

Understanding Climate-Mobilities for Policy Direction in the Global South.

Migration, according to observers signifies not just uneven development or unsafe places torn by conflict, from which people must escape either because they aspire to better their lives economically (first case) or because they must just to survive (second case), but also the climate change disrupted living contexts. Depending upon upon whether the people who migrate chose to leave a location or were forced to leave because of unbearable conditions, ranging from wars, scarcity and persecution, the state of vulnerability is assessed by external observers. But subjective assessment of migrants themselves are also crucial for understanding migration flows generated by environmental disruption but manifested by individual and household decisions to move to a different location (the concept of agency in migration). This form of classification is better known as the voluntary versus involuntary nature of migration, though causal reasons for migration streams are not very easy to compartmentalize. People who migrate under duress from 'external forces' tend to be known as involuntary migrants. If they fit the criteria under international convention and policy, they are called refugees. While climate change is estimated to displace millions of people and the global society is predicted to face a migration crisis due to changing climate, international laws and conventions provide no legal protection for climate change and environmental migrants and refugees (Warren 2016). But as Boas et al 2019, warn, the understanding of climate mobilities tends to be grounded in simplistic assumptions about the inevitability of mass migration of 'climate refugees' from the global South to the North, induced by climate change, resulting in a 'security crisis.' Since migration is influenced by climatic, social, economic, cultural, and political factors and since migrants typically move within their national regions, policies that are restricted to the securitization agenda, produce myths about climate induced migration (ibid).

For political ecologists, environmental contexts, including climate must be viewed in the long term that 'reaffirms the central role of human agency'. To avoid 'naïve anthropocentrism' historians of climate consider the notion of 'adaptation in the broadest sense: on the one hand, the relation between long-term climatic variability and social life; and on the other, how long-term structural adaptations operate in relation to short term climatic change' (Watts 2013:83). Climate historians argued that the impact of climate change and extreme climate events on human society can be found in a variety of evidence preserved in the 'natural archive' and the 'human archive' but also warn that such evidence must be viewed alongside the adaptive and survival strategies of human societies in the face of extreme events, to avoid climate determinism. The centrality of human agency is especially visible in population mobility and the proliferation of climate change discourse that make the connection between climate and mobility tangible and urgent for observers. As Hulme argues, the normative knowledge of the world, how humans come to be, to know and to act, is beyond climate knowledge as produced by science and social sciences. Complex, historical, and contextual understanding of climate-mobilities in the Global South, will be required to understand how survival and adaptation trajectories are taking shape in this epoch.

Reference

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Abstract – Policy Brief

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