

POLICY ARENA

ENVIRONMENTALLY INDUCED MIGRATION, VULNERABILITY AND HUMAN SECURITY: CONSENSUS, CONTROVERSIES AND CONCEPTUAL GAPS FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This Policy Arena examines the consensus, controversies and some conceptual gaps associated with how policy approaches environmentally induced migration and human security concerns associated with individuals displaced as a result of climatic variability. This introductory paper discusses the theme from a historical approach to policy analysis of the subject by looking at three main areas of policy concern. The trilogy of discord are related to first, the absence of recognised definition of this phenomenon; second, the disagreement over the number of environmental migrants; and third, the diverse legal perspectives. It is not a coincidence that these traditional three thematic issues should remain controversial as they each relate to one another; with no recognised definitions, no precise criteria can be set out to calculate the number of environmental migrants, and consequently, no rigorous legal framework can be implemented to deal with environmentally induced migration. Although recent research projects led by governments and international organisations have chosen to move beyond the question of terminology by providing crucial data on the topic, there is the need to arrive at some internationally recognised consensus on the three core issues linked to the topic of environmental migration in order to legitimise the field. Such a step will also facilitate policy efforts at addressing environmental migration at the national and international levels. Copyright © 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords: environmental migration; human security; legal frameworks for environmental migrants/refugees

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1 INTRODUCTION

The debate on the significance and effect of environmentally induced human migration and mobility on development is growing in importance within contemporary literature on international development (Black *et al.*, 2011). The ties between human migration and environmental changes can be traced back to the existence of humanity. Human kind has traditionally made use of migration as a strategy when confronted with environmental changes. Many historical examples of migration processes where human movements have taken place in part because of the role played by the environment or changes in the environment exist such as the Invasion of Europe by the Barbarians during the 4th century or more recently, the Dust Bowl, a drought episode which occurred during the 1930s and led to dust storms in the USA pushed large numbers of affected people out of their homes (Brown, 2008a). These events possessed an environmental factor which contributed to the displacement of people.

From the rise of industrialization up to the advent of globalisation, human activities, have throughout the years, had a strong impact on the earth's 'natural architecture'. Extensive research by the global scientific community such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) has revealed that anthropogenic climate change or climate change is having an increasingly destabilising impact on the relationship between man and nature. This new challenge is already directly modifying the livelihoods of people around the world (Assan and Kumar, 2009). Developing countries are more likely to be affected by these changes because of their vulnerability (Assan *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, environmental change will exacerbate the already existing development challenges which characterise these countries, creating additional obstacles to the fight against poverty and the achievement of social equality (CARE, 2009). Hence, migration could present itself as a gradually more attractive option for people to adopt in the face of climate change (Black *et al.*, 2011). Migration has been identified by social scientists and policymakers as one of the possible consequences of the impact of climate change on human populations (IPCC, 1990; Stern, 2006). It has been demonstrated through research on environmentally induced and forced migration that environmental change is an active component of this multi-faceted process (Piguet, 2011). Furthermore, some research points out that the extent of displacement because of environmental change could surpass all past population movements (Warner *et al.*, 2009).

The contemporary debate on environmentally induced migration and the human security implications is confronted with diverse controversies as well as some degree of consensus that this introduction would like to highlight. Three traditional areas of controversy lie at the core of the topic on environmentally induced migration. These trilogy of discord are related to first, the absence of recognised definition of this phenomenon; second, the disagreement over the number of environmental migrants; and third, the diverse legal perspectives. It is not a coincidence that these three thematic issues should remain controversial as they each relate to one another; with no recognised definitions, no precise criteria can be set out to calculate the number of environmental migrants, and consequently, no legal framework can be planned to deal with environmentally induced migration. Although recent research projects¹⁻³ led by governments and international organisations have chosen to move beyond the question of terminology providing crucial data on the topic, the three core issues linked to the topic of

¹<http://www.bis.gov.uk/foresight/our-work/projects/published-projects/global-migration/reports-publications>

²<http://www.adb.org/publications/addressing-climate-change-and-migration-asia-and-pacific>

³<http://wheretherainfalls.org/>

environmental migration remain and still need to be answered in order to legitimise the field of environmental migration.

This introduction will firstly explore the challenges which derive from the emergence of this new category. It will examine the issue of terminology regarding environmental change and migration, providing a brief overview of the evolution of definitions on the subject. Secondly, it will look at the problem of providing estimates of environmental migrants. Thirdly, it will examine the diverse legal perspectives of the debate.

1.1 The Evolution and Consensus Associated with a Controversial Concept

Attempts to define and conceptualise an internationally accepted and consistent definition for environmentally induced migration and the consequent displacement of people because of a severe environmental occurrence have been as controversial as the concept itself. The topic of migration caused by environmental change first came to the fore in the 1970s when Lester Brown from the World Watch Institute used the term of environmental refugees in several speeches he made (Gemene, 2006). However, it was when Essam El-Hinnawi coined the term environmental refugees in a paper he wrote for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that the concept really took some importance. Furthermore, the use of the term began to be increasingly widespread as it was employed during various international conferences such as the 1992 Rio Summit, or the 1997 Kyoto Conference on Climate Change, by distinguished officials and then by advocacy groups, NGOs and certain social scientists (Gemene, 2006). The concept was commonly employed although it was still not formally recognised by international law and received no official UN acknowledgment (Boano *et al.*, 2008).

El-Hinnawi made use of this term to describe ‘those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardised their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life’ (El-Hinnawi, 1985). The author describes environmental disruption as any physical, chemical and/or biological changes in the ecosystem (or resource base) that render it temporarily or permanently, unsuitable to support human life (*ibid*).

He wrote his paper with the idea of shedding light on the process of human displacement because of anthropogenic climate change and to underline the necessity of accommodating environmental refugees within international law (Bronen *et al.*, 2009). Within his definition, he distinguished between three different sorts of environmental refugees: ‘those temporarily dislocated due to disasters, natural or man-made; those permanently displaced due to drastic environmental changes, such as the construction of dams; and those who migrate as a result of the gradual deterioration of environmental conditions’ and in it a smaller group of those displaced because of conflict (El-Hinnawi, 1985).

In 1988 Jacobson also came up with a similar classification, calling environmental refugees:

- those displaced temporarily because of local disruption such as an avalanche or earthquake
- those who migrate because environmental degradation has undermined their livelihoods or poses unacceptable risks to health
- those who resettle because land degradation has resulted in desertification or because of other permanent and untenable changes in their habitat (Jacobson, 1989).

In 2001, Norman Myers generated a definition that shows the human security dimension and has also been widely quoted. He describes environmental refugees as

‘people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation and other environmental problems. In their desperation, they feel they have no alternative but to seek sanctuary elsewhere, however hazardous the attempt. Not all of them have fled their countries, many being internally displaced. But all have abandoned their homelands with little hope of a foreseeable return’ (Myers, 2001, p. 639).

Although El-Hinnawi’s definition is useful, it is vague in the sense that it does not allow for a differentiation between environmental refugees and other kind of migrants. More precisely it does not distinguish between those fleeing sudden disasters and those who leave because of gradual environmental degradation. The definition could apply to a large range of people rendering it less helpful (Bates, 2002). These definitions acknowledge and give a name to an unidentified phenomenon.

However, there has been widespread debates and criticism of these. They illustrate a trend in the field when the use of the term ‘environmental refugees’ was left unquestioned and played a role in the ensuing confusion surrounding the definition. A number of authors have since criticised and subsequently called for the term to be discarded (McGregor, 1993; Kibreab, 1994; Black, 2001). After El-Hinnawi’s (1985), Jacobson’s (1989), World Watch and Norman Myers’ works in which the term ‘environmental refugees’ was used unquestioningly, a number of scholars, such as JoAnn McGregor (1993), Gaim Kibreab (1994) and later Richard Black (2001) in what was then known as ‘Refugee Studies’ and later contestably referred to as ‘Forced Migration Studies’ called for the rejection of the contradictory term ‘environmental refugees’. There was intense and heated debate between the exponents of the two schools of thought in the early 1990s. However, despite the plethora of the literature, the debate has not substantially advanced since then.

The literature on the topic has subsequently taken two sides; on the one hand, a group of scholars have challenged that the mere notion of environmental refugees is invalid, and on the other hand, there have been strong defenders of its authenticity and of the importance of the issue. The debate is often described as ranging from the alarmists to the sceptics (Dun and Gemenne, 2008). The disagreements surfaced, on the one hand, between the fields of environmental studies and, on the other hand, from those of forced migration and refugee studies and involved the intrinsic differences between both schools and in particular their distinct research agendas (Dun and Gemenne, 2008).

One of the main problems encountered within the conceptualization of environmental migration concerns the issue of identifying the environment as the sole reason leading to displacement. Proponents such as El-Hinnawi and Myers of the term environmental/climate refugees have only produced statements establishing straightforward linkage between environmental changes and migration but have not provided evidence of the existence of this link. Indeed, when looking at migration, it is difficult to isolate one cause of displacement as the phenomenon always entails a mixture of push and pull factors. Therefore, economic, political and social contexts of a specific case as well as other determinants will shape into a decision to leave (Assan, 2008). Hence, this interconnectedness between social factors and the environment results in a difficulty in distinguishing primary causes responsible for displacement (Piguet, 2008).

From Castles' (2002) point of view migration entails: 'complex patterns of multiple causality, in which natural and environmental factors are closely linked to economic, social and political ones.' This idea reveals the connection the environment shares with other social processes. This is especially the case as natural and environmental factors are densely interlinked with economic, political and social factors with which they form part of complex mechanisms of multiple sources accounting for migration (Castles, 2002). The notion of multiple causality in migration has been demonstrated through research Lonergan has conducted through case studies such as Haiti, El Salvador, the Sahel and Bangladesh (Lonergan, 1998). Following this reasoning, it has been proven that environmental factors are not the single motive invoked when migrating but are rather entangled in a complex relationship involving political, economical, social and other aspects.

Indeed, as proven, migration does not occur because of a single factor but rather a variety and the 'environmental factor' forms a part of each of the other processes revealing its importance. The idea has been put forward that looking at migration uniquely from an environmental perspective consequently takes away some of the political responsibility from actions which may have deliberately been taken. Finally, it has been recognised that the migration process is influenced by a wide spectrum of factors (economic, political, social, etc.) of which pertain environmental factors (Piguat, 2010)

In 2007, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) introduced a definition of environmentally induced migration which serves as a reference point when discussing the issue. The IOM describes environmental migrants as

'persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment that adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad' (IOM, 2007, p. 1–2).

Since the IOM definition, the debate on defining the term appears to have come to a halt whereby no subsequent advances on an internationally recognised definition were made, thus, perpetuating the confusion surrounding the term. Research projects which have been implemented since have concentrated more on gathering the very much needed data rather than contributing to the establishment of a recognised definition. The UK led Foresight project has for instance argued that the search for a recognised definition is constrained by the impossibility to attribute the cause of migration solely to environmental factor and that any attempts would be 'unlikely to be scientifically credible' (Foresight, 2011, p. 151). Furthermore, the need for a definition is essential as 'definitions are crucial in guiding the policies of governments and international agencies towards mobile people' (Castles, 2002, p. 9). Therefore, if environmental migration is to progress as recognised field, the search for an internationally recognised definition must be put back on the table and cannot be dissociated from further advances made on the topic. In doing so, we would like to raise some pertinent questions in this regard:

- In what way are people displaced by environmental degradation/climatic variability different from people who migrate because their sources of livelihoods are destroyed because of economic hardship?
- Is the difference one of magnitude rather than anything else?
- Why is it necessary to have a special legal framework when there are no special legal and policy frameworks that apply to people uprooted from their homes and places of habitual residence by severe economic adversities?

Although this paper is not able to resolve in a short introductory debate such as this one, such critical questions need to be put on the table as part of the attempt to move forward in the global policy arena on the subject.

1.2 Controversies and Gaps in Legal Perspectives

The lack of acknowledgement of Environmentally Induced Migration (EIM), also finds its roots in the legal debates surrounding the appropriateness of the term environmental refugee. The concept has been employed because of the lack of a common agreed definition and also to express the sense of urgency regarding the matter (Brown, 2008a, 2008b, p. 13). Zetter remarked how 'the label refugee' is being used more than ever to refer to the different types of forced migration (Boano *et al.*, 2008, p. 10). This causes an epistemological confusion surrounding its real meaning and the one which is hoped to be conveyed.

There are numerous existing frameworks, conventions and norms in place to protect and provide for 'the rights of people forcibly displaced by conflict or persecution and to some extent by natural disasters or conflicts over resources' but that there are numerous gaps in international law with regards to the protection of people displaced because of environmental degradation and the effects of climate change. Legal experts such as Zetter express their disbelief that no comparable frameworks exists for those who are forced to flee because of climate change (Acketoft, 2008, p. 3 and Boano, 2008, p. 62). Furthermore, the existing legal frameworks and policies would prove inadequate to cover the full extent of environmentally induced migration (Boano 200, p. 3). As a consequence of this, many people affected by the environmental consequences of climate change and forcibly displaced whose rights are being baffled are not being given adequate protection and being taken care of.

This is an especially thorny point within the debate on EIM. Indeed, the usage of the word refugee entails very specific criteria with regards to the conditions under which flight is undertaken. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the 1951 Convention on Refugees and 1967 Protocol a refugee is

'a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country' (UNHCR, 1951).

The 1951 Convention definition which is very precise and only applicable to refugees could not be transposed to other groups such as people migrating, fleeing or displaced because of environmental factors. First of all, as underlined previously, it is expected that most people fleeing from environmental consequences will migrate but remain within their country and not cross an international border, which is a prerequisite for a refugee in the proper sense, revealing once more the inadequacy of the concept (Brown, 2008a, 2008b, p. 14).

Moreover, a central part of the 1951 definition includes the notion of fear of persecution. But in the case of displacement because of environmental causes, it cannot be proven that there is a persecutor as nature cannot be regarded as such, and it would be hard to identify in what respect people are facing persecution. The definition already contains a list of criterions which account for fear of persecution: 'race, nationality, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' within which the environment does not figure (Renaud *et al.*, 2007, p. 14; Acketoft, 2008, p. 14 and Boano *et al.*, 2008), p. 10). Odedra Kolmannskog raises the notion of environmental persecution which occurs when

states purposefully provoke and make use of environmental degradation to force human displacement. He, however, notes that this concept could not be enlarged to the issue of climate change as it raises once more the question of who would be the persecutor; the government incapable and unwilling to provide for the civilians or the developed countries that are the most accountable for environmental change.

Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, human migration across borders due to environmental reasons could be applicable for the refugee status. The UNHCR claims the status would apply when states intentionally deny or impede assistance to its people with the objective of punishing or marginalising them based on one of the five criteria. This is an important recognition that under very specific circumstances, the refugee status could apply to people moving in part because of environmental factors and that the influence of governance is extremely important within this issue.

There is also another issue regarding the usage of the word refugee as it is understood that once the persecution has ceased, the refugee will return to his home country. However, in certain cases such as the submersion of low lying islands or coastal areas because of sea-level rise, a return may be impossible and illustrates once more the general limitations of the term and the need to expand it to cover the large scope and different trends which exist within EIM (Brown, 2008a, 2008b, p. 14 and Zetter, 2008, p. 62).

In addition to this, no international agreement has been put forward to enlarge the refugee status. This is mainly because there are strong concerns that if the Convention were to be enlarged, it would undermine the already existing refugee regime, which is under strong scrutiny by many countries who wish to reduce its scope because of the obligations they have to them. Therefore their 'knee-jerk reaction for most of them will be to resist granting refugee status to a large new group of people' (Kolsmannskog, 2008, p. 31; Brown, 2008a, 2008b, p. 14; Boano *et al.*, 2008, p. 10). Therefore, the rights of the most affected are once more being baffled and in danger of not being recognised, worsening their condition.

Furthermore, one of the flaws of the concept of environmental refugees lies in its possible damaging effects, as it could serve the interests of governments who wish to limit the number of asylum claims and serve as a pretext to label victims of persecution as people escaping environmentally degraded and poverty conditions (Castles, 2002, p. 10). Kibreab believes that the concept of environmental refugees has been conceived so that states could 'derogate [to] their obligation to provide asylum.' (Kibreab, 1997, p. 21) The justification underlying this argument is that states are not required to give asylum to populations that have escaped because of aggravated environmental situations as the environment is not recognised as a valid factor in international law for the provision of protection.

The UNHCR's stance with regards to environmental migration is representative of the extreme caution in the international community concerning terminology, as it has highlighted that climate change is a potential threat to migration but has not yet officially recognised the occurrence of the phenomenon.

There is, however, a growing amount of specialists who are contending for the recognition and enlargement of environmental migration within international law. Renaud *et al.* (2007) argue that people obliged to flee from their homes because of environmental reasons should be given the same rights and granted equal protection as refugees forced to leave for different reasons such as armed conflict and the like. This is more so because more lives could be lost in an environmental disaster such as drought just like what is often observed in arm and civil conflicts and or genocides.

There are also strong implications to the recognition of the term refugees as it could entail the responsibility of states which are accountable for climate change and would signify under those circumstances that they need to care for environmental migrants on the same basis as political refugees, which the European Parliamentary Assembly points out is 'a precedent that no country has yet been willing to set' (Acketoft, 2008, p. 15). The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) underlines how indirectly responsible states could be accountable to victims of climate change (Kolmannskog, 2008, p. 31). Furthermore, Zetter regards this as a key point within the debate as there is an 'obligation on the polluting countries of the global north to address the needs of countries that will suffer most in the global south' (Zetter, 2008, p. 62). This idea of accountability supposes people fleeing from the effects of climate change are regarded as potential security threat.

This analysis of the validity of the concept of environmental refugees through the spectrum of international law has revealed that the term employed is incorrect as it differs from the original 1951 Convention definition. However, in certain situations, the status of refugee could be applicable, such as when governments purposely make use of environmental degradation to persecute a group of people. What is more, it carries certain risks such as undermining the current refugee regime as states wish to restrict it. Another aspect within this debate concerns the accountability of states for environmental modifications because of climate change which explains the extreme reluctance to recognise this category of migration.

Bogardi (2007) provides an insightful reflection on this debate and argues for the need to extend environmentally induced migration as a recognised issue. He states that the 'environment may not force anyone to cross an international border, but no one can close the eyes from the terrible similarities between people running for their life threatened by guns or by droughts, famine, hurricanes or a Tsunami.'

The European Union Council also pledges for an adequate international protection of people displaced because of environmental causes whether the migratory movement is international or intra-state and especially if the national government is unable or unwilling to (Acketoft, 2008, p. 3). It furthermore calls for 'the elaboration of a specific framework for the recognition and protection of environmental migrant, either in a separate convention or as parts of multilateral environmental treaties, or as both' (Ibid).

The committee on Migration, Refugees and Population of the Council of Europe speaking of Environment Induced Migration gives a useful conclusion to the topic stating: 'new concepts should not be feared, yet they should not limit the applicability of universally recognised protection standards prescribed in international law and normative frameworks' (Ibid). This makes studies that look at the relevance of other international legal instruments as a means for affording protections to groups moving in a context of environmental stress rather timely. In this regard, we would point to the collection of works by McAdam, Koser, Cournil and Epiny, all in *Migration and Climate Change*, edited by Etienne Piguet, Antoine Pécoud and Paul De Guchteneir, and published by Cambridge University Press and UNESCO. Such works deal with the relevance of refugee law, Internally Displaced Person (IDP) law, international law, the Kampala convention and state responsibility as a means for exploring avenues for protection. There is a growing need for such inter-disciplinary works to provide a platform for migration scholars, environmental researchers and legal/refugee studies experts to engage with policy and conceptual issues regarding this theme.

We will now look at the issue of data which represents the third area of contention with regard to the debate surrounding environmental migration.

1.3 The Debate on Observed Gaps in Numbers from Policy and Practice

The issue of statistics within the field of EIM is the third point which has been the scene of intense debates amongst academics. It holds one of the most important parts in the process of dealing with the issue of human displacement because of environmental modifications. As demonstrated earlier, the construction of a recognised definition is interlinked with the process of establishing an adequate legal framework and hence determining the precise criteria necessary to assess the number of people affected by EIM. Policymakers rely thoroughly on statistics to take action, and it is difficult to convince them of the urgency of the matter without concrete figures (Brown, 2008b, p. 9). The clash between the sceptics and catastrophists which was brought up earlier is reflected within this topic. As scholars such as Myers claim there could be millions of environmental refugees and others such as Black contending their existence. The claims of floods of refugees or migrants carry some risks as they could be made use of to 'instil fear in people and institutions that may be influenced by the vision of waves of refugees spilling over their borders' (Lonergan and Swain, 1999, p. 3) and contribute to governments further restricting immigration and closing their borders.

Some researchers have already underlined the extreme complexity of elaborating and endorsing a methodology to determine the amount of people displaced because of climate change (Boano *et al.*, 2008, p. 12). The difficulty of establishing precise statistics on the number of environmental migrants is reinforced by the fact that the scope of climate change, and of its effects, is still very tentative and inaccurate. This difficulty in establishing estimates is reinforced by the fact that there are no modelling techniques that can explain the influence of individual choices in the decision to migrate as well as the impact of the international engagement on the issue and the unpredictability of climatic variability, and climate change (Brown, 2008a, 2008b, p. 9). Boano (2008 p. 14) assigns the complexities of evaluating the number of environmental migrants to the 'lack of conceptual development [and a] vagueness coupled with statistical biases that compromise the possibility to produce data that is meaningful, reliable and comparable.'

Nevertheless, there have been various attempts at calculating the numbers of people displaced by the effects of climate change examples of the most prominent will subsequently be listed. In 1994, through the Almeria Statement, it was claimed that because of desertification, 135 million were at danger of having to be forced out of their homes (Boano *et al.*, 2008, p. 12). In 1996, Myers found that the amount of environmental refugees was of 25 million refugees. The UNEP finds that numbers of climate migrants in Africa could amount to 50 million (Brown, 2008b, p. 8). Myers estimates, however, grew as he found that there could be 250 million displaced by 2050 because of the modifications of monsoon and rainfall systems, by extremely severe droughts and by sea-level rise and coastal erosion (Black, 2001, p. 1).

The latter calculation has become an accepted figure as it has been used by the Stern Review in its report on the economics of climate change (Stern, 2006, p. 77). Finally, the Christian Aid report on human displacement induced by the effects of climate change has put forward that there could be up to one billion climate migrants by 2050 (Christian Aid, 2007, p. 5). These statistical efforts have been met by much criticism and debate as it appears that the calculations and means to calculate are 'poorly documented with rarely a data table to be found (Erway, 2009, p. 26).' Brown contends that the data published represent no more than educated guesswork (Brown, 2008b, p. 8). Most of the numbers provided are understood to be wild estimates and guesses which have been driven by environmental politics aimed at curtailing Green House Gases (GHG) emissions. The question that arises in connection to this

is In what way would a 'conceptual development' and clarity contribute to resolution of the issue? In actual reality, this is difficult and seemingly unachievable goal, in as much as migration remains multi-causal; there is no magic wand that would enable analysts to isolate the effect of environmental factors on the decision to migrate. Although a multivariate statistical correlation is possible, this should not be confused with causation

1.4 The Current Policy Arena

The current policy Arena on Environmentally Induced Migration and Human Security brings together three papers to examine this emerging policy concern in a critical manner. This introduction section has attempted to highlight some consensus, controversies and gaps in relation to how the theme has been approached from the policy perspective.

In addressing the theme for this policy arena, Oliver-Smith (2012) approaches the problem of environment and migration through a consideration of convergent themes regarding nature and society in ecological theory and in social scientific disaster research. He argues that the articulation between ecological and social theory provides grounding concepts for both framing the issue and research on the problem of actual and potential mass displacement of human populations by environmental change, specifically global climate change. This article asserts that effective policy responses to environmental displacement and migration cannot be developed without an in-depth understanding of the phenomena of climate change, human-environment relations, and migration and the linkages among them.

In his paper, Kolmannskog (2012) addresses two main concerns relating to climate change and human mobility. First, the paper looks at the extent to which current international law afford or guide protection for environmentally displaced persons. Second, it looks at how protection of those considered in this category could be enhanced. The paper identifies views that are controversial inclined towards views that are in line with de Sousa Santos' subaltern cosmopolitanism. The author favours a cosmopolitan legality and multi-track approach and argues that we should exploit existing international law by applying a dynamic and context-oriented interpretation of both refugee law and human rights law, as well as develop a new law at national, regional and international levels to redress this concern.

In concluding this introductory debate to the Policy Arena, it is important to note that although we might need more research to be conducted in the hope that it renders an object around which policy might be built, we might also do well to think about other novel approaches to policy making or need to generate policy which seeks to afford rights to all mobile peoples, an argument for which there is a strong moral case.

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