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# Environmental Migration: The Adaptive and Fatalist view

Discourse analysis of International Organizations

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# **Table of contents**

- 1. Abstract**
- 2. Key words**
- 3. Acronyms and abbreviations**
- Part I**
- 4. Introduction**
  - a. Objectives**
  - b. Motives**
- 5. Methodology**
- 6. Literature Review**
- 7. Summarizing the Fatalist and the Adaptive view on environmental migration**
- 8. Coding categories**
- Part II**
- 9. Discussion: The Discourses on environmental migration of IGOs and NGOs**
  - a. Discourse of International Governmental Organizations**
    - i. International Organization of Migration**
    - ii. World Bank Group**
  - b. Discourse of Non-Governmental Organizations**
    - i. Red Cross**
    - ii. Christian Aid**
    - iii. Friends of Earth**
- 10. Conclusions**
- 11. Bibliography**

## **1. Abstract**

Environmental conditions are and will continue to be relevant push and pull factors for migration. As a result, the subject of environmental migration emerged in the 80s aiming to study and question the relation between the environment and migration. Since then, the extent to which the environment influences migration continues to be a matter of debate. On one side, the fatalist view understands environmental migration as an inevitable exodus. On the other, the adaptive view regards environmental migration as a practical adaptation strategy for climate change. What is more, many academics and international organizations have framed environmental migration through the fatalist or the adaptive discourse. The results are different approaches and policy recommendations on environmental migration.

## **2. Key Words**

Migration, environmental migration, discourse, international organizations, policy recommendation

### **3. Acronyms and abbreviations**

IO: International Organizations

IGO: International Governmental Organizations

IOM: International Organization of Migration

FOE: Friends of Earth

NGO: Non-governmental Organizations

WB: World Bank Group

## **4. Introduction**

### **Motives and objectives**

The subject of environmental migration has gained prominence in academic literature, in policy debates and in the media in the last few years. Environmental change will have multiple consequences for humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but how it will impact human migration is especially relevant. Environmental factors are and will continue to be relevant push and pull factors for migrants. However, to what extent the environment influences migration is still a matter of debate.

Since the 80s, the relation between the environment and migration has been studied and questioned. Some academics and International Organizations (IOs) argue that environmental migration will cause an inevitable exodus. On the contrary, other academics and IOs contemplate environmental migration as a sensible adaptation alternative for environmental change. In any case, the lack of consensus on environmental migration produces different discourses about the topic. In turn, academics and IOs approach environmental migration from different perspectives and propose different ways of action.

For this reason, I am interested in studying the different discourses on environmental migration. In my opinion, it is important to understand how different views on environmental migration frame the issue, as the negative or positive understanding of environmental migration leads to different strategies and policies to address the issue. In specific, it is interesting how highly influential IOs in shaping migration policies approach environmental migration, not only because of the impact of IOs on policy creation, but also because the discourse of IOs on environmental migration is an understudied topic. While there are some literature reviews on environmental migration, nobody has studied how different IOs address environmental migration.

With these considerations in mind, the first objective of this work is to provide a comprehensive and analytic literature review on the subject of environmental migration. The literature review will allow me to identify and organize the literature around the main discourses on environmental

migration: the fatalist view and the adaptive view on environmental migration. Relying on the insights gathered in the literature review, the second objective of this work is to contrast the main views on environmental migration with IOs' discourses on environmental migration. Employing five case studies, I will discuss if the discourse of IOs frames environmental migration through a fatalist view or an adaptive view.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. Conduct a critical literature review of the most significant contributions made thus far on environmental migration.
2. Identify gaps in the literature.
3. Identify and connect the contributions along the different discourses on environmental migration.
4. Based on the identified views on environmental migration, discuss how IOs frame environmental migration through the fatalist view or the adaptive view.

### **5. Methodology**

In order to answer the research questions and objectives of this work, I have chosen a qualitative methodological approach. First, I conduct a critical literature review of the relevant academic contributions on environmental migration. The critical literature review will allow me to identify the main discourses on the environmental migration debate. The works and authors included in the literature review were selected taking into account their relevance for this work. I only included those authors and works whose contributions advanced significantly the fatalist or adaptive debate of environmental migration. The terms used in the search were “environmental migration”, “environmental migrants”, “environmental refugees”, “climate migration” and “environmental displacement”. The chosen criteria for the search were: public works available in google and google scholar, works in English, academic works, and works about environmental migration or environmental refugees. The exclusion criteria for the search were works that were not mentioned in other literature reviews on environmental migration.

Secondly, I contrasted the two main discourses on environmental migration (previously identified in the literature review) with five cases. The case studies consist of migration related International Organizations and their discourses regarding environmental migration. Of the five case studies, I selected two International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and three Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). As samples of IGOs I chose the International Organization for Migration and the World Bank Group. Both IGOs were selected because they are respected organizations oriented towards migration policy recommendation. In addition, these IGOs have carried out extensive research, projects, and literature on environmental migration. In a similar way, as samples of NGOs, I chose the Red Cross (IFRC), Christian Aid, and Friends of the Earth (FOE). These NGOs were selected because of their international recognition and their long history in denouncing and advocating for better human conditions. Further, I decided to use three NGOs with different areas of advocacy, as it is interesting to compare if they approach environmental migration in a similar way depending on their expertise. Each NGO has a unique aspect that makes it an interesting unit of analysis: the IFRC is the largest and most institutionalized organization of the three NGOs. Instead, Christian Aid is a European based NGO that aims to raise funds in rich countries to alleviate poverty in less developed regions. Finally, FOE is an environmentalist NGO.

## **6. Literature review**

### **6.1. The fatalist view on environmental migration**

The beginning of research on the subject of environmental migration can be traced back to El-Hinnawi's report on Environmental Refugees commissioned by the United Nations Environmental Program (2008) more than 30 years ago. He is one of the earliest academics to bring attention to the linkage between climate change and human mobility, advancing the earliest typologies, definitions and estimates on the subject. His research centered on asserting the existence of a new category of refugees (environmental refugees), which he defined as "those people that have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporary or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption that jeopardize their existence and/or seriously affects the quality of their life" (1984: 4). This is a concept that would become the center of discussion during the first years

of study on the subject of environmental migration, despite its conceptual and legal limitations; as stated in the previous definitions, the term does not fulfill the 1951 Refugee Convention criteria. Besides, it ignores the various overlapping causes of migration, focusing on displacement rather than human mobility and failing to differentiate between internal/international and temporary/permanent flows.

Moreover, El-Hinnawi conducted the first attempt to estimate the amount of people displaced due to environmental factors, coming up with the figure of 30 million. The author's estimate was based on his own typology of environmental migration. El-Hinnawi's typology consisted of 3 sub-categories: "those who had been temporarily displaced because of an environmental stress; those who had to be permanently displaced and resettled in a new area; those who migrated within their national boundaries because the resource base in their natural habitat had deteriorated to offer no sustenance" (El-Hinnawi, 1985:4). The academic community would point out later on the lack of empirical accuracy of El-Hinnawi's estimates (Black, 2001). Critics of the author argued that his typology failed to differentiate between voluntary and involuntary migrants, not taking into account other overlapping drivers of migration. Regardless, El-Hinnawi's work would become the base for subsequent estimates and studies in environmental migration. The author's estimates would be cited in multiple studies and articles focused on stopping climate change as a tool to mobilize supporters. Also, his work attracted a lot of attention from the media and policy makers.

El-Hinnawi's initial contribution framed the environmental migration debate as a critical issue of uttermost urgency. He accomplished this by proposing an ambiguous definition of the term environmental refugee; by using this term, instead of the more impartial term of environmental migrant; and by proposing estimates that lack a clear methodology, parameters and data sources, but end up predicting high figures of environmentally displaced people. These three elements would become common attributes of what I consider the "fatalist view of environmental migration". By this I mean a discourse that approaches environmental migration as a critical and unavoidable migration exodus, born out of this initial understanding of the topic by El-Hinnawi. The concept implies a direct causal link between environmental distress and migration, ignoring

additional drivers for migration, human agency, and capacity to adapt or mitigate climate stressors.

During the first years of research on environmental migration, the topic was predominantly approached through the fatalist view. In 1988, Jodi Jacobsen published the report *Environmental Refugees: a Yardstick of Habitability* commanded by the WorldWatch Institute, based on El-Hinnawis work. The focus of the report remained on environmental refugees, with an abstract definition of “people fleeing from environmental declines” (1988:6). Her typologies of environmental migration were similar to those of El-Hinnawis, with three sub-categories that linked how temporary or permanent the displacement was depending on the time frame of the environmental stressor; temporary displacement was associated with temporary environmental stress (Gemenne, 2011). The typology was inaccurate as it gave too much importance to the timespan, disregarding important variables, such as the degree of coercion imposed on migrants or the distance traveled by migrants. But despite the shortcomings of Jacobsen’s typology, she advanced the existence of regions where environmental displacement would predominantly take place, emphasizing Sub-Saharan Africa and coastal regions in SouthEast Asia. This is a relevant contribution by Jacobsen because it brings attention to the unequal impact of environmental change in migration flows depending on the region’s geography and degree of development.

Jacobsen’s report ended by asserting that environmental refugees were the largest class of displaced people worldwide. The author’s statement is based on her own estimate of 10 million people displaced for environmental reasons, which appears to take into account all internal displacement (regardless of other drivers) that took place in the regions mentioned before. Jacobsen’s statement is clearly aligned with the fatalist view, as it has an alarmist intention but lacks a strong empirical base. The fatalist discourse grew with the increase of speculative estimates, with inflated figures of environmental displacement appearing more and more often. Another author who speculated with estimates is Westing (1992), who proposes that 15.5 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide between 1986 and 1992. His prediction was based on a comparison of the number of people forcibly displaced worldwide in 1986 (26.4 million) and 1992 (41.5 million). The author hypothesizes that the increase in forced displacements was due to

these “environmental refugees”, without seriously examining the drivers of the various migration flows. To Westing, the rise in forced migration is attributed to a single proxy, namely, environmental changes (Gemenne, 2011).

During the 90s, some climate scientists ventured into the subject of environmental migration, advancing their own estimates of existing and future flows. The most prolific of these authors was Norman Myers, who published multiple studies in the 90s and early 2000s. His works cautioned policy makers and the public about the “growing phenomenon” of environmental refugees. His estimates have become the most influential, quoted and debated in the subject, notable for their inflated figures, proposing that there were already 25 million people displaced by environmental change in 1995 and predicting that 200 million people would be displaced in the future (1995). This figure appears to be based on the aggregate of different country reports, some of them conducted by him. His work has some methodological flaws, since it is not clear which methodology was applied in each country report used in the estimate.

Myers' main argument was that the rise in human displacement was the result of three interrelated factors: environmental degradation, spreading poverty, and demographic expansion. Of the three factors, he gave prominence to environmental degradation, since he contended that it directly affected the other two factors. Meaning that Myers’ forecasts took into account not only migrants with an environmental motivation, but also those with social and economic motivations. Just as other scholars of the fatalist view, Meyers used the term environmental refugees in all of his reports, which he understood as “people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation and other environmental problems, together with the associated problems of population pressures and profound poverty (Meyers, 2002: 56). This author’s definition failed to differentiate temporary from permanent migration and internal from international migration. By using this wording, it is clear that the definition makes reference to displacement rather than to mobility. In addition, Myers’ environmental refugees definition combines environmental drivers with other economic and social drivers, as explained before.

The alarmist tone and figures that appear in Meyers' reports about environmental migration point out his role as one of the most prominent advocates of the fatalist view. Indeed, the author is responsible for the widespread diffusion of the fatalist view in the early 2000s. His figure of 25 million environmental refugees was used in many articles that aimed to raise awareness on this "new category" of refugees. An example of this is the petition of refugee recognition made by Consibee and Simms (2003).

In sum, until the early 2000s the fatalist view dominated the environmental migration debate. Despite the view's lack of accuracy and methodological shortcomings, the fatalist discourse was useful to attract attention towards environmental migration. The alarming estimates of displaced people made environmental migration known to policy creators, the media and other academics. Inciting authors from the field of migration to publish critical works on the fatalist view on environmental migration.

## **6.2. The adaptive view of environmental migration**

During the 90s, part of the literature on environmental migration deviated from its initial alarmist tone, disputing the relevance given until then to "environmental refugees". Authors from migration studies, such as Bilborrow and McGregor (1992), contrasted the conceptualization of the "environmental refugee" with experience they had gathered from the field of migration. In their conclusions, they criticized that the concept was over simplistic, as this conceptualization considered the environment as the sole driver of migration (Bilborrow, 1992), and it implicitly denied individual capacity to respond to climate change, ergo rejecting human agency (McGregor, 1994). These contributions acknowledged that not all environmentally induced movements fall into the refugee category, given the complexity and multi-causality of migration dynamics. Building on this opinion, Shurke (1994: 481) drew a distinction between environmental migrants, who "respond to a mix of push-pull factors", and environmental refugees, who are "particularly vulnerable people displaced by extreme environmental degradation". The author talks about environmental pressure points, where a mix of climate stimulus (e.g., deforestation, rising sea levels, desertification and drought, and degradation of water and air) establish the susceptibility

for environmental migration. Shurke's typology recognized important variables that had been neglected in previous research, such as human agency, the degree of coercion induced by environmental factors, and the existence of overlapping drivers of migration. Therefore, Shurke's contribution is notable in recognizing that environmental migration is not mono-causal nor easily quantifiable, pointing out a lack of empirical data on the subject.

By contesting the widespread use of the concept of environmental refugee in the subject, the adaptive view was born. The authors of this view shifted their efforts into studying the broader link between environmental change and human mobility. The aim was to correctly distinguish the diverse movements and drivers of environmental migration. For them, environmental migration was not limited to the issue of environmental refugees. Authors of the adaptive view understood environmental refugees as a small group of a broader and more complex issue. Thus, their research examined in depth the causes of environmental migration; the coercion, or the motivation to migrate; its legal and policy implications; the function of migration as a process of adaptation; and the potential risks of environmental change. These authors pointed out that the environmental migration debate had been of normative nature until then. As a result, the adaptive view argued that it was necessary to increase empirical research on environmental migration to connect theory and reality.

The most important contributions for the adaptive view would appear from the 2000s onwards, when authors examined in more depth notions such as vulnerability, adaptability, and mitigation and their role in environmental migration. Mcleman and Smit (2006:14) acknowledged that "migration should not be considered as a simple or automatic response to a singular risk, climate-related or otherwise". Instead, they considered migration as a potentially adaptive outcome. The authors proposed the climate-migration model, which takes into account the relevance of vulnerability in climate related migration. They saw vulnerability and environmental migration as functions of the degree of exposure and the degree of adaptive capacity. This new approach meant that as exposure increases and the adaptive capacity of a community or individual decreases, communities and individuals become more vulnerable. If communities or individuals are more vulnerable, migration becomes a more attractive adaptive response to climate related exposure. This approach builds on Shurke's perspective, acknowledging that the push and pull factors

behind each migration flow are different because the degree of vulnerability of a community changes depending on the particular region, society, and environmental event. What is more, McLeman and Smit go a step further, introducing the variables of adaptive capacity and exposure. These variables integrate the extent of coercion imposed by the environmental factor and the unique characteristics that each society and region possess in a single equation.

For authors of the adaptive view, the linkage between climate change and mass migration had not been explicitly demonstrated, but it had derived from “common sense” (Black, 2001). Thus, Baettig et. al. (2008) undertook the task to make this linkage explicit through the study of two “mechanisms” (sea level rise and floods), incorporating multiple new variables, notably the various alternative adaptation options. Since adaptation alternatives can modify the vulnerability of an individual or community, these authors argued that migration should be investigated in the context of the other alternatives available, with migration being usually the last alternative chosen. They concluded that the linkage between environmental migration existed, but it was by no means deterministic, since it depended on various factors pertinent to the region and to the degree of vulnerability of each society.

For the literature of the adaptive view, it became clear that alternative adaptation options were central to environmental migration. Indeed, the occurrence of environmental migration depended on the existence and viability of alternative adaptation options. Therefore, academics started to investigate in depth the different adaptation alternatives to environmentally-induced migration. Cecilia Tacoli’s paper for the Expert Group Meeting on Population Dynamics and Climate Change organized by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the International Institute on Environment and Development (IIED), investigated environmental migration in a context of high mobility. This author understands mobility (along with income diversification) as an important strategy to reduce vulnerability to environmental stressors, increasing resilience. She criticized the alarmist framing of environmental migration used by other authors. In her view, the alarmist view of migration reinforces the negative perception of migration held by governments of migration. In turn, this leads to unsuccessful policies that fail to support correct adaptation strategies to climate change. She advocates for an immediate shift in the understanding of

migration and the role played by national institutions, making mobility part of the solution instead of the problem.

Macleman (2006) examined four case studies of drastic climate events and used them as analogues to identify generic causal, temporal, and spatial elements of environmental migration with the aim to draw conclusions that could better inform policy-making. Regarding the causal connection, the case studies suggested that environmental factors were one of multiple push and pull factors that acted upon migration. Macleman takes into account that environmental drivers interact with additional socioeconomic, political, and cultural processes in shaping migration decision-making. Also, research carried out by the adaptive view strongly suggested that environmental migration is closely linked to the adaptive capacity of an individual or community. In addition, the adaptive view research pointed out that sociodemographic characteristics strongly shape the probability of permanent migration and showed that permanent migration is the less chosen adaptation option. Therefore, the nature and the scale of environmental migration depends on the degree to which the international community deals with proactive capacity-building, especially in vulnerable regions and populations. If done correctly, the efforts could enhance the adaptive capacity of vulnerable households, reducing involuntary environmentally induced migration.

The adaptive view of migration advanced the environmental migration debate by trying to better understand the relationship between environmental factors and human migration. The adaptive view is aware of the difficulties of studying environmental migration. For this reason, the adaptive view prefers to investigate the different variables and the importance of each variable on environmental migration, before adventuring into inaccurate estimates. What is more, the adaptive view on environmental migration introduces human mobility as an adaptation strategy to climate stressors. Understanding migration from this angle opens the door to a wide range of strategies that can target the needs of environmental migrants.

## **7. Summarizing the fatalist and adaptive view on environmental migration**

As stated throughout the literature review, this work identifies two different views through which environmental migration is understood: the fatalist view and the adaptive view. Each view is constituted by a basic set of assumptions, granting each a unique voice and grouping together the different authors and their contributions. With this information, I propose a number of conceptual categories that help classify different approaches to environmental migration as alarmist or adaptive. I then use these categories to explore different governmental and non-governmental organizations approaches to environmental migration.

### **7.1. Fatalist view**

The fatalist view states a direct causal link between environmental factors and changes and mass migration. For them, harsh climate stressors lead directly to population displacement, ruling out alternative options to migration and overlooking difficulties to migrate. This view also ignores the degree of coercion imposed by the climate stressor and the degree of resilience of each community. By ignoring these elements, the fatalist view implicitly disregards human agency, depicting environmental migration as an almost automatic reaction to environmental stressors. This is reflected in the terms that advocates of the fatalist view use to refer to these migrants, most clearly evident in referring to them as “*environmental refugees*” instead of environmental migrants, and talking about “*displacement*” rather than of mobility. These concepts describe a forced outcome instead of a premeditated and voluntary one.

The fatalist view draws a simplistic typology of environmental migrants, mostly based in the temporary framework of environmental events and migration flows. This view does not take into account the geographic scope of the movement (internal or international), nor the degree of coercion (voluntary or involuntary). Also, the typology on environmental migration of the fatalist view is so broad, that it includes migrants whose motivations to migrate have an economic or social nature. As a result, the estimates of the fatalist view on environmental migration predict large numbers of people on the move, since these estimates are based on a broad and undifferentiated typology of environmental migrants.

## **7.2. Adaptive view**

The adaptive view shows a non-deterministic link between environmental factors and changes and migration flows. For this view, migration is a complex phenomenon that involves multiple push and pull factors, one of them being environmental change. Also, the alternative adaptation options and the degree of vulnerability of a community impact whether migration will occur or not. The adaptive view acknowledges human agency in the migration process, recognizing that people evaluate all the available options and rationally choose the most convenient choice. Notably, the adaptive view does not regard migration as necessarily negative, understanding that in some situations it can be a helpful adaptation strategy for climate change. Therefore, the terms they use to refer to this phenomenon depart from those that depict the issue as forceful and negative, opting for more neutral and objective concepts. Specifically, proponents of the adaptive view talk about migrants and not about refugees, since the later term does not take into account the diverse types of migration flows nor the diverse drivers of environmental migration. Finally, advocates of the adaptive view prefer the use of mobility rather than displacement, as mobility is a term that takes into account different degrees of coercion and human agency.

Authors from the adaptive view are aware of the complexity of producing accurate estimates, given the difficulty of separating correctly the overlapping drivers of migration. As a result, their empirical research is more focused on understanding the role and the weight of the different drivers (among them the environment) present in environmental migration rather than in predicting the number of people that will be involved in it. Finally, this adaptive approach recognizes that environmental migration can be avoided to a great extent through proactive capacity building strategies that decrease a region's or community's vulnerability. Hence, the adaptive view calls for national policies that instead of focusing on halting migration, focus on capacity building or facilitate migration when it is the best option.

## 8. Coding categories

I will proceed to identify key concepts from each of the views that will serve as coding categories. These key concepts come from the basic constitutive assumptions exposed in the previous paragraphs, but I will state an operational definition for each of them for practical purposes:

### *Terms:*

The terms used by each view differ principally in the degree of human agency and coercion that they assign to environmental migrants. The fatalist view assigns low human agency and high coercion to environmental migration (environmental refugee/ human displacement) and the adaptive view assigns high human agency and lower levels of coercion (environmental migrant/ human mobility).

### *Type of linkage:*

The main difference between the views is how they regard the role that environmental factors have on migration. The fatalist view assigns them a sole/direct impact onto migration (direct causal link), while the adaptive view assigns them an overlapping/indirect impact onto migration (non deterministic link).

### *Empirical research and Estimates:*

The focus of empirical research carried out under each of the views is different, producing disparate estimates. The fatalist view tries to produce numerical estimates on the amount of people involved in past and future environmental migration flows. In contrast, the adaptive view is interested in understanding how each factor influences migration patterns and to what extent.

### *Policy recommendation*

Each view recommends different ways to deal with environmental migration from a policy point of view. The fatalist view puts the focus on stopping climate change and granting these migrants refugee status. The adaptive view puts the focus on capacity building and creating pro-migration strategies.

Coding categories	Fatalist View	Adaptive View
Terms	Refugees	Migrants
	Displacement	Mobility
Type of Linkage	Direct causal link	Non deterministic link
Empirical research and estimates	Focus on predicting large numbers of displaced people	Focus on understanding the degree of influence of each factor
Policy recommendations	Focus on stopping climate change and granting refugee status to environmentally displaced people	Focus on capacity building and pro-migration strategies (no me queda claro que quieres decir por pro-migration strategies ....)

Table 1. View's classification (Self elaboration)

## **Part II**

### **9. Discussion: The discourses on environmental migration of IGOs and NGOs**

The sections above have provided an informed discussion of the two major approaches to environmental migration. Using this previous work, I will proceed to categorize the discourse chosen by International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) into the fatalist or the adaptive view of migration. I advance a hypothesis on what type of organizations are more prone to use the fatalist or the adaptive discourse of environmental migration. My expectation is that IGOs will use the adaptive discourse, since they are oriented to operational policy implementation and advice on environmental migration. Instead, I expect that NGOs will use the fatalist discourse, since they are oriented towards denouncement, fund raising, and increasing public opinion awareness on environmental migration.

To prove or discard the previous hypotheses, I will research the discourse of relevant IGOs and NGOs on environmental migration. I will use the coding categories of Table 1 to determine if the IGOs and NGOs discourse falls into the fatalist or the adaptive view of migration. To this end, I focus on the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank Group as samples of IGOs. I will use the Red Cross, Christian Aid, and Friends of the Earth as samples of NGOs. I choose to concentrate in these IGOs and NGOs because they are respected organizations oriented either towards policy recommendation or denouncement. Comparing the discourses of International Organizations that work towards different goals helps me identify in which situation the fatalist or the adaptive view is used. Also, using IGOs and NGOs of different areas of expertise allows me to examine if their discourse changes depending on the background of each International Organization.

*a. International Governmental Organizations*

*i. International Organization for Migration (IOM)*

The International Organization for Migration was established in 1951 and it is the main intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. The IOM promotes humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all, providing services and advice to migrants and governments. In particular, environmental migration represents a relevant subsection of study for the IOM. The organization “has been at the forefront of operational, research, policy and advocacy efforts seeking to bring environmental migration to the heart of national, regional, and international concerns with multiple publications, projects, policy recommendations on the topic” (IOM, 2021<sup>1</sup>). The IOM has a Migration, Environment, and Climate Change Division (MECC) and devotes a specific section of the IOM website to the Environmental Migration Portal. In addition, the IOM implements the project Migration, Environment and Climate Change-Evidence for Policy (MECLEP), that explores the means by which migration can contribute to adaptation strategies through data collection.

*Terms: Environmental migrants and mobility*

The IOM uses the term environmental migrants and rejects the use of the term environmental refugees. In the report “Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence” the IOM states that “terms, such as “climate change refugee” or “environmental refugee” are widely used in the media but these terms are a misnomer under international law and risk undermining the very precise legal definition of a refugee and the protection regime which exists” (IOM, 2009: 18). This led the IOM to develop a working definition on environmental migrants in the absence of an internationally agreed definition in 2007 (IOM,2009:18). The IOM then uses the term environmental migrants whenever they address the relation between migration and environment.

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<sup>1</sup> <<https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/policy/human-mobility-unfccc>> [Accessed 26 April 2021].

Then the IOM shifted from referring to environmental migration as displacement in the early 90s, to referring to it as mobility from the late 1990s onwards. In 1992, the IOM with the Refugee Policy Group published the conference report *Migration and Environment* (1992), stating that by the turn of the century there may be one billion people who have been environmentally displaced from their original habitat. But since that report, the IOM discourse on environmental migration gives preference to the use of the term *mobility*. An example is the title of the report “The poor pay the price: New research insights on human mobility, climate change and disasters” published in 2015; or the 2008 Expert Seminar: *Migration and the environment*, that states that “the IOM addresses linkages between the environment on the one hand, and human settlement and population movement on the other from a human mobility perspective” (IOM, 2008: 5).

*Linkage: Not deterministic.*

The IOM discourse on environmental migration recognizes a non-deterministic link between environmental factors and migration. In the report “*Migration, Environment and Climate Change*” (2009), the IOM notes that “Climate change, on its own, does not directly displace people or cause them to move but it produces environmental effects and exacerbates current vulnerabilities that make it difficult for people to survive where they are” (IOM, 2009:14). In the same report, the organization expresses that “the extent to which the environment, including climate change, is the primary driver of migration remains debatable for several reasons” (IOM, 2009:13).

*Empirical research and estimates: Focus on understanding the relevance of each driver of migration.*

For the IOM, empirical research so far has failed to produce correct estimates on current and future flows of environmental migration. This organization says that “there are several factors which make it difficult to measure current levels of environmental migration and to predict the likely scale of future follows. It is extremely difficult to predict the impact of climate change and climate modelling techniques to date have not yet begun to account adequately for the impact of individual choice, the potential for international action and the variability of future emissions and meteorological scenarios” (IOM, 2009:20). Furthermore, the IOM points out that current scientific models aiming to predict environmental migration “need to be complemented by more targeted research to identify the social, economic and political factors that can make some individuals,

households and communities more likely than others to migrate or be displaced during various situations of environmental change.” (IOM, 2008: 43). It is evident that the IOM places the focus of empirical research on identifying how different factors may result in environmental migration.

*Policy recommendation: Focus on capacity building and pro-migration strategies*

As one of the main tasks of the IOM, the organization has engaged in policy recommendations regarding environmental migration since the 90s. The IOM has advocated the integration of migration issues in climate change policy, proposing human mobility as a possible adaptation and coping strategy (IOM, 2009; IOM, 2015). In the report “The poor pay the price: New research insights on human mobility, climate change and disasters” (2015), the IOM’s advice is to integrate the potential of migration in adaptation plans; increase disaster risk reduction and resilience to prevent and mitigate displacement; and plan carefully relocation (IOM, 2015). These policy guidelines are suggested in their online environmental migration portal and in their other environmental migration reports as well (IOM, 2015; IOM, 2008; IOM, 2009). In the policy arena, the IOM has managed to include the issue of human mobility in the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change and is constantly participating and advising other actors in the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC).

***ii. World Bank Group (WB)***

The World Bank Group is a global partnership of five international institutions that work towards sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries. They combine partnerships with the public and private sector to provide financing, policy advice and technical assistance (WB, 2021). Multiple reports produced by the World Bank Group discuss the relation between migration and environmental change and propose policy advice on it. Notably, the “Groundswell Report: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration” is the most relevant study carried out by the World Bank Group on environmental migration. Also, in 2013 the World Bank Group established a multi-donor trust fund to implement the Global Knowledge Partnership on

Migration and Development (KNOMAD), a worldwide brain trust to investigate migration and development.

*Terms: Migrants and mobility*

The World Bank Group refrains from using the term environmental refugee, preferring the term climate migrants. Unlike other organizations, the WB does not mention nor discusses environmental refugees at all. For instance, in the Groundswell Report, the term environmental refugee is not included in the vast glossary of environmental migration related terms, nor does it appear in any part of the report. The absence of the term environmental refugee shows that the WB does not consider the term correct. Likewise, the World Bank Group at no time alludes to environmental displacement. Instead, the organization states that “when environmental change affects the drivers of human movements, it is referred to as environmental mobility or environmental movement” (Rigaud et al., 2018: 35 ).

*Linkage: Not deterministic*

The World Bank Group recognizes a non-deterministic link between migration and environmental change, considering environmental stress one of the multiple factors that cause migration. In the Groundswell report, the WB acknowledges that “because mobility is complex, driven by multiple, interacting processes that vary greatly over space and time, there is no straight line of causation from environmental stress to the movement of people” (Rigaud et al., 2018: 33). Also, the KNOMAD’s Foresight project identifies four possible paths by which environmental change may affect migration, most likely in combination with the other factors (KNOMAD, 2014).

*Empirical research and estimates: Focus on understanding the relevance of each driver of migration.*

The World Bank Group notes the difficulty to carry out empirical research on environmental migration. More than that, the organization disregards most of the estimates produced so far on environmental migration as not rigorous enough, given the lack of data and good methods to estimate environmental migration. In turn, the WB suggests “exploring tipping points and thresholds of migration decisions, creating a better understanding of exposure, sensitivity, and resilience or adaptive capacities of migrants” (KNOMAD, 2016: 11). Most importantly, the World

Bank Group has carried out their own empirical research and estimates, notably the Groundswell Report or the projects conducted by KNOMAD. At first sight, the World Bank's research could appear as an attempt to generate non concrete estimates of environmental migration flows. However, when examined closely, the World Bank's research attempts to understand the specific types of migration better as well as the weight of the different factors involved in the decision to migrate. For instance, the Groundswell report focuses only on internal migration of three country cases. Moreover, its estimates contemplate multiple scenarios (more and less favorable), which depend on the evolution of different factors (Rigaud et al., 2018). In this way, the WB differentiates itself from the simplistic estimates of the fatalist view which tend to generate an inflated number of people on the move.

*Policy recommendation: Focus on capacity building and pro-migration strategies.*

Policy Recommendation is one of the main tasks of the World Bank Group, dedicating the last section of all their reports and projects on environmental migration to propose a future course of action. The policy recommendations of the World Bank Group approach migration as an effective response to climate change (World development report, 2010: 108). The organization asserts, "the negative portrayal of migration can foster policies that seek to reduce and control its incidence and do little to address the needs of those who migrate, when migration may be the only option for those affected by climate hazards. Indeed, policies designed to restrict migration rarely succeed, are often self-defeating, and increase the costs to migrants and to communities of origin and destination" (World Bank, 2010: 25). Also, in facilitating migration as a response to climate impact, the World Bank acknowledges, "it is better to formulate integrated migration and development policies that address the needs of voluntary migrants and support their entrepreneurial abilities and technical skills (World development report, 2010: 109). This approach makes evident that the World Bank focuses on policies that facilitate migration.

*International Governmental Organizations' Discourse: Adaptive View*

Coding categories	Fatalist View	Adaptive View	IGOs Discourse
Terms	Environmental Refugees	Environmental Migrants	Environmental Migrants
	Displacement	Mobility	Mobility/Migration
Type of Linkage	Direct causal link	Not deterministic link	Not deterministic
Empirical research and estimates	Focus on predicting large numbers of displaced people	Focus on understanding the degree of influence of each factor	Focus on understanding the different types of migration and the different factors that influence it
Policy recommendations	Focus on stopping climate change and granting refugee status	Focus on capacity building and pro-migration strategies	*IOM focus on capacity building and increasing communities' resilience. Understand mobility as a viable adaptation strategy for climate change. Building more practical migration strategies

Table 2 (self-elaboration)

In Table 2, it is evident that all coding categories of the adaptive view are present in the International Organization for Migration and the World Bank Group discourse on environmental migration. This exercise confirms the hypothesis that IGOs discourse on environmental migration predominantly uses the adaptive view of migration.

The approach of both IGOs on environmental migration is similar. Both organizations refer to the issue as human mobility, recognize that the environment does not cause migration directly, point out the lack of empirical estimates on environmental migration, and understand human mobility as an adaptation strategy for climate change. Still the discourse of each IGO presents three main differences. First, the World Bank does not refer to environmental refugees, neither in a positive

or negative way. Instead, the IOM does highlight in their website and reports the invalidity of the term environmental refugee. Second, the World Bank has carried out more in-depth empirical research through the Groundswell Report (2018). Finally, the IOM policy recommendations put more emphasis on reducing vulnerability and capacity-building strategies.

## ***b. Non-Governmental Organization's***

### ***International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)***

The IFRC is the largest humanitarian network in the world, reaching 150 million people in 192 countries. The Red Cross acts before, during, and after disasters and health emergencies, trying to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. The IFRC has a vast history of “providing humanitarian aid and protection for migrants and displaced people, in countries of origin, transit and destination, whatever their legal status” (IFRC, 2021<sup>2</sup>).

#### *Terms*

The Red Cross is known as one of the first International Organizations that legitimized the term “environmental refugee”. In the 2001 Worlds Disasters Report, the IFRC asserted that “towards the end of the 1990s, the world counted some 25 million “environmental refugees” (IFRC, 2001: 11). Since then, the IFRC shifted to the term “environmentally displaced people” whenever they mention environmental migration in their website (IFRC, 2021<sup>3</sup>).

#### *Linkage*

Even though the Red Cross does not express it overtly, their discourse on environmental migration implies a direct link between the environment and migration. The term environmental refugee assumes that environmental stress is the direct driver of migration, neglecting other drivers of

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<sup>2</sup> <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/migration-and-displacement/> [Accessed 6 May 2021].

<sup>3</sup> <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/migration/policy-strategy/> [Accessed 6 May 2021]

migration, alternatives to migration and individuals' agency to decide. Furthermore, when the IFRC enlists the groups they assist, they mention the category of "people displaced by disasters and the impact of climate change" (IFRC, 2021<sup>4</sup>). By assigning a unique category to environmental displacement, they imply that environmental factors are the sole driver behind this type of movement. If the Red Cross did not believe in a direct link between environmental stressors and human displacement, they would have classified those flows as economic or social displacement.

### *Empirical research and estimates*

As an NGO dedicated to humanitarian assistance, the Red Cross does not generate their own empirical research or estimates. Instead, the NGO bases their position and quotes on the estimates produced by different academics. In the case of environmental migration, the Red Cross quotes the estimates of Myers (1997). In the 2001 Worlds Disasters Report, the Red Cross talks about 25 million environmental refugees by the end of 1990. The organization goes as far as stating that "for the first time more people had fled natural hazards than conflict" (IFRC, 2001<sup>5</sup>). This type of statement points towards a fatalist view of migration, taking into account the author of the estimate and his focus on large volumes of displaced people due to environmental stress.

### *Policy recommendations*

Policy recommendations by the Red Cross try to press the international community to get more involved with environmentally displaced people. The IFRC recommendations focus on increasing development aid and financial contributions to regions affected by climate change. As stated in the World Disasters Report, "if relief interventions provide the bridgehead within exposed communities for an increased flow of resources into disaster recovery, preparedness and development, then such 'developmental relief' could prove enormously beneficial (IFRC, 2001:18). Also, in the section of the Red Cross website dedicated to migration policy strategies they promote "investment in addressing large-scale displacement as a result of natural disasters and climate change and ensuring that the most at-risk communities become more resilient." (IFRC,

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<sup>4</sup> <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/migration/policy-strategy/> [Accessed 6 May 2021]

<sup>5</sup> <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/migration/policy-strategy/> [Accessed 6 May 2021]

2021<sup>6</sup>). It is important to note that besides the emphasis of the Red Cross in increasing development funding, they also advocate increasing communities' resilience to climate change. "States need to: [S]cale up financial contributions to ensure that refugees' needs are adequately and holistically addressed. While we agree that sharing of responsibility goes well beyond solely providing funding, there is a need to provide further support to programmes aiming to help refugees in building sustainable, safe and dignified livelihoods." ( IFRC, 2021<sup>7</sup>)

### *iii. Christian Aid*

Christian Aid defines itself as a global movement of people, churches, and local organizations. The organization is committed to ending poverty worldwide, working with local partners and communities to fight injustice, respond to humanitarian emergencies, campaign for change, and help people claim the services and rights they are entitled to (Christian Aid, 2021). During the past 75 years, they have focused on seven key areas to eradicate poverty and fight injustice, out of which the humanitarian and resilience and climate areas are the most relevant to this work. Christian Aid implements multiple projects to enhance communities' resilience to environmental stressors and campaigns for climate justice and a humane approach to migration.

#### *Terms*

Christian aid uses the term environmental displacement in their discourse on environmental migration. In the "Human tide: the real migration crisis" report, they mention "25 million people displaced by disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes and floods" (Christian Aid, 2007: 4). In the same report Christian Aid also argues, "climate change will make the forced displacement crisis the biggest threat facing developing countries over the next 50 years" (Christian Aid, 2007: 4). However, Christian Aid does not mention environmental refugees, but rather the organization refers to them always as environmentally displaced people.

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<sup>6</sup><https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/migration/policy-strategy/> [Accessed 6 May 2021]

<sup>7</sup> <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/migration/policy-strategy/> [Accessed 6 May 2021]

### *Linkage*

Christian Aid assumes that there is a direct causal link between environmental stressors and migration. This direct link is implicit when Christian Aid refers to environmental migration only through displacement, a term that denies human agency and adaptation options. What is more, Christian Aid explicitly acknowledges a direct link by asserting in the Human Tide report, “climate change will displace people from their homes, both directly and by intensifying conflicts that cause people to flee” (Christian Aid, 2007: 13).

### *Empirical research and estimates*

As a charitable assistance NGO, Christian Aid quotes the estimates on environmental migration of other international organizations and academics, namely, Norman Meyers. According to Christian Aid, “the growing number of disasters and conflicts linked to future climate change will push the number of people forced to flee their homes far higher, unless urgent action is taken. We estimate that over the years between now and 2050, a total of 1 billion people will be displaced from their homes.” (Christian Aid, 2007 :7). By the way the last sentence is written, one would assume that Christian Aid predicts 1 billion environmentally displaced people by 2050. However, in other parts of the report they explain more clearly, that the 1 billion displaced people is the sum of displaced people by several causes. Of the total 1 billion, only 50 million people would be displaced as a direct result of environmental drivers. A clear attempt by Christian Aid to frame the estimates, making the figures of environmentally displaced people appear larger and scarier. In any case, the 50 million displaced people by the environment still comprises a high and speculative figure.

### *Policy recommendations*

The policy recommendations of Christian Aid focus on increasing funding for environmentally displaced people and slow down climate change. They assert that rich countries are responsible “to help pay for the protection of those who will bear the worst consequence”, since they are polluters and largely responsible for the increasingly cruel climate (Christian Aid, 2007: 5). In this way, Christian Aid places the policy focus on increasing monetary aid and makes an implicit suggestion to stop polluting. As well, their policy recommendations are to prevent displacement

and help those displaced, instead of considering mobility as a viable adaptation option to environmental stressors (Christin Aid, 2007: 11). What is more, it is important to note that most policy suggestions are framed in an alarmist tone. It is common to find policy recommendations preceding phrases like “without urgent action” (Christian Aid, 2007: 4).

#### *iv. Friends of Earth*

Friends of the Earth is an international network of environmental NGOs that strives for a healthier and more just world. It was founded in 1969 and is present in 74 countries. Friends of the Earth “organize to build long-term political power and campaign to change the rules of the economic and political systems that create injustice and destroy nature” (Friends of Earth, [FOE], 2021<sup>8</sup>). The three guiding principles of Friends of Earth are being a bold and fearless voice, fighting for systematic transformation, and organizing and building long-term power.

#### *Terms*

Friends of the Earth use the terms environmental refugees and climate refugees without distinction to refer to all environmentally related migration. They also use the term displacement, instead of using mobility or migration. This position is appreciable in the section of their website dedicated to “climate refugees”. In this section, Friends of the Earth argue that “climate change is threatening the lives of the world's poorest and most vulnerable – displacing millions of people. These people are known as "climate refugees" (FOE, 2021<sup>9</sup>).

#### *Linkage*

For Friends of Earth, the link between environmental stressors and migration is direct. In their website they declare, “Environmental problems also create refugees – problems like droughts, floods and food shortages” (FOE, 2021<sup>10</sup>). It is also said that “environmental refugees have been

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<sup>8</sup><https://foe.org/about-us/> [Accessed 2 May 2021]

<sup>9</sup>[https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/climate-refugees?\\_ga=2.78555348.1504577497.1618935456-1067714432.1618935456](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/climate-refugees?_ga=2.78555348.1504577497.1618935456-1067714432.1618935456) [Accessed 6 May 2021]

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid*

forced to leave their home because of an environmental issue” (FOE, 2021<sup>11</sup>). By not mentioning other factors that may provoke migration in these statements, Friends of Earth contemplate environmental issues as the direct driver of migration.

### *Empirical research and estimates*

As an NGO dedicated to denouncement and awareness, Friends of the Earth does not produce empirical research or estimates about environmental migration on their own. However, they mention in their website “[E]stimates suggest there are already more than 40 million environmental refugees. If ongoing threats to our environment and climate aren’t dealt with, this number will rise substantially over coming decades” (FOE, 2021<sup>12</sup>). The source of the estimate is never mentioned and they fail to communicate the speculative nature of the estimates.

### *Policy recommendations*

The policy recommendation of Friends of Earth is to give legal recognition to environmental refugees under the refugee statute. In their website they express, “Environmental refugees should have the same legal rights as refugees of conflict and persecution, including a legal right to stay” (FOE, 2021<sup>13</sup>). Also, Friends of the Earth recommends to provide developing countries with money to make necessary adaptations to climate change. Placing the responsibility on rich countries, arguing that “wealthier countries are refusing to provide this money, despite being most responsible for climate change” (FOE, 2021<sup>14</sup>). Finally, Friends of Earth recommend policies that reduce the causes of environmental displacement, namely, stopping climate change. The examples they list are cutting greenhouse emissions, protecting land rights, and introducing more sustainable farming measures.

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<sup>11</sup>[https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/climate-refugees?\\_ga=2.78555348.1504577497.1618935456-1067714432.1618935456](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/climate-refugees?_ga=2.78555348.1504577497.1618935456-1067714432.1618935456) > [Accessed 6 May 2021]

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

*NGOs Discourse: Fatalist View*

Coding categories	Fatalist View	Adaptive View	NGOs Discourse
Terms	Environmental Refugees	Environmental Migrants	Environmental refugees *Christian Aid uses Environmentally Displaced People
	Displacement	Mobility	Displacement
Type of Linkage	Direct causal link	Not deterministic link	Direct link
Empirical research and estimates	Focus on predicting large numbers of displaced people	Focus on understanding the degree of influence of each factor	Cite large figures of environmentally displaced people. Usually cite Norman Myers' alarmist estimates.
Policy recommendations	Focus in stopping climate change and granting refugee status to environmentally displaced people	Focus in capacity building and pro-migration strategies	Focus in a more humane treatment of climate refugees. Granting climate migrants refugee status. Stopping climate change. More funding and financial aid from rich countries.

Table 3. Author's classification (self-elaboration)

In Table 3, it is evident that most coding categories of the fatalist view are present in the IFRC, Christian Aid and Friends of Earth discourse on environmental migration. The findings confirm my initial hypothesis that NGOs discourse on environmental migration use the fatalist view of migration. It is noteworthy that the scope of NGOs policy recommendations goes beyond the fatalist view's policy recommendations. Besides advocating for stopping climate change and granting refugee status to environmentally displaced people, NGOs also advocate for increasing international funding on environmental migration, and for improving communities' resilience to climate change.

Even though the three NGOs use the fatalist discourse on environmental migration, they present interesting differences in the terms they use and in the policy recommendations they make. With respect to the terms the NGOs use, Christian Aid and the IFRC currently use the term “environmentally displaced people”. On the contrary, Friends of Earth uses “environmental refugee”. I believe the terms they use differ because Friends of Earth has a more radical and aggressive discourse, while the other two NGOs have a more politically correct discourse. Also, depending on the area of expertise of each NGO, some policy recommendations on environmental migration differ. All of them agree in the increase of funding towards environmental migration. However, the IFRC suggests capacity-building strategies. Christian Aid emphasizes the responsibility of rich countries to provide the funding on environmental migration. And Friends of Earth propose actions aimed towards stopping climate change. The different policies are in line with the background of each NGO. Of the three NGOs, IFRC is the largest and most institutionalized organization. Instead, Christian Aid is a European based NGO that aims to raise funds in rich countries to alleviate poverty in less developed regions. Finally, Friends of Earth is an environmentalist NGO.

## **10. Conclusion**

To conclude the present work, I would like to point out the main findings obtained from the research and analysis carried out during the development of this work. I have summarized the conclusions as follows:

The literature on environmental migration agrees on the fact that environmental change can influence human migration. Nevertheless, there is debate about how and to what extent environmental stressors cause migration. On one side, *the fatalist view* argues that environmental stressors directly cause migration. This view also regards this relationship as an alarming and urgent problem for humanity. On the other hand, *the adaptive view* claims a direct relationship between environmental stressors and human migration, defending the multi-causal nature of migration. What is more, this view approaches migration as a sensible and practical strategy of adaptation to the challenges posed by climate change.

Both, the fatalist and the adaptive view on migration remain at a theoretical level. Until now, there are scarcely any serious empirical studies on environmental migration. What is more, there is a global lack of accurate data on environmental migration, as many internal and temporary migration flows are not accounted for by governments or organizations. Therefore, future research should have an empirical focus and aim to understand better the various factors that influence environmental migration. Researchers should make a special effort in distinguishing how and to what extent different drivers influence migration. Furthermore, governments should facilitate more and better evidence of environmental migration. It is necessary to improve national data collection techniques, especially on internal migration flows and on the social impact of environmental events.

The fatalist and the adaptive view of migration have been identified in the discourse on environmental migration of relevant International Organizations. As I suggested in my hypothesis, International Governmental Organizations discourse on environmental migration uses the adaptive view of migration. Indeed, the pragmatic and fact-based approach of the adaptive view on migration is consistent with the IGO's orientation towards operational policy implementation and advice on environmental migration. Therefore, the use of the adaptive discourse on migration results are useful to IGOs in order to approach the topic in an impartial and realistic way. Also, the IOM and the WB share a similar discourse on environmental migration. The main differences between the IGOs are that the WB has carried out more extensive empirical research on environmental migration than the IOM. In addition, the IOM policy recommendations include capacity-building strategies, while the WB policy recommendations do not.

On the other hand, Non-Governmental Organizations discourse on environmental migration use the fatalist view of migration as expected. In this sense, the alarmist approach of the fatalist view on migration is consistent with NGO's orientation towards denouncement, fund raising, and increasing public awareness on environmental migration. Clearly, the capacity of the fatalist view on migration to attract attention towards the issue and spur governments and the public to take on action, serves well the activities of NGOs. Despite the common use of the fatalist view on migration, NGO's present interesting differences in their discourses on environmental migration.

The policy recommendations of NGOs differ, depending on the area of expertise of each NGO. As well, the IFRC and Christian Aid discourse on environmental migration refrains from using the term “environmental refugee”, as it aims to be politically correct. On the contrary, the Friends of Earth discourse on environmental migration uses the term “environmental refugee”, as it aims to be more radical.

In my opinion, IGO’s policy recommendations address better the challenges posed by environmental migration. First, migration must be acknowledged as a viable adaptation strategy for environmental change. A negative portrayal of migration only fosters inefficient policies that fail to address the needs of migrants. Policies designed to address migrants’ needs, supporting their entrepreneurial and adaptive skills, are more likely to be successful and end up being less costly than restrictive policies of migration. Second, the international community must carry out proactive capacity-building strategies that increase the resilience of vulnerable regions and populations. All the International Organizations studied supported capacity-building strategies, making evident the relevance of reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience. If capacity-building strategies are implemented correctly, communities that are more resilient can reduce involuntary environmentally induced migration. Ultimately, countries should foster integrated migration and capacity-building policies that help to build resilience against climate stressors, address the needs of environmental migrants, and optimize the outcomes of environmental migration.

Finally, this work answers the questions that arose during the investigation relating to what the main discourses on environmental migration are and how International Organizations use the discourses on environmental migration. Having said that, new questions on the discourses on environmental migration arise from the conclusion of this work. I believe that the discourse of states on environmental migration is an interesting and relevant path for future research. Just as the discourse on environmental migration differs depending on the purpose of International Organizations, it is possible that states use the fatalist or the adaptive view to fulfill their own purposes. What is more, states are without doubt other important units of analysis, as states are ultimately those who create and implement policies.

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