



México 2010

Environmental Degradation, Climate Change, Migration and Development

Stephen Castles and Colin Rajah

PART I (Stephen Castles)

1. Climate change: politics and reality

The topic of the possible effects of climate change on migration has gained considerable prominence in recent years (McAdam, 2010a). The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC - a group of prominent climate scientists) has predicted that global warming will lead to an increasing frequency and severity of storms, cyclone and hurricanes, as well as longer term sea-level rise and desertification. These factors will severely affect people's ability to live and work in many regions, especially in coastal areas, small islands and river deltas. Global warming and the resulting effects on many parts of the world are well-established scientific facts. The failure of the United Nations Climate Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 marks the end of hopes that the world's leaders would unite to take measures to reduce greenhouse gas

emissions and to slow the process of global warming. Expectations of the next UN Climate change meeting in Mexico late in 2010 are low.

The global process of environmental degradation through carbon-intensive industries and transport was initiated by the rich nations of the Global North, although today it is also continued by emerging industrial powers - which are equally unwilling to adopt binding measures of mitigation. The consequences of global warming, on the other hand, are borne mainly by the less-developed nations and communities of the South, which often lack the resources needed to deal with them.

But what are these consequences, especially for the future of migration? That is a highly controversial question. *Environmentalists* have claimed that millions of people have already been displaced by climate change, and that tens of millions - even hundreds of millions - more will have to flee by 2050 (Myers and Kent, 1995). The most extreme claim was made by the British development charity, Christian Aid, which spoke of one billion displaced people (Christian Aid, 2007). Environmentalists coined the term 'environmental refugees' (Myers, 1997), and predicted that developed countries would be swamped by impoverished masses from the South, who would bring poverty, disease and criminality with them. The use of such emotive scenarios was designed to provoke politicians into taking action on climate change (although in the case of charities like Christian Aid, fundraising may also have been a consideration).

How real are such prospects? Some *migration and refugee experts* have argued that it is impossible to identify anybody who can be considered an environmental refugee (e.g. Black, 2001). However, well-intentioned, the extreme claims of environmentalists have had the effect of creating fear and exacerbating the hostility towards refugees that already existed in many countries. Today, the media and the Internet are full of predictions of catastrophe resulting from environmental displacement. Such highly-politicised views actually hinder understanding of the real effects of

climate change and have become an obstacle to action to support affected populations. Migration and refugee experts therefore call for recognition of the complexity of the relationships between climate change and human mobility.

2. **Environment and displacement: understanding complexity**

A first reason to reject the concept of the 'environmental refugee' is a *legal* one: the definition of a refugee in international law is based on the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which covers only people who have crossed an international border and who seek protection from individual persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality or membership in a particular social group (UNHCR, 2006). Most people affected by climate change are likely to move within their home countries (i.e. they are internal displacees who have not crossed an international border), and do not fulfil the Convention's criteria of individual persecution. International lawyers therefore argue that the 1951 Convention is not an appropriate instrument to protect people affected by climate change, and that other human rights measures are needed (see Kälin, 2010).

A second reason is *methodological*: environmentalists have simply assumed that sea-level rise, drought or desertification would turn all the people of affected regions into displacees (or even refugees), but there is no empirical evidence to show that this has happened. Migration specialists have therefore highlighted the need for research, especially at the local level, to examine whether people are really being displaced by climate change. Such research is now beginning to be carried out, as will be discussed below.

A third reason is *conceptual*: migration experts point out that environmental factors have always been one cause out of many that encourage people to migrate. Throughout human history, people have

moved in search of better living and working conditions, linked to geographical, economic, political and even religious factors of many kinds. The current debate is often marked by confusion between broader environmental factors and specific processes of climate change caused by human activity.

This leads to a fourth factor based on the *analysis of migratory flows*: it is only in the reductionist neo-classical view of individual costs and benefits that the causes of migration can be reduced to a single factor. A more comprehensive understanding of migration must take account of a wide range of causes, linked to global asymmetries, inequality, social transformations in both origin and destination areas, and the aims and strategies of the migrants themselves. Migration can never be explained through one factor alone. The environment has always been one factor among others. Today it seems clear that climate change is a significant factor in causing migration, but it is always also connected with some of the other factors mentioned here (see Hugo, 2010). A narrow view that looks only at climate change and migration, and ignores all other causes is not useful as a guide to social action. Moreover, there seems to be an assumption that migration (especially of poor people) is something negative that should be prevented (Bakewell, 2008). Against this is important to realise that migration can be a positive form of adaptation to climate change (Barnett and Webber, 2010) (and indeed other forms of change), and can lead to important processes of human development (UNDP, 2009).

Implicit in the previous point is the *importance of politics and the state*. Since, as already pointed out, the main effects of climate change will be felt in poorer countries, the state often lacks the capacity to act to assist populations affected by climate change in adapting and developing new ways of working and living. Thus the politics of global inequality play a major part in determining people's *vulnerability* to climate change and their *resilience* (capacity to adapt) to such change. In countries with

undemocratic and oppressive states, leaders also often lack the political will to support affected populations. The developed countries and the emerging industrial powers also lack the political will to take responsibility for the consequences of their highly-polluting mode of production.¹ Displacement in such situations is therefore more a result of economic inequality and political exclusion than of climate change. When climate change threatens a rich country (e.g. sea-level rise in the Netherlands) the state can act to limit displacement and to help in the adaptation of livelihoods. A comparable event in a poor country (e.g. drought in Ethiopia) will not lead to similar state action.

To sum up: the effects of climate change in many regions are likely to become increasingly important factors contributing to human mobility. However, to conceptualise 'climate-change migration' as something unique and distinct from other forms of migration is unhelpful. Rather, nearly all forms of migration have multiple causes. Understanding migration and working out strategies to support migrants require a comprehensive understanding of the process, in which climate change is one factor (albeit an increasingly important one) among others. It is important to realise that most people affected by climate change will not migrate, that where migration does take place it will be mainly internal rather than international, and that migration can be a positive and effective adaptation strategy.

3. 'Hot spots' and 'disappearing islands': where is climate change most likely to lead to migration?

Climate change is a global issue, but it does not affect everyone equally. Different geographical regions will experience varying impacts. For some areas – such as New Zealand and Siberia – there may even be positive effects, such as longer growing seasons and the chance to introduce new crops. However, the negative impacts will be concentrated in poorer

¹ The Copenhagen Summit did promise to provide US\$30 billion from 2010 to 2012, and to establish a fund of \$100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poorer countries, but going on the past record of such pledges by developed countries, considerable scepticism is appropriate as to whether these commitments will ever be met.

regions and particularly in those with large and dense populations. Graeme Hugo has carried out a useful review for the Asia Pacific region. He (Hugo, 2010, 18) identifies the following 'hot spots' where the relationship between climate change and migration is likely to be most apparent:

- Densely settled river delta regions;
- Low-lying coastal areas;
- Low-lying atolls and coral islands;
- Some river valleys; and
- Semi-arid low-humidity areas.

The largest populations who may be affected by climate change are in river delta regions like the Mekong delta of southern Vietnam and eastern Cambodia, the Yangtze delta around Shanghai, the Menem Delta around Bangkok and Ganges Delta of Bangladesh and North-eastern India. The Ganges delta – the world's biggest such region – is home to over 125 million people, who are amongst the world's poorest. The population density is around 200 persons per square kilometre – one of the highest population densities anywhere. The delta is frequently affected by floods and cyclones, leading to mass temporary displacements. The Bhola Cyclone of 1970 killed at least 500,000 people, while another cyclone in 1991 killed over 100,000. Extreme events such as cyclones and flooding are linked to human activity in at least four ways. First, floods are sometimes the result of the release of dam water by Indian authorities upstream on the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. Second, climate change increases the frequency of cyclones, and may also increase river flooding due to the melting of glaciers far away in the Himalayas. Third, population growth forces people to settle and develop economic activities such as farming and fishing on increasingly marginal and dangerous lands. Fourth, the poverty of many of the people and the weakness of the state makes adaptation strategies difficult.

Clearly, detailed analyses need to be carried out for all types of hot spot. As Hugo points out many of East Asia's megacities (cities with over 10 million inhabitants) like Shanghai, Tianjin, Tokyo, Osaka and Guangzhou are near the coast and have average heights above sea level of 5 metres or less, exposing huge populations to the risk of floods. Millions more live in vulnerable coastal areas that are less highly urbanised.

It is curious, therefore, that most public debates on climate-change displacement have focused on the 'disappearing islands' of the Pacific. Small island states like Kiribati and Tuvalu are highly vulnerable to flooding, but their populations are only a few thousands, so that migration to neighbouring countries like New Zealand and Australia could offer a solution – at least in terms of livelihoods and protection. The consequences of such displacement for culture, identity and national sovereignty would be much harder to resolve (McAdam, 2010b). Interestingly, even in such cases that appear to be clear instances of forced displacement, the politics of migration policies and national interests play an important part, with local leaders using fears of mass displacement to gain leverage in negotiations on labour migration (Gemenne, 2009). The obsession with 'disappearing islands is even more curious when one considers that 68 per cent of the population of the Pacific region lives in Papua New Guinea. Most of PNG's population live inland and will be affected not by sea-level rise, but by changes in temperature, rainfall and wind patterns. The possible severe impacts on livelihoods are not likely to lead to significant international migration.²

Global warming does not only affect coastal or river areas and does not always lead to much migration. An important study on the effects of climate change on the population of an inland, mountainous region is to be found in the research carried out Doug Massey and collaborators in Nepal. This study uses longitudinal data on a range of social indicators (such as class, religion, gender, livelihood patterns and environmental

² Personal communication from Professor Richard Bedford of Waikato University, New Zealand.

factors) from the Chitwan Valley Study. The findings demonstrate the complexity of linkages between climate change and local, internal and international migration (Pratikshya and Massey, 2009).

Many of the research findings on Asia and the Pacific almost certainly apply to other world regions too. There is an urgent need for research, both of the regional overview type carried out by Hugo and of the multi-factorial micro-level type represented by the Chitwan Valley Study. Yet, overall there is a surprising lack of sound empirical evidence. The most ambitious effort so far has been the Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios (EACH-FOR) Programme funded by the European Union under its Sixth Framework Research mechanism. Twenty-three research projects were carried out all over the world from 2007-9 (EACH-FOR Programme, 2009). EACH-FOR clearly represents an important initiative, but some concern has been expressed over the rather short-term nature of the research and about the narrow focus of some projects on perceived environmental push factors, as opposed to long-term analyses of a much wider range of factors and responses.³

4. Climate change, development and human rights

One aspect of the effects of climate change that has received little attention in debates of governments and intergovernmental organisations is the likely impacts on the economic and social development of the poorer countries of the South, and thus on the human rights and human security of their peoples. The economic benefits of the mode of production based on maximum exploitation of the world's natural and human resources have gone largely to the rich nations of the North and to the multi-national corporations. The neo-liberal ideology of short-term profit maximisation and de-regulation has made this mode of production appear as the only option available to emerging industrial powers. In this way analysis of the long term costs of this wasteful and polluting form of

³ For a discussion of EACH-FOR African research, and of other research findings on environmental factors in African migration dynamics see: (Jónsson, 2010).

economic activity for the world's peoples and especially for those of poorer nations has been largely ignored.

But the unequal distribution of the effects of climate change means that its negative effects are felt mainly by the nations and social groups that are most disempowered in the contemporary global order. The development of poorer countries is being severely hampered by the strains and costs of climate change. The countries that suffer most from climate change are those on the lower levels of global economic and political hierarchies, and at the same time climate change prevents such nations from climbing out of poverty. The effects of this for the people of poorer countries are felt not only at the economic level. Impoverishment and blocked development often lead to denial of human rights and to high levels of human insecurity.

However, it is not easy to assess the meaning of this new barrier to development. It would be simplistic to assume that impoverishment and denial of rights would automatically lead to more emigration. Migration research has shown that it is not the poorest of the poor who migrate, but rather people with somewhat higher incomes, who have the resources needed for mobility. Blocked development may lead to less migration, not more – except in extreme cases where it becomes impossible to remain in areas affected by climate change.

5. Forms of displacement

To what extent can climate-change induced displacement be seen as forced migration? As we have argued above, migration triggered entirely by the effects of climate change is quite rare. Most migration has multiple causes, of which climate change can be one. It is important to distinguish between *slow-onset effects of climate change* (like decline in rainfall or changes in crop fertility) and *rapid-onset events linked to climate change* (like cyclones or floods).

In the case of *slow-onset effects*, the populations involved often have considerable time to develop adaptation strategies, such as changing agricultural practices, planting new crops, developing irrigation systems and diversifying income sources. Much of this adaptation may take place without mobility, but a household's decision that one or more members should migrate to diversify household income may well be an effective part of an adaptation strategy. Slow-onset changes may permit a fairly high degree of *agency* of the part of affected communities, although such resilience depends a great deal on the availability of resources and support (especially from the state).

In the case of *rapid-onset events*, sudden flight (i.e. forced migration) may be the only option, and this may take place under very poor conditions, and without time for preparation. The level of *agency* in such cases is often low, although not absent altogether. However, such forced migration may be temporary in nature, as populations often return once the specific event has passed. This does not always happen: the climate event may permanently damage production systems or undermine people's confidence in the viability of living in the origin area. For instance only about half the people displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 actually returned. Again the availability of resources and support is crucial.

Hugo suggests that we should not see environmental displacement as an either/or situation, but rather as a continuum. At one end of the continuum, people make voluntary decisions to move in response to climate change; at the other end people are forced to flee from flooding or some other environmental disaster. However, many people are somewhere between these extremes, and can exercise varying degrees of agency (Hugo, 2010, 12). In the same vein, Roger Zetter has pointed out that even in situations of forced migration, people have some degree of agency, and can make choices about when and where to go (Zetter,

2010). Although people displaced by extreme climate events are undoubtedly forced migrants, it is unhelpful to see them as helpless victims. To do so often implies strategies of housing people in camps and providing them with material aid (such as food and medical care), while denying them any opportunity to develop their own livelihood strategies and rebuild their lives. In forms of migration where climate change is an important factor – just like in other forms of migration – the emphasis should always be on recognising the individual and collective capabilities of migrants, and on restoring their ability to participate in decision-making as active citizens.

PART II (Colin Rajah)

1. Dramatic Changes in Climate Threatening Populations and Communities

While climate data and predictions remain contentious, there is increasing empirical evidence suggesting that we are facing an almost unprecedented shift in climate patterns, which will only exacerbate in coming decades. Sometime in the next 20-50 years, current levels of worldwide carbon emissions will likely cause a doubling of pre-industrial greenhouse gases and very likely to commit the planet to a rise of 2-5°C in global mean temperatures (Leighton, 2009).

Even a 3°C rise by the end of this century, could cause a mean sea level rise of 1.3 meters (Leighton, *ibid*). Compared to just a 2.1mm (8 inches) rise over the last century, this rate is roughly equal to what was experienced during the global-wide melting during the end of the last ice-age, approximately 11,700 years ago! If realized, this would inundate deltas, coral atoll islands and other coastal lowlands, erode beaches, exacerbate coastal flooding, and threaten water quality in estuaries and aquifers. More than 17% of Bangladesh would be submerged, and 80% of the Maldives inhabited islands would disappear under water (Leighton, *ibid*).

Castles (see previous section) has already established the two primary impacts of such dramatic changes; rapid-onset and slow-onset:

Rapid onset would increase the incidence of storm surges, hurricanes, floods, and heat-waves. Furthermore, glacier melting in the Himalayas is projected to increase flooding in the region, rock avalanches from destabilized slopes, and decreased river flows as the glaciers retreat. These have an immediate and dramatic impact on displacing communities

as evidenced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita which caused more than 2 million people from the U.S. Gulf Coast to be homeless (US OPM, 2005).

Slow onset incidences however, while less dramatic and presenting more options for adaptation have a particularly direct impact upon rural, agricultural-based communities. Drought and desertification effects will threaten long-standing agricultural farmlands, fisheries collapse will undoubtedly cause the complete decimation of the livelihoods of fishing communities, and ecological thresholds might be exceeded thereby causing major species-habitat changes and a catastrophic disruption to a finely balanced ecosystem. There are also food and water scarcity crises already taking place in many impoverished regions which will only worsen, and even major cities will not be spared with increasing sanitation disposal challenges. Finally, as Castles also observes, sinking coastal areas is probably the most publicized slow onset impact, one that the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) has increasingly tried to highlight in international fora, especially at the UNFCCC (UNFCCC, 2007).

As a result, the overall area of severely stressed river basins is expected to expand significantly, from 1.6 billion dwellers in 1995, to almost 7 billion by 2050 (Payne, 2005). Just in Asia alone, some 120 million to 1.2 billion people are expected to be exposed to increased water stress in just the next 10 years.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has mapped worldwide coastal delta regions that would be highly (between 50,000 – 1 million people) or extremely (>1 million people) vulnerable to population displacement due to sea level rise by 2050. It identifies the Nile in Africa, the Ganges in South Asia, and the Chao Phraya in Southeast Asia as deltas with extreme vulnerability, while the Godavari in South Asia, the Changjiang in East Asia and the Mississippi in North America as deltas with high vulnerability (IPCC, 2007).

Almost all predictions are dire. The Red Cross and United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) already estimate about 25 million have been displaced due to impacts from climate change, more than all those displaced due to war (Leighton, *ibid*). But as Castles has established, climate by itself is not a singular cause of migration, nor is there necessarily a direct causal relation. However, by the end of this century, it is clear that we may witness between 30% to 60% losses in agricultural and food production in 21 countries, 2.3 billion people in drylands threatened with mega-droughts, and the livelihoods of 86% of all rural people will be at risk (Leighton, *ibid*).

That is enough to suggest that the issue has to have careful consideration in migration policy-making, and communities everywhere have to be actively advocating for better environmental policy, especially from states which are the primary perpetrators.

2. Root Causes: Where does Climate Change come from?

As Castles suggests (see previous section), there is a decisively socio-economic, political and racial injustice to these impacts. 98% of the 262 million people affected by natural disasters between 2000-2005, lived in the Global South. Even in the U.S., by the most conservative estimates, 30% of all who were displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were never able to return home, almost all of them African-American (Leighton, *ibid*).

This suggests that climate change itself is not the sole impetus for displacement, nor is the current level of change natural by any means. In fact, it is a byproduct (albeit a far-reaching and impactful one at that) of a neoliberal global economic system which has created vastly unequal development between regions. As a result, displacement occurs in poorer communities in the Global South, while wealthier communities in the Global North indulge in excessive consumption and energy use, resulting in extreme levels of carbon emissions.

As such, the differentiation suggested by “climate refugee” definitions from those displaced due to economic, war/militarization and other factors, make little sense. Aside from the methodological complications already raised by Castles earlier, such identifications set an unintended “hierarchy of oppression” especially as proponents advocate for legal redress. It is not only unjust, but also ineffective as it fails to address the large political-economic context in which climate change is taking place. Furthermore, we may well see displaced communities of all kinds, attempting to classify themselves as impacted by climate merely to obtain such redress and move to “the front of the line” in gaining documented status in the countries of destination, further neglecting the other factors of displacement already well-entrenched in this global economic system.

3. **Adaptation as Cause: REDD**

One factor definitely already causing displacement is ironically, one of the primary adaptation “solutions” offered by negotiating governments within the UNFCCC. REDD (Reduction in Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) and its various versions of REDD+ and REDD++ has been widely critiqued by indigenous communities for treating Mother Earth and particularly forests, as merely carbon absorbing commodities.

One of the most vocal and high profile critics, Bolivian President Evo Morales has condemned this form of adaptation strategy, “...some propose to commoditize forests on the false argument that only what has a price and owner is worth taking care of” (Morales, 2010). He continues, “their proposal is to consider only one of the functions of forests, which is its ability to absorb carbon dioxide, and issue “certificates”, “credits” or “carbon rights” to be commercialized in a carbon market” (Morales, *ibid*).

Indigenous communities have long warned that REDD will most certainly lead to the loss of legal title over lands settled by indigenous communities for generations. Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network contends “increasing the financial value of forests could lead to the biggest land grabs of all time” (Mukerjee, 2009). According to Interpol, large multinational organized crime syndicates are already planning to reap unscrupulous profit through REDD by expelling indigenous communities from their forests in order to acquire legal title over it (Mukerjee, *ibid*).

Perhaps the worst outcome of REDD is that it allows polluting states and corporate entities to continue their current levels of carbon emissions, while buying carbon credits to “green-wash” their polluting ways. Communities in the Global South, particularly forest-dwelling ones, have to bear the burden of this indiscretion, while the REDD agencies and Global North industries profit from it.

4. Greening of Hate: Jumping on the Population Control, Anti-Migrant and Militarization Bandwagon

Another troubling trend in false predictions and solutions around climate comes from the population control and anti-migrant lobby. Some of these groups are claiming that population growth is a major cause of climate change, and this is primarily perpetrated by large-scale migration (Hartmann, 2009). This view undermines real solutions and a progressive climate justice agenda.

Empirical data directly contradict population control proponents. Industrialized countries such as the U.S. and Western Europe, account for only 20 percent of the world population but emit 80 percent of the accumulated carbon in the atmosphere. In a single year, the U.S. is responsible for 20 tons of carbon emissions per person, compared to

merely 0.2 tons in Bangladesh, 0.3 in Kenya and 3.9 in Mexico (Hartmann, *ibid*). Even countries that have the highest birth-rates, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa, account for only 2.5 percent of the world's carbon emissions (Dow & Downing, 2007).

The growing “greening of hate” strategy by anti-migration groups, have unfortunately held some environmental movements hostage. They claim that migration flows over-populate urban and developed regions, and migrants should remain in their home countries where they consume less energy (Hartmann, 2009). They go on further to blame migrants for every conceivable environmental degradation including, but not limited to, “the destruction of forests, national parks and natural habitats, over-consumption of resources, deadly sewage on beaches, continually expanding sprawl and more” (Center for New Community, 2009). These misleading arguments veil the fact that the Global North is still disproportionately responsible for the majority of carbon emissions and other pollutants, and that should be the target for correction, not laying the blame on vulnerable communities under enormous economic pressures already.

The most dangerous result of fear-mongering around climate crises, centers around military amplification efforts. The U.S. Pentagon is one such proponent, sponsoring a 2003 study on the impacts of climate change which depicted poor, starving, over-populated communities in the Global South overwhelming the environmental capacities of their lands, engaging in violent conflict over scarce resources, and storming en masse towards Western borders (Schwartz & Randall, 2003). This narrative is serving as a rationale for further militarization of both repressive migration enforcement, and expansion of U.S. military intervention especially into Africa. Some extremists are even going so far as to suggest that millions of displaced Muslim “climate refugees” present a new and growing source of potential Islamic terrorists (Black, 2008).

5. **Need for a Climate Justice Movement among Migrant Communities and Migrants Rights Advocates**

What is lacking in all of this discourse is an assertion for the need of developing a climate justice movement among migrant communities and migrants rights advocates. Leaving the intersection of climate and migration to be claimed by well-intended but misinformed environmentalists is unfruitful at the least, and dangerous at the worst. As Castles has asserted, the preoccupation with defining “climate refugees” or “environmental migrant” has been useless and distracted attention and resources to the more urgent need for critical analyses and corresponding policy responses.

What is clear is that the Conference of the Parties (COP) process of the UNFCCC is being coopted by economically rich and politically powerful states. Expecting any real effective and enforceable solutions to come out from the COPs will require significant advocacy and pressure through a dual “inside-outside” strategy. Migrant communities and migrants rights advocates have to join alongside other environmental and climate justice movements if we are to be able to effectively respond to this urgency in a manner that allow just and equitable development while protecting the human rights of migrants.

A recent encouraging development in this respect has been the People’s World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth (PWCCC), convened by the Bolivian government⁴. Unlike in most previous international fora on climate, the migration thematic sessions were driven and led predominantly by migrants rights advocates and academics, and outcomes from the plenary and working group 6 on climate migration, were generally directed towards the need for greater human rights

⁴ April 19-22, Cochabamba, Bolivia (<http://pwccc.wordpress.com>)

protections for migrants and calling for more significant input and consultation with migrant communities.

The People's Accord from the PWCCC offers a starting point for governmental advocacy. However, presumably due to space and other constraints, some key points of discussion raised at both the climate migration plenary and its corresponding working group, failed to make it onto the summarized People's Accord. Instead, a better reference can be found under that working group's category archive⁵. The most critical element of this is that climate-drive migration stems from the dominant capitalist global development agenda which overexploits and degrades natural resources, which corresponds with assertions made in this paper.

The People's Accord acts at least as a counter-balance to the Copenhagen Accord (Building Bridges Collective, 2010). However, both the People's Accord and the Climate Migration working group's outcome paper are still wanting in contextual analyses of migration and offering solutions that are materially and culturally necessary to ensure both climate justice and migrants rights advancements.

Instead a deeper understanding is required around the contentious issues surround climate and international climate legislation by migrant communities and migrants rights advocates, in order for more decisive action to be taken. The 5th People's Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights in Mexico City, Mexico offers an opportunity to take a big step toward this. Taking place just a few weeks before COP 16 in Cancun, Mexico⁶, the PGA can serve to generate deeper dialogue and concrete proposals for advocacy actions that can feed into the mobilization towards Cancun and beyond. Not only is this a unique opportunity that should not be missed, it is a necessary and critical step

⁵ <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/04/16/working-group-6-climate-migrants/>

⁶ The 16th Conference of the Parties convenes high-level ministerial parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, on November 29 to December 10, 2010 in Cancun, Mexico. See <http://www.cc2010.mx>.

toward formulating better migration, development and indeed climate and environmental policies internationally.

References