamil Tigers and the Sinhalese-led government was spurred on by the Sinhalese perception of the Tamil having better fisheries, farms, and land:

'Then this area is known for the shipment and planting of the rice. But this area [the Sinhalese] is coming. It is very good ground, but they come inside and say we are not allowed. Then we are arrested, and they take our land. Then my people start moving up. Away. They always think: 'My people are always the best; my people are the best'. Then other countries think that these people [Sinhalese] are here to stay, on our land. This civil war is a very big problem thanks to this and the help they get from China and India' R8 (male, 39).

Thus, when the Sinhalese people move towards the North, they primarily utilise a form of environmental migration. In contrast, the Tamil community tends to undergo a form of mobility that can be categorised as political migration when relocating themselves abroad to other nations.

5.2. Contact with Sri Lanka: The prevalence of remittances and transnational networks.

After migrating to the Netherlands, Sri Lankans keep in touch with the network of origin partially due to their continuous effort to send back financial and social remittances. Regarding financial remittances, every respondent except one sends back regular occurring financial remittances. Even though many participants were barely, or not even, making the minimum monthly income in the Netherlands when they arrived, or even now, they still send a very significant part of their disposable income back to their network in Sri Lanka. Financial

remittances range from 300 euro a month' to 4800 euro during a trip back home. This last quote comes from the only person who does not send back regular financial remittances, but he did return once to Sri Lanka to help and donate in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami:

'Last time I wanted to send 1200 [euro] ... it ended up being 4800 ... I was bankrupt when I got back' R7 (male, 52).

He was adamant about helping his country of origin, even if it had severe negative impacts on his quality of life. This shows his strong affection still towards Sri Lanka. Financial remittances are mainly used for food, clothes, and medication, but sometimes some miscellaneous stuff gets sent which is expensive or challenging to get in Sri Lanka:

'Yes, food, small things sometimes too, but mostly food. An air fryer also was sent last time.' R1 (male, 51).

Next to helping specific individuals, many interviewees directly tried to contribute to education within Sri Lanka:

'Yes, I also did that for a school another two years ago. For the school, there I gave materials. Chairs, tables, or the children can get books, pens, and school bags.' R3 (male, 38).

By helping with education, as some respondents do, more people learn about the world and the problems that dominate it, like environmental change. In the future, these students may find ways to decrease these 'wicked problems' in their country.

One crucial observation was made during the interviews: the incredibly close ties all respondents still have with Sri Lanka. When the topic of returning to Sri Lanka came up, some respondents were quick to express their desire to return home. R9 (female, 39) said, *'I really want to [go back]'* but that it is not possible for a lot of them:

‘Yes, I am afraid [to return]. I actually have this fear ...That’s why [I] say no, next year, but I want to go back.’ R5 (male, 62).

This mostly came from the persecution and inequalities they experienced while living in Sri Lanka. Next to this physical desire to return, all interviewees have at least weekly contact with their network back in *‘their home’* R10 (female, 42). This ranges from video calls to text messages. WhatsApp texts are the most common, with contact with family being *‘almost every day’* R3 (male, 38) or *‘daily’* R2 (female, 56), and contact with less close family and friends being *‘at least once a week’* R9 (female, 39). This frequent contact is explained by the proclamation that:

‘I have no girlfriends here at all. Lived here for sixteen years, and I have no girlfriends at all. My girlfriends are all outside Europe, say, in England or Canada or Sri Lanka. We still have from that time a reunion group from school.’ R9 (female, 39).

She left her whole network behind and has had the feeling of being an outsider within the Netherlands. Furthermore, some respondents felt extreme nostalgia towards Sri Lanka:

*‘Because we are a really cosy country. Not so cold, always nice weather. Always after five o'clock school is finished. In the village, we go sit in one place [with my friends]. That's another life *laughter*. There you can really live differently.’ R5 (male, 62).*

During the calls or texts, most contact is about *‘the usual’* R4 (female, 32) with simple questions like *‘How are you? How is life there’* R9 (female, 39), but there is also daily talk about the problems they face in the Netherlands or Sri Lanka and how to fix them. Next to this, environmental change is an issue that is frequently talked about like R2 (female, 56) saying that it is *‘very warm and dry there at the moment’*, but this is not an issue they can fix according to them but mainly the government:

'Government must do better without corruption. More than \$20 billion stolen from the treasury in the last 20 years. And that is people's money. That's why there is economic crisis, it's because of corruption. Without corruption, just normal democratic life then, Sri Lanka can get better very quickly. Economy, study, and medication. Everything can get much better.' R7 (male, 52).

However, they do advise people back home where the best doctors, schools, and houses are:

'Finally, I say: okay, maybe this time when it is better, just go there because that medicine there is better.' R7 (male, 52).

In this way, their social beliefs still impact the lives of their network in Sri Lanka. Thus, Sri Lankan migrants maintain strong connections with their home country through regular financial remittances and frequent communication with their networks. These transnational networks serve as a vital support system and as a means to influence positive change in Sri Lanka.

6. Conclusion

During the research, interviews were conducted to see if migrants from the Sri Lankan diaspora in the Netherlands perceived environmental changes to have influenced their trajectory to migrate. Furthermore, specific attention was given to remittances and whether they were a helpful tool in using migration as an adaptation strategy to tackle environmental changes in Sri Lanka.

Two main results came out of the findings. First, Sri Lankan migrants did not perceive environmental changes themselves to be a reason for their migration, which follows other empirical research (De Longueville et al., 2020; Ou-Salah et al., 2022; Van Praag et al., 2021).

Environmental factors such as droughts, floods, and hurricanes (Boano et al., 2008) or environmental degradation (Suhrke, 1994), were not seen as reasons to migrate for themselves. Instead, political or economic reasons were predominantly given as reasons to migrate, arguing that their minimum level of quality of life was in danger (Chowdhury et al., 2012). However, when gradually asking more about their migration trajectories, political and economic catalysts for migration were found to be intertwined and slightly impacted by environmental changes in the case of the Sri Lankan diaspora. While Sri Lankan migrants thus did not perceive environmental changes to have affected their migration trajectory themselves, environmental changes did have a significant impact on their migration decision-making.

Second, moving on to returning remittances from the diaspora communities, both financial and social remittances are incredibly prevalent within the Sri Lankan diaspora within the Netherlands. Financial remittances are frequently sent back to help compensate for the loss of skilled labour and the increasing poverty in social networks (Biao, 2007; Nguyen et al., 2006). This aligns with the adaptation strategy of financing infrastructure and consumption needs of the network that is left behind (Musah-Surugu et al., 2017). On the one hand, this is invigorating for Sri Lankans with a lower socio-economic status since the enhanced wealth raises their living conditions. However, the drawback is that network members living in Sri Lanka become heavily dependent on sent-back goods and money. A culture of migration focussed on financial remittances therefore also has negative aspects (Cohen & Sirkeci, 2011). At the same time, social remittances, which include ideas, social capital, and identities, are sent back and forth between Sri Lanka and the Netherlands, with these remittances becoming a significant part of the life of people that feel more like an outsider in the new host society (Bagnoli, 2007).

Due to the prevalence of social remittances within the Sri Lankan diaspora, the network within the native country gets a different perspective on societal issues like environmental

change. New beliefs and opinions might be formed, which can lead to a different way of addressing these issues (Black, Bennett, et al., 2011). Tamil migrants within the Netherlands take a traditional approach, combining their Tamil culture and the social ideas they picked up within the Netherlands to form a transnational community (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). Interviewees emphasise that they specifically donate money for schools and housing, with new houses being a short-term solution to environmental migration and environmental changes by providing protected and secure places of residence. At the same time, schooling is a long-term solution with improved education which provides the new generation with knowledge about environmental changes and the issues that arise from them. This aligns with the belief that more access leads to more prevalent action against environmental change (Aregbeshola, 2022), a traditional stance (Fuglerud, 2001; Pfaffenberger, 1981).

In conclusion, while the Sri Lankan diaspora in the Netherlands does not perceive nor categorise themselves as environmental migrants, it is shown that environmental changes have influenced the initial political and economic migration reasons. Therefore, it shows again that it is socially relevant not to put migrants into one migration category because the borders between reasons are extremely blurry (Apap, 2021; Zetter, 2007). Moreover, it highlights the significance of remittances in addressing environmental change outside of academia. Policymakers and politicians can make a change by engaging in the social discourse surrounding the reasons for financial and social remittances. By focusing on the collectivistic positive attributes of remittances from a governing viewpoint and linking up with diaspora communities, new solutions can be made to fight the ‘wicked problem’ of environmental change.

7. Discussion

7.1. Limitations and future research

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations within this research as they impact the reliability, validity, and generalisability of the research findings. First, there could be bias in the results due to the *specific ethnic composition* of the sample. With all respondents stemming from the Tamil demographic, a biased view of this migration trajectory was created. The researched demographic may have different reasons for migration in comparison with other demographics, thanks to for instance different perceived environmental changes. The current sample mainly lived in Northern cities like Jaffna and Vavuniya, which was more ravaged by bombings and riots during the civil war. With Sinhalese taking the land from Tamil, these other Sri Lankans may have experienced environmental changes themselves in their part of Sri Lanka, which led them to make these decisions.

Future research should therefore include another ethnic group present within the Netherlands, namely the Sinhalese migrants. During the research process, the aforementioned findings were predominantly derived from interviews with Tamil migrants. It is plausible that the Sinhalese community holds a distinct perception that might differ from the viewpoints presented in this research. Many Tamil migrants have severely negative opinions of the Sinhalese population due to perceived ethnicity and racial injustice, characterised by the removal of land from Tamil. There is, thus, a lot of interaction at play between these ethnic groups. By giving this other party a voice and incorporating their perspectives as Sinhalese migrants, a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the previously mentioned migration problems in Sri Lanka can be attained. This methodological expansion would ultimately enhance the validity and reliability of future research findings and contribute to formulating well-informed policies and interventions aimed at addressing the observed disparities and improving the overall well-being of Sri Lankans of different ethnic backgrounds.

The second limitation consists of a *limited migration scope*. This study focused on migration abroad, with all respondents as previously mentioned stemming from the persecuted Tamil ethnicity. However, during the data collection, it became apparent that environmental migration by Sri Lankans can also be internal as seen by the Sinhalese population moving from the southern to the northern part of the country. This first part of the environmental migration process of many migrants, internal migration, was not researched. Instead, all focus was put on migration abroad which is only one chunk of the broader migration trajectory. The movement of the Sri Lankan migrants was found to not go in one fluid motion, but instead consisted of stopping and going, like a fragmented journey. Especially for environmental migration, which is characterised by large amounts of internal migration (Chowdhury et al., 2012), there should be more attention put on this aspect of migration in future research concerning Sri Lanka (Collyer, 2010). By looking at this fragmented journey, and its accompanying migration categories (Collyer & de Haas, 2012), new research can be built upon the results found in this study regarding the environmental migrant identity of Sri Lankan migrants. At the moment, this research is lacking a valuable asset in understanding the Sri Lankan diaspora's migration trajectories by not taking this between-borders migration into account (Carling & Schewel, 2018).

These future studies aim to address the previously discussed limitations by focusing on more than one ethnic demographic and researching the fragmented journey of migrants, which includes between-borders migration.

7.2. Closing statement

In the end, our understanding of Sri Lankan environmental migration to the Netherlands is far from complete. Still, this study has made an excellent first step towards uncovering the wealth of knowledge that is buried within the migration trajectories of Sri Lankan migrants. It is witnessed that, even when departing your country of origin, one's impact on the country persists, and as this study comes to an end, it can hopefully have an impact on future research.

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Appendix

A. Interview information table

	Answer
Age	
Gender	
Completed Education(s)	
Place of birth	
Languages	
Religion	
Age of migration from Sri Lanka	
Age at time of arrival in NL	
Previous place of residence before NL (if relevant)	
First job in NL	
First income level per month in NL (0-500€, 500-1000€, 1000-1500€, 1500-2000€, 2000-2500€, 2500€+)	
Current job	
Current income level (0-500€, 500-1000€, 1000-1500€, 1500-2000€, 2000-2500€, 2500€+)	

B. Interview guide

1st part: Migration process

Can you tell me about your migration journey to the Netherlands?

How long did you spend preparing for the journey? Furthermore, with whom (people involved in the trip, people who helped organize the trip)?

Have other people in your household migrated? Why? Why not? Where to?

How did you finance the journey?

Did you have to change your route of travel during the journey? Did you have to change your plans regarding the initial destination?

When did you finally decide to leave?

Why did you decide on [that particular country/place (or here if it is the Netherlands)] instead of somewhere else?

Did you experience any problems during your migration? If so, what kind of problems?

If the respondent migrated directly to the Netherlands, continue to the second part. If not, continue here.

The following questions should be repeated for each destination in the fragmented journey:

Where did you go and why?

What was the situation at your destination?

Has your situation improved or worsened from the situation in your original community (or previous destination)?

Did you encounter any problems while you were there?

Did you know people before you arrived here? If so, who?

Why did you choose this place?

What were the main reasons you left this place?

Would you say that environmental issues were influential in your decision to migrate? Why yes/no?

Repeat the above questions if there are other destinations before the arrival in the Netherlands.

**2nd part: Reasons for moving (climate or non-climate related) and
The socio-economic profile of household of origin.**

Can you tell me something about the living situation in your community of origin before you left?

What did a typical day or week look like for you?

To what extent is climate change an issue in your region of origin?

What are local people's attitudes toward environmental problems in your region of origin?

To what extent are local authorities involved in addressing environmental problems in your region of origin?

How and to what extent did your economic situation deteriorate or improve in the five years before your migration?

What are the main problems facing people in your region of origin? [*If they cannot find answers, list possible problems, e.g., climate, political, economic reasons, etc.*]. Do these also apply to your household in your country of origin? Name them.

Can you tell me again how you came upon the idea of migrating?

Did you see a difference between people who live in urban areas and those who live in rural areas? Is there a difference in the problems they face?

Were there increased problems with your living situation in the five years before you left the country?

What reasons could you name that could lead to migration in Sri Lanka? [*If they cannot find answers, list possible problems, e.g., climate, political, economic reasons, etc.*].

What was the main reason you left? Were there other factors that contributed to the final decision to migrate? Do you think climate factors contributed to your eventual departure?

3rd Part: Impact of Migration on Communities of Origin

Do you stay in touch with your community of origin (visits, phone, etc.)? How often?
With whom do you have the most contact?

What is their situation today?

What do you talk about with your contacts in the country of origin?

What problems do they face?

Do you sometimes talk about climate change? In what ways?

Are you able to send your family/kin money? If not, why not?

If so, approximately how much per month and year? What are the main occasions and reasons you send money? If they suffer from environmental stress (or some other type of stress), do you send more?

Do you know what they mainly use these remittances for? [*housing, agriculture, education, food, etc.*] Are you sending the money for a specific purpose?

Can you help your community of origin with resources other than financial? If yes, how? If not, why?

Do you think your family is better or worse off because of your migration? Please explain why.

What are the main difficulties you and your family face today? How do you think you can improve these difficulties?

In what situation could you better help your community of origin?

Closing questions:

In your opinion, do you think climate factors ultimately contributed to your eventual departure from Sri Lanka?

Do you have any questions or comments of your own that you would like to share?

C. Information Letter

Information brochure English

Migration from Sri Lanka to the Netherlands

Introduction

Hello, my name is Dorian Pijnenburg, and I am doing research for Erasmus University Rotterdam. I am a master's student of International Sociology, and for my final thesis, I am researching the presence of environmental migration among Sri Lankans living in the Netherlands.

Below I explain this research. If you do not understand something or have questions, please ask me. While reading, you can mark within the text you have questions about.

If you wish to participate in the study, you can indicate this at the end of this form.

What is the research about?

The research focuses on whether climate and environmental factors and their associated impacts have influenced the migration of Sri Lankans to the Netherlands. This involves looking at possible changes in the climate and environment in Sri Lanka and how these changes have affected the lives of local people. It then examines whether these changes have contributed to the migration decision of Sri Lankans to the Netherlands. The research can focus on different aspects, for example, economic impacts, social factors and political instability.

Why are we asking you to participate?

We are asking you to participate in our research because your experiences as a migrant can help us learn more about the effects of climate change on people's migration patterns. Your unique experiences and perspectives as a migrant from Sri Lanka to the Netherlands can help us better understand how climate change affected your decision to migrate, what challenges you encountered, and how you adapted to life in a new country.

What to expect.

The examination takes about **1 hour**.

If you are participating in this study, you are participating in the following:

An interview:

I will come to your home / a mutually agreed upon location for one time. The conversation takes about 1 hour. If you do not want to answer a question during the conversation, it is not required. I will record the audio of the conversation. After the conversation, the audio fragment will be written out. Thus, the recording of the conversation is for transcription purposes only.

At the end of the interview/discussion, you will have the opportunity to return to your answers. If you disagree with my notes or if I misunderstood you, you may ask to have portions of them edited or deleted.

You choose whether to participate.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can stop at any time and without explanation.

What are the possible risks and inconveniences?

Personal questions about profound events you experienced during your migration to the Netherlands will be asked during the interview. These may trigger memories and emotions. You may therefore wish to invite a loved one, such as a good friend, to be present during the interview. Should you or your loved one need further help after the interview, please contact a specialized foundation that can support you, such as Slachtofferhulp Nederland (slachtofferhulp.nl, 0900-0101).

What information do I need from you?

I will save your information so that I can contact you. I also need other information from you for the study.

During the interview, the following personal data will be collected from you: name, age, gender, sound recordings, cultural background, ethnic background, feelings about your migration process, and your opinion about the migration process.

It is also possible that you will talk about your political affiliation and religious or philosophical beliefs and those of others, as these may also relate to your views on your migration.

Who can see your data?

- I store all your data securely.
- Only persons involved in the study can see (some of) the data. Only the principal investigator can access your confidential data, such as your name, address, phone number, etc.
- Recordings made are converted into text. Your name will be replaced with a made-up name.

- Data such as your direct personal data will be stored and deleted separately from your responses.
- We will write an article about the research results, which we may publish in journal articles and books. The results are available to everyone.
- We may use your specific answers in the article. If your answer is traceable to you or we like to mention your name, we will ask your permission first.

How long do I keep your data?

Your data will be kept for a minimum of 10 years. We keep the data so other researchers can verify that the study was conducted correctly.

The usage of your data for new research.

The data we collect about you may be helpful in anonymized form for educational purposes and future research, including very different research areas. We make the data publicly available. We ensure that the data cannot be traced back to you/we do not disclose anything that identifies you.

In addition, we ask you in the consent form to permit us to use your data again for follow-up or new scientific research. The data that are shared are pseudonymized.

What happens to the results of the study?

We publish the results on a website [<https://thesis.eur.nl/>] so interested parties can learn about the study.

Do you have questions about the survey?

Please contact me if you have **questions** about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, modifying, deleting, or updating your data.

Name: Dorian Pijnenburg
Phone number: +31642564221
email: 667802dp@student.eur.nl

Do you have a **complaint** about your privacy? Please email the Data Protection Officer (fg@eur.nl) or visit www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl. (T: 088 - 1805 250)

D. Codebook

Codebook for Sri Lankan migration to the Netherlands

* Codes in blue are the principal codes; codes under the main code are its sub-codes

1. The Initial Migration Process.

a. **Migration Process**

- i. Direct to the Netherlands
- ii. Indirect to the Netherlands
- iii. Set Path
- iv. No Set Path
- v. Troublesome Process
- vi. Simple Process

b. **Aspirations / Capabilities**

- i. Mobility
- ii. Voluntary Immobility
- iii. Acquiescent Immobility
- iv. Involuntary Immobility

2. Reasons for Migration.

a. **Political Migration**

- i. Demographic Differences
- ii. Civil War
- iii. Political Instability
- iv. Acts of Terrorism
 1. Persecuted
 2. Not-persecuted
- v. Social Inequality

b. **Economic Migration**

- i. Poverty
- ii. Sickness/Disability
- iii. Family Income Dependence
 - 1. Self-Sufficient
 - 2. Reliant
- iv. Family Wealth
 - 1. Affluent
 - 2. Impoverished

c. **Environmental Migration**

- i. Environmental changes
 - 1. Environmental changes present in migration
 - 2. Environmental changes are not present in migration
 - 3. Droughts
 - 4. Floods
- ii. Environmental migrant
 - 1. Aware of perception as climate migrant
 - 2. Not aware of perception as climate migrant

d. **Family Migration**

- i. Family Reunification
- ii. Family Inception

3. Contact from Diaspora.

a. **Financial Remittances**

- i. Helping Financially (money)
- ii. Not Helping Financially (money)

- iii. Helping Financially (goods)
- b. **Social Remittances**
 - i. Returning to Home Country
 - ii. Remitting Beliefs
 - iii. Receiving Beliefs
- c. **Diaspora**
 - i. Integration
 - ii. Separation
 - iii. Established Migrant Network in NL
 - iv. Nostalgia
 - v. Insider/Outsider Perspective

E. Ethical and privacy checklist



CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: "The Impact of Environmental Degradation: Sri Lankan Migration Patterns to the Netherlands"

Name, email of student: Dorian Pijnenburg, 667802dp@student.eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Lore Van Praag, vanpraag@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: Block 2

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES - NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?

(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - NO

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO) must first be submitted to an accredited medical research ethics committee or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - NO

2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - NO

3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - NO

4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES - NO

Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES - NO

The interview (and the questions used) might lead to the recollection of negative experiences regarding the migration trajectory participant have undertaken. This can lead to negative emotions within the participants.

Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES - NO

Racial or ethnic origin and political opinions will be collected to understand if there are other reasons that have led to the migration of participants, aside from environmental migration. Questions relating to these special categories will therefore be a part of the interview guide.

Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - NO

Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - NO

Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - NO

Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

During the collection of the interview samples, it may occur that participants will have recollections of their migration process. This can range from good to bad memories. These bad memories may induce stress. Therefore, at the beginning of the interviews, it is emphasised to each participant that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they can opt out at any moment, as well as not answer any question they do not feel comfortable answering.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

To ensure that participants in an interview do not have a negative experience, the following safeguards are used.

Participants will be informed that they can stop the interview at any time if they feel uncomfortable or want to withdraw their participation.

Additionally, participants will be provided with information about support services from university that they can access if they need additional assistance.

Finally, the interview process will be discussed with participants beforehand to ensure that they understand what is involved and feel comfortable with the process.

By implementing these safeguards, a safe and positive environment for participants will be created during the interview process.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

Some questions will dive deep into the migration process and history of the participant. For most participants, this is a traumatic and stressful time. Therefore, some questions relating to this experience may lead to negative emotions.

Also, some questions are about very personal details (political opinion, ethnic background). Some people may be offended by these questions, and it is therefore crucial to notify participants about these topics within the informed consent.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

Facebook groups for Sri Lankan migrants residing in the whole of the Netherlands, the network of Sri Lankan migrants that have joined NGO Stichting Nederland-Sri Lanka, and the network of people that take Dutch language courses at a Tamil-Dutch language school. Through snowball sampling, I will try to get into the social networks of respondents and find even more participants in that way.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

Ten to twelve individuals.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

Around seven thousand people, if I only consider first-generation migrants.

Taking into consideration all migrants (so from later generations) with an ethnic background from Sri Lanka, it would be around fourteen-thousand people in the Netherlands based on data from the Centraal Planbureau voor Statistiek (Alle Cijfers, 2023).

Migratie uit Sri Lanka en sri lankaanse inwoners in Nederland (update 2023!). AlleCijfers.nl. (2023, March 18). Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://allecijfers.nl/migratie-nationaliteiten-geboortelanden/sri-lanka/>

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

Digital data will be immediately stored after the interview is conducted will be stored on the hard drive of my laptop. Afterwards, data will be uploaded within a secure folder in Onedrive provided by Erasmus University, where only I have access to the raw data.

Physical data will be stored (temporarily) in a drawer in my desk which can be locked.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

I am responsible myself for the day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data with the help of OneDrive.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

Data will be backed-up daily in the digital database of OneDrive.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

Within the final thesis, some mention of personal characteristics (age, region of origin) that can point to a specific person will be made. Personal quotes used within the final research will therefore be carefully screened to ensure that data cannot be retraced to one specific individual. Considerations relating to what to include in the research will therefore always be made in favour of keeping someone anonymous.

Collected personal data will be anonymized by removing real names and using code names like 'participant 7'.

For audio logs, the beginning of the interview will not be recorded where participants give personal identification. When parts of the audio file still can specifically lead to one

individual, these parts will be kept within the original audio files but deleted in the written transcripts.

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Dorian Pijnenburg

Name (EUR) supervisor: Lore Van Praag

Date: 20-03-2023

Date: 23-03-2023

