SOME COMMENTS ON THE DEBATE "MIGRATION-NEXUS-CLIMATE CHANGES". CONTINUING WITH THE STATUS QUO?

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Abstract

The debate surrounding the issue of environmentally induced migration is still in an early stage yet many approaches have been presented by academic and non-governmental bodies. The main conclusion we derive is that international, regional and national procedures and laws should be applied to Internally Displaced People and to cross-state migrants. In fact, the most part of migrants fleeing climate change hazards move, at least to date, inside their country and cross-state migration is rather the exception. We argue that the issue is oriented towards the status quo of Globalization processes and the preservation of ethnocentric views. Finally, we draw attention to the role that international migration theories may have to play in settling the debate.

KEY WORDS: ethnocentrism; climate changes; globalization processes and migration.

Introduction

Climate changes are of concern for public authorities and, so far, much has to be done to mitigate and control them. There are many consequences for humans such as difficulty in accessing natural resources, increase of inequalities, impoverishment of populations and eco-system quality, human mobility or harsh health and hygiene conditions. In this article, we focus our attention on human mobility as being one of the most problematic conditions to define and to legalize at an international level, not counting the increase of flows in the foreseeable future.

Migrations related to environmental causes have always taken place in the history of humanity, but the novelty is the fact that we are dealing with irreversible climate changes with worrying long-term consequences as well as the fact that humans are mostly responsible for these changes.

It has been clearly proven that humans are not immune to nature and its laws and some evidence alerts us to the fact that the rapid modernization and urban development of some Southern countries do not have the positive effects that some would predict and desire. We are living in a world-risk-society, where uncertainty, difficult forecasting and inequalities are guiding the development of our societies. Climate changes are another factor contributing to a constant increase in risk and uncertainty. This applies to humans but also to the eco-system and natural habitat of other life forms.

Climate changes are an undeniable fact and the international community has to consider and embrace them as soon as possible in order to avoid what is still avoidable, namely human migration. There is a need for shared-responsibility at the international level where developed countries are accountable for their role in climate changes and to compensate affected countries and societies. The possible forms of compensation are still under scrutiny and there is a search for consensus.

This article will present the main issues of concern on the subject, namely legal definitions and coping strategies. These issues will be presented in a critical way in order to propose an alternative perspective on the consequences of climate change and

related responsabilities. The paper will rely on the main academic literature, social/scientific reports produced for international organizations and non-published material such as master theses.

Eco-Refugees: do they really exist? The rise and development of a new migration category

Firstly, it is of utmost importance to recall a basic fact that Metzner in 1998 states: "environment fulfils three essential functions for society, namely a) to provide it with resources; b) to absorb its refuse; c) to serve as "living-space" and habitat of man" (316). This being so, it is clear that we are dealing with the most essential aspect for human survival, its environment. In consequence, this aspect should not be ignored or relegated to a lesser level of concern. The following sections address the issue of a newly socially constructed category. We employ an ironic twist because, as it will be shown, human migration based on the consequences of climate change has always taken place throughout history. However, during many years, especially since the 1960s and 1970s, the environmental factor was not considered as a potential trigger. Nowadays, it is being introduced in multi-causal explanatory schemes but still with some scepticism. Such an introduction is made at a multidisciplinary level, including migration theory, environmental studies, international law, international relations and so forth.

It was in the 1970s that, for the first time, a link was established between environmental degradations and migration flows. This is largely due to the fact that a new agenda was established by international organisations such as the United Nations, which considered environmental issues as fundamental for human survival. In fact, during the 1972 summit in Stockholm, the United Nations presented a report entitled "environmental refugees". The phenomenon *per se* was already an object of research in academia since the 1950s. But it was only in 1985 that the concept of "environmental refugees" was defined by an Egyptian scholar Essam El-Hinnawi (Razemon, 2005, 34). Since then, a fierce and intense debate has developed among academic and public authorities at the international and national levels. The crucial point was not to provide another definition, but to discern potential variables and conditions that could render human migrants vulnerable and in need of assistance. Thus, ecological assistance should be the main parameter of action on the part of decisive public and private actors and a

normative platform for a new concept of international responsibility (Razemon, 2005, 47).

Relying on a specific category of studies, namely reports, essays and some relevant articles, we try to put together variables and conditions that may help to discern this category of human mobility.

For Lassailly-Jacob, Boyer and Bracket (2006), based on a study of South-South migration, there are three main basic factors to consider in relation to human mobility in this part of the World: "diversity: profile of migrants, causes and forms of migration and its impact; complexity; and legality: the legality of people's situation while they are travelling" (2006:16). Regarding the forms of migration, these may be seasonal, temporary or permanent and vary from local, national and international moves. In relation to spatial moves, many argue that environmental migration often takes place internally, intra-locale, villages, cities, regions, and as a consequence they are not in themselves migrants but Internally Displaced People who are under the protection of their own governments. This also sustains arguments against the attribution of a refugee's status to these specific migrants. These arguments adopt the 1952 Geneva Convention's definition of refugees, which specifies that one must be outside the country of origin if refugee status is to be attributed.

Moreover, migrants may move individually or in groups depending on the severity of the consequences of climate changes (cases of disruptive environmental consequences in a short period of time – floods, tsunamis, and cases of slow-onset and progressive loss of natural habitat benefits such as land degradation, desertification, water supplies, sea-level rise), the decision-making process in the household or the local community where the most optimal individuals are chosen to migrate (for instance human capital and psychological conditions), and the perception of migration as an alternative to support families or local communities. It also implies that, in some cases, it is essential to adopt a collective approach to migration issues, which is not in accordance with the 1952 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Indeed, the Convention relies on an individual

perspective on human movements. Profiles of migrants are also relevant for one main reason: social stratification/hierarchy and benefits associated to it.

Indeed, and as many studies in the field of international migration illustrate, the poorest do not migrate easily due to a lack of financial resources, social support and access to migration chains (Castles and Miller, 2009, 75). Commonly, the richer and wealthy strata of local societies have more possibilities to move and, above all, to move long before the total degradation of the eco-system occurs. Furthermore, they have the possibility to settle in relatively acceptable conditions elsewhere due to their human and economic capital. As Sheng summarizes concisely (2011, 11) "environmental inequalities reflect inequalities in income and political power". Obviously local economic development and political configuration may also condition human moves.

For instance, during the process of desertification of the Sahel region, in the 1970s and 1980s, Tuareg groups had to move collectively because, on the one hand, their economic activity was directly dependent on the eco-system and, on the other hand, the group's social structure implied a collective type of decision (Kolmannskog, 2008). Migrants profiles differ greatly depending on their human, social and economic capital and migration traditions in local cultures and social class. Nonetheless, the poorer are more vulnerable to hazards and disruptions related with climate change, this also applies to Western countries. For instance, when Hurricane Katrina damaged the city of New Orleans in 2005, the poorest and Black sections of the population remained in the city. The social question is also linked to the attribution of land and urban social planning. Usually, non-wealthy people are channelled by local authorities, through policies or simply through deliberate inaction, into the worst and most vulnerable habitats. This, in turn, underlines the type of relation that exists between national and local governments and the population at large. There are many cases where environmental migrants are simply ignored by public authorities due to a lack of resources, corruption, the level of administrative organization, and the relation between the state and its nation. We may remember the case of the famine in North-Korea (Bellamy, 2010:14) that demonstrates clearly this aspect and illustrates the difficulties involved in moving in closed and dictatorial countries. In addition, and once again relying on Lasailly et al. (2006), the causes of migration recall for the issue in distinguishing environmental from economic migrants. In our assumption, humans are dependent on their natural habitat above all.

The natural habitat is, in first place, the basis for the development of economic activities and the social structure of local populations. The entire economic system and social structure will suffer if the natural habitat is damaged by climate changes, whether they are anthropogenic or not. In turn, a weak economic structure will inevitably lead some individuals or entire groups to opt to migrate. The length of migration - seasonal or permanent - may change according to environmental changes. A seasonal migration may become permanent if the environment has reached its limits of sustainability (Afifi, 2011, 100).

For a more complete understanding of processes and causes, we argue that the introduction of the role of national and local governments as an intermediary variable should be considered. Much will depend on economic politics and policies. This applies, for example, to countries and local populations dependent on their eco-systems to survive, less economically connected at a regional or global level and with non-efficient, reluctant and more authoritarian governments. Nonetheless, it applies also indirectly to more developed countries. Indeed, Portuguese emigration is a case in point. Above all, it is not a well-defined developed country as some of its partners in the European Union, which has provoked a continuous emigration flow throughout history. In many cases, those migrants were from non-privileged regions and villages, where the natural habitat was essential to provide an economic base to the population (Baganha, 2003, 12). Nowadays, Portuguese are still leaving for economic reasons as the Portuguese mass media points out, but environmental issues are less prevalent in the multi-causal scheme. As Afifi states clearly in his analysis of migration push factors in Niger (2011, 100), "the economic factor can act as the mechanism through which environmental degradation leads to migration. It remains tricky to find out the extent to which pure environmental problems contribute to the migration decision as compared to other factors, including the social and economic ones". Our perspective applies to cases where environmental degradation is progressive and where the natural habitat characteristics are not good enough to provide resources.

Docherty and Giannini (2009) provide additional criteria. For them, it is necessary to identify the character of the movement (whether compelled or voluntary), the length of

the relocation (temporary or permanent), the level of disruption and degradation of environment (sudden or gradual), and the presence or absence of human responsibility in the climate change. We believe voluntary movements may be included in the attribution criteria for the status of a climate change victim. In fact, even if the decision is voluntary and based on cost-benefits calculations, it does not imply that the consequences of climate changes are not responsible for such decision. As we said above, environmental and economic factors are usually linked when the level of degradation of the human habitat is gradual. Moreover, following a clear analytical statement of Moriniere, Taylor, Hamza and Downing (2009), "the impact of an extreme climatic event is to accelerate an existing process, not necessarily to initiate a new one" (2009, 31). Still, considering gradual processes of environmental degradation, compelled migration may be due to the disorganization of social structures and corruption. As Myers writes "with poverty and "life on the environment limits" as the main motivating force, it matters little to the migrants whether they view themselves primarily as environmental or economic refugees" (2005: 12). Docherty and Giannini (2009) contend that disruption must be consistent with climate change. Nonetheless, climate change is complex and pernicious in its effects and not always visibly associated with disruption. Additionally, it is also essential to take into account the degree to which some environmental disruptions may be provoked by political issues. Governments may provoke famine, for instance, in a certain place in order to control its population or to influence migratory processes among non-desirable ethnic groups. This technique may also be used when there are conflicts among countries. In respect to the length of relocation, we argue that temporary relocations may qualify as a criterion given that the affected population is in a situation of high precariousness and vulnerability in the place of resettlement, whether it be in another village or city. This being said, we consider that this is one of the social costs of climate changes that the victims have to endure.

These criteria and arguments lead us to agree with Moriniere et al. (2009: 29) that no climate consequence occurs in a vacuum. The two main systems implied in this process, human and nature, are interconnected. Yet, the human system is the more complex and difficult one to evaluate due to its intrinsic nature and many types of living conditions (economic, social, cultural or political). The authors say that there is "higher levels of non-linearity in the human subsystem" (2009: 29). This means that it is then difficult to

predict, evaluate, numerate, control and alleviate consequences. Moreover, climate change is not predictable and measurable in regard to its effects in natural and human systems. It is also pertinent to add that the increasing complexities of societies do not facilitate the control and mitigation of climate change: "The necessity to build complex procedures of eco-social regulation increases historically along with the growing complexity and differentiation of societies" (Metzner, 1998: 312).

To sum up, there is a clear consensus that migration triggered by climate change has multiple causes. Moreover, climate changes have different impacts according to the structure of the society (being it local or national) and its level of development and capacity to deal with emergencies. For this very reason, causes and consequences may not be always identical among cases and may interlink differently. As a matter of fact, research shows not all environmental changes induce similar movements, and some of them do not induce movements at all (Kniveton, Scmidt-Verkerk, Smith and Black, 2008: 32-36). Furthermore, "similar movements can be induced by different kinds of disruption, while the same disruption can result in very different movements" (Kniveton et al., 2008, 14).

There is an intersection of factors and climate change may trigger some of these factors and may be indirectly involved in the migration process. Many factors are then at play, those linked to the economic development of society, the use of intensive agriculture, the social structure and access to sources of power and education, demography issues, the level of corruption of the government and local entities, the level of networking capacity of local and national institutions, the mechanisms of governance, the absence of environmental regulations at a national and local level and finally social-induced and constructed factors that are embodied by individuals (gender, race or ethnicity and age). Cains (2010) also stresses the role of industry interests and influences on governments' policies as well as the distortion of scientific evidence and data (2010, 9). For this author, there are anti-science groups that refuse scientific evidence in order to justify the maintenance of the status quo or economic growth and consumption. In order to establish laws and effective policies, public actors have no alternative than to confront the interests of private and sometimes powerful actors. This may also be one reason

why the issue is still on the table of international organizations and national governments. Finally, and not least, there is also a dimension that is more specifically linked to Western culture, which is the post-modern quest. Domenach and Gonin consider (2002), for instance, noise, pollution, life quality or search for better weather conditions. One such example is the flow of Northern European migrants to Southern countries in order to enjoy better weather conditions. There is a sun belt in the South of Europe, which brings flows of elderly and wealthy people. Nonetheless, we are dealing with quite a different issue. Indeed, those migrants do not suffer climate changes *per se* but are in search of better conditions the environment still provides. It is not said, however, that those better conditions are not a result of direct or indirect climate changes. If so, climate changes may be beneficial in certain areas and for certain social groups and may be prejudicial for other regions and social classes.

The debate about phraseology and factors and causal links illustrate that much is needed to embrace the issue and to make the right choices in terms of humanitarian aid and policies. As many scholars contend, empirical research about the impact on population and on population movements in particular, has been lagging behind (Brown, 2008). This hinders plausible definitions, typologies and estimates as well as comprehensive policy responses.

Moreover, it is of utmost importance to state that the lack or reluctance of dialogue among disciplines has negative effects on definitions, typologies, proactive policies and the provision of preventative actions. For Cains (2010), policy-makers decisions should be "based on ethical values guided by scientific evidence" (2010: 4). Indeed, climate and nature are very complex systems that are constantly changing and manipulated by humans according to many economic or political interests. We also agree that scientific evidence provides a neutral or impartial view of the effects and consequences of climate change and provides the only convincing argument to oppose economic and/or political interests. Human rights discourse is only endorsed when it is beneficial for a certain country and/or interest group or when the issue is too obvious and potentially scandalous for the officials and is divulged by powerful mass media.

In a nutshell, potential causes referred to may provide a good starting point to situate those migrants and to determine whether or not there is an environmental factor,

whether it is indirectly or directly connected to human mobility. Furthermore, and relying on the traditional definition of refugee, it is quite hard to define them as such. However, we are not dealing with classical economic-motivated migrants as defined in first dominant migration theories. Nowadays, environmental issues are already considered in migration theories that have a more global and systemic approach to factors related with the causes and consequences of migration. Nonetheless, and as we exemplified with the Portuguese emigration case, environmental aspects have always been present, even if indirectly, in the migration process. In this instance it was a combination of poorly used environmental resources and endemic poverty as well as deliberate political use of migration as a way to control potential social disruption and social reforms. In sum, environmental factors have always been present in the case of emigration from poor regions and/or huge chaotic cities. It is for this very reason that we are reluctant to use the term "refugee" in the case of migration provoked by gradual environmental degradation. In this case of migration, solutions are quite diverse from a refugee's situation and involve directly and in a first place national and/or local governments of affected individuals. When it is a disruptive environmental event, anthropogenic or not, where people have to leave everything behind and have to find sanctuary quickly without choosing or deliberating the costs-benefits of such movement, we may use the term forced migrants. In the case of forced migrants, direct humanitarian aid makes sense and, according to our point of view, should not even be put under scrutiny. If we search for guilty actors, governments are mainly responsible for the state of poverty of entire strata of the population and for the lack of resources to deal with environmental changes. It is the lack of interest of states to provide fair economic, political and social structures that provoke migration in all its forms.

Globalization contributes as well but in a last instance it is the national state that should protect citizens' interests, even if it has to confront global economic interests. Finally, we agree with Clarin (2011: 35) who asks "would it be better to urge the world to act on climate change and fund sustainable development instead for investigate the prospects for a new category of refugees?" We also ask would it be better for states to revise their obligations vis-à-vis their citizens and to defend citizens' right to the public good. Should we add the protection of the eco-system and all forms of life on earth? This is

probably a naïve quest, especially if we consider states that are incapable of assisting their citizens such as failed states, dictatorial states or even semi-peripheral states with a medium level of development. Nonetheless, these are clear issues underlying the process of fleeing from catastrophic natural habitats and entering, for most part of migrants, a new circle of poverty and vulnerability.

Policy Implications

In this section, we present main ideas and attempts to provide solutions, at a legal and political level, to react vis-à-vis climate changes and its human consequences.

The normative and ethical issue is also relevant at this stage in order to convince and to force national states to act and to assume their responsibilities. According to Bellamy (2010: 11), the UN 2005 World Summit adopted the "responsibility to protect" principle. On the one hand, national states have the responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity, and, on the other hand, the international community has the duty to assist the state to comply with the principle. The concept of sovereignty is equated with responsibility. It is, however, difficult to urge dictatorial countries to follow such principles and to ask sovereign countries to alter their perception and relationship with the nation. Many countries just ignore environmental migrants and rely on the capacity of local communities to adapt and find solutions on their own.

We recall that, beyond any doubt, there is inequity in the consequences of climate change at the international level. Those countries suffering the main and devastating effects are those who have the least responsibility for human-induced climate changes whilst those responsible are affected to a lesser extent. Furthermore, climate changes exacerbate the already weak and difficult position of countries in the South compared to Western countries. Their vulnerable position in terms of international relations renders their possible claim-making process invisible or overshadowed by the interests of more developed countries on the economic and political map. This has to be kept in mind when solutions have to be contemplated and decided upon. The more vulnerable countries are in diverse positions in what may be termed as the game of international relations and some may have more legitimacy to claim for reparation than others.

a) Protection and status

As we have seen in the previous section, the recognition of a legal status for victims of climate change is essential to protect human migrants successfully. Moreover, we have seen that the traditional definition of refugee provided by the 1951 Geneva Convention does not fit with the criteria exposed above and with the causes behind environmental human migration. Some states do not want to embrace this sort of migrant category in order to preserve the current criteria for refugee status as they believe it may have pernicious effects. National and international actors have not yet been convinced by the argument that the Convention of Geneva should be enlarged and revised. In a nutshell, these migrants are simply ignored at the international level and no legal instrument considers them in a straightforward manner (Cournil, 2006, 1040). Quoting Docherty and Giannini (2009, 357), "displacement due to climate change is a de facto problem currently lacking a de jure solution".

This being said, we review alternative possibilities based on the criteria and causes of environmental climate changes and human migration.

One initial point to consider that may explain why international protection may be difficult is the status of internally displaced people. Environmental migrants move inside borders and inter-state movements are rather the exception. It means that the first entity that has the legal and moral responsibility to protect them is the national government. However, in many cases, these national governments do not want or cannot provide assistance to internally displaced people. We could underline here the role of the mass media in the social construction of such issue. Indeed, if a case of environmental disruption and consequent human migration is taken seriously by mass media actors and is sufficiently appealing for audiences, especially at the international level, those same national governments may feel compelled to act. As Metzner (1998: 313) rightly states, "why are certain environmental phenomena diagnosed as problematic and brought towards a solution, while others – factually not less problematic or risky events – are hardly or not at all noticed?". Faced with reluctant states to protect their internal migrants, international actors have to find a way to enforce those states to provide humanitarian aid. This may be done using international

regulations and binding agreements. The role of mass media here is essential in determining what is what and under which circumstances.

A second aspect is to consider whether or not a more focus-oriented action and legal framework could be more beneficial and effective. Hence, many climate changes have different consequences at the spatial level, and some regional instruments could be provided. This could facilitate the analysis and scientific approach to specific places, especially because many social, cultural and economic factors have to be considered as well. It means that a specific status could be attributed to those migrants at a regional or national level. We are aware though that much is possible if governments have minimal ethical and moral frameworks that consider the common public good as a *fait accompli*.

A human rights approach could be invoked to protect and to guarantee minimum life conditions. It is, however, a very tricky argument when claimants confront powerful actors. Affected populations could invoke the human right of remaining in the original place of birth/settlement and, based on that, ask for direct intervention from the government to improve their life conditions. Opposed to the right to remain is the right to leave. Indeed, there are no migration processes if this right is not defended and promoted by national and international laws. The environmental debate puts into question the right to leave or to remain in the same place of origin. Yet, it is the most basic and fundamental right that affects and allows access to other rights and duties. It is then essential to restore the right to leave, especially for those that are hardest hit by natural disasters. In this argument we focus on the role of origin countries. When inter-state migration occurs, it is necessary to consider the approach to immigration issues from the perspective of the settlement country. Could migration triggered by climate change be seen by the settlement country as a particular category that deserves more attention and access to more rights than other kinds of migration?

Ethical and moral issues driving states decisions rely, on the one hand, on the power of state sovereignty, and, on the other hand, on a duty to assist unprotected humans as part of a natural law. The principle of interference is revisited in order to enforce states to receive humanitarian aid and to improve quality of life. Furthermore, international provisions should be taken to control reluctant states. The duty to assist humans in extreme and dangerous situations should be also invoked based on the principle of good

governance, the public good and human rights. In this respect, international instruments and more precisely the role of the United Nations are crucial.

Finally, there is also the essential aspect of shared responsibilities. Countries contributing negatively to climate changes should be implicated in the process of humanitarian aid, technical and scientific assistance and sustainable development to affected countries. It is also relevant to remember that those affected countries are, generally speaking, in already vulnerable positions in the global economy and suffer from processes of inequality in the context of globalization. There is, in our perspective, a double duty from developed countries towards developing countries. A duty to enforce global justice and a duty to promote rather than hinder solutions to climate change. Affected countries, in turn, should assume the compromise of the most basic human rights enforcement and lines of reasoning. We argue that there is a dependent link of responsibility and compromise between both worlds that should be explored by decision-makers at an international and national level.

b) Essential coping strategies

There are some essential strategies that ought to be conducted by decision-makers.

There is a fact though that is overlooked, namely, the proactive role of local communities and individuals to adapt and, when possible, to prevent the costs and consequences of climate change. The establishment of a clear vertical hierarchy in the community and in the institutional framework that embraces many individual perspectives and skills, and the constant increase in the legitimacy of civil society to act are two factors that may enhance the proactive role of communities and individuals. We are facing a contradictory case, which is a perfect mirror of global inequality and global injustice. The actors that provoke human-induced climate changes are, in general terms, wealthy countries and powerful economic institutions whilst many responses to the threat are locally-based and developed by communities with limited capacity to bargain and to claim for compensation. These communities recycle everything in the nature and in the economic structure in order to adapt such recycling goods to a new habitat. Their

level of creativity and knowledge of the surrounding eco-system and economic structure should be considered and introduced into the decision-making processes.

Nonetheless, we should not rely on these facts to avoid more structural strategies with more resources and effectiveness from national and international actors.

Essential strategies are control and prevention, as well as the development of resiliency among local populations. Those strategies, based, on the one hand, on the deployment of scientific resources and transfer of knowledge from more developed to less developed countries, and, on the other hand, on local capacities to adapt and use skills may be a good combination to follow. NGOs, for instance, should consider strategies with a more general scope and strategies based on the analysis of local/regional conditions of resiliency and economic and social development. Sometimes, strategies have only to enhance the perfection and direction of already established processes of social and economic development. Adaptation and resiliency are possible to achieve through community quality enhancement. In fact, community structures, whether or not formally established, are able to secure and control the effectiveness of basic rights (Lasailly-Jacob et al., 2006: 13). It is also implicit that institutional structures should be redefined and purged from corruption in a manageable and acceptable level.

Finally, another strategy that embraces the crucial point, that is adaptation between local realities and the effects of climate change, may be sustainable development. This strategy considers the multi-causal framework and the interaction of complex factors. Moreover, this concept may be adapted to each singular case with specific instruments and projects.

There are clearly many legal and normative principles that have to be combined in order to deal with such a multidisciplinary issue. For Docherty and Giannini (2009, 392), these principles include "human rights, humanitarian assistance and international environmental law". We would like to add the economic principles that rule globalization processes and the principles that govern international relations (more precisely a review of sovereignty and non-interference principles). In reality, we are referring to a network of principles that have governed at a global level so far but that may need recast in terms of priorities and societal and economic models.

Once again, there are national inequities in environmental terms regarding the basic strategies approached in this section. Indeed, many societies, namely those of the so-called Western World, probably have better resiliency in social and political institutions that will contribute to the prevention and adaptation to potential climate threats. New technologies, especially if they can be transferred where and when they are needed, should facilitate adaptation. Wealthy individuals and groups in general will have more adaptive capacity than poor ones. Richer nations will have more adaptive capacity than poorer ones. The vulnerability of many poor countries may be exacerbated by trends that are proceeding independently of climate change effects. Rapid population growth, for example, is stressing land use, pressing migration to cities, presenting the challenge of large numbers of unemployed youth, and increasing pollution. In a certain sense, there is a vicious circle where vulnerable countries are embedded and in order to overcome such a dilemma they will have to undergo many changes relating to governance as well some social reforms (Sheng, 2011: 10). This applies, however, to developed countries as well that have, for instance, to confront pollution problems and to organize enormously large volumes of waste. They are not immune to corruption and to the dominance of economic priorities as well. In any case, and relying on Cains (2010: 3), "the true costs and consequences of human activities must always be evaluated".

In order to deploy such strategies and to respond to urgent humanitarian crises (especially in the case of displaced people that have to move rapidly and that are living in unwelcome natural and social habitats), many actors have to be mobilized such as national governments in collaboration with United Nations organizations, other international bodies that may emerge in the future, INGOS, international financial institutions (IMF and World Bank), donors and civil society actors. At the national and/or local levels, actors involved are national governments, national banks and charitable actors, religious organizations, NGOs, civil society actors and also informal networks of power and decision-making processes at the local level. In fact, it is necessary to purge particular interests from the circles of power and decision-making processes and to promote the acceptance of the public good. We believe small

communities and specific types of groups have a clear perception of what is good or bad for the entire group and vertical relations of power may be promoted in order to maintain social cohesion. The list of actors presented here represents the main idea of potential coping strategies: the interplay between international and national/local actors, social and ethical principles of international versus local communities, and the share-burden responsibility between international institutions from the West and developing countries. Bellamy summarises it nicely: "1) working with regional arrangements and strengthening their capacity, 2) developing the UN mechanisms for humanitarian assistance" (2010: 14). An international market-place of ideas is in place where environmental responsibility, humanitarian aid, enforcement of closed nations to provide assistance, attempts to restore nations' asymmetries and attempts to continue to use the discourse of human rights are the dominant vectors. Another aspect we propose is: considering the needs and aspirations of affected local populations and to provide solutions based on such factors. Most probably, many individuals would prefer to remain in their place of origin rather than moving across the country in search for sanctuary. To sum up this point, and relying on Bellamy, "(…) the challenge is to determine the nature of the contract: who should be entitled to what sort of assistance from whom under what conditions at whose expenses? (…) there is a need to create a new global regime of clear rights and obligations for those who provide humanitarian assistance and those who receive it" (2010: 22). Negotiations state-to-state should be complemented with the active role of communities and civil society actors in order to promote the defence of affected people' rights and desires (Docherty and Giannini, 2009, 350).

We would like also to add that such coping strategies are designed to deal with the main features of a society's status quo and not to call into question *per se* the entire organization of a nation or even the globe. For some authors, a more radical approach is necessary. Indeed, faced with increasing global inequality, global injustice and climate change asymmetries, they contend that the entire global system should be revised and altered, namely by reducing economic growth, current consumption patterns and life styles (Cains, 2010: 5). However, this approach or solution is not globally beneficial or fair. Should we ask poor and vulnerable countries to halt their economic growth and to prohibit their population from consuming goods? Solutions presented are clearly ethnocentric and western-oriented.

Conclusion

This article is an essay where some ideas are exposed based on the mainstream lines of reasoning vis-à-vis climate changes and migration. Some aspects are relevant from a *de facto* point of view, well-argued and concerned with promoting the well-being of affected populations. Others are, in our point of view, used and argued in such a way that the status quo is preserved and even defended. When we use the term "status quo" we are referring to the actual state and consequences of processes of globalization and the actors who benefit from it. In order to put a legal print on human migration issues linked with climate change, it is necessary to call the attention of decision-makers to the fact that nothing will change from a long-term perspective if the global social and economic system is not altered. In addition, rules governing international relations should take into account the responsibility of developed countries for the profound inequalities that climate changes produce. The way economic growth is structured in the world is also another aspect to consider. Nowadays, countries other than Western ones are part of the global competition system. China, India and Malaysia alongside other Asian countries also have a shared quota of global greenhouse gas emissions and thus should also be included in the list of responsible countries. However, some of these new economic giants are not prone to human rights discourse or to the promotion of the common good. Moreover, those countries are also affected by climate changes and have to cope with internally displaced people fleeing poverty, degradation or sudden hazards. This is a new factor to consider in the game of environmental responsibilities. We argue that Western countries have a strong and continued influence in international organizations and they should be the first countries to provide humanitarian aid. We are still facing an ethnocentric, economistic, western-oriented approach toward environmental issues.

International and national civil society actors may be appropriate actors to confront such a reality and to organize some sort of resistance and protest at a global level. Affected populations are too poor or too weak to organize themselves and to confront national or international authorities, especially in failed and dictatorial countries. Even if

committees were organized at a local level, it is most unlikely they would reach national authorities. Global and national governance systems do not favour channelling the claimant voices of the invisible and non-desirable social groups to the spheres of power. This is a typical case of exit-voice dilemma. Affected populations prefer to exit, that is, to migrate or to find ways to cope without relying on authorities.

Finally, we believe a systemic and global approach to international and internal migration determinants may be a good option. As we have seen, causes of migration are multiple and complex and each migratory process has its own dynamics. A single and simple definition of each type of migration cannot embrace the full process complexity. Migration takes place in response to a combination of factors, which are often in a state of flux: environmental, economic, social, cultural and political. Actually, it may have been gainful to use international migration theories and studies to better delimitate the kind of migration under scrutiny. We verified throughout this article that many debates about causes and the role of the factors contributing to climate change could have been fuelled positively with this social science discipline. The evolution of specific theories has incorporated environmental issues coupled with other factors and much of the current academic production has a multidisciplinary approach.

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