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Research Brief: Climate Change, Migration and Justice

Though migration in response to changes in one's environment is not a new phenomenon, the impacts of climate change are likely to alter patterns of migration across the globe in a number of ways. A number of physical bases for altered patterns of migration have been identified, including sea-level rise, heatwaves, changes in patterns of precipitation, and the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events (Rebetez, 2011). Yet changing patterns of migration are unlikely to be solely a function of these climatic impacts, and the IPCC points out that migration relating to climate change is complex and multi-causal (IPCC, 2014, p. 20). The availability of migration as an adaptive response to climate change, and the possibility of adapting *in situ* are also likely to depend on the vulnerability of those affected to the impacts of climate change (McLeman and Smit, 2006).

Given that emissions causing anthropogenic climate change are not and have not been uniformly distributed, and that neither are their effects, we have good reason to think that important questions of justice, equity and responsibility need to be posed in this domain. If these questions are to be genuinely relevant and action-guiding, however, they will need to take seriously the varieties of ways and contexts in which people are likely to migrate or be displaced by climate change. Whilst there is some nascent literature in political theory concerning the obligations and entitlements of different actors in the domain of climate migration (see, for example, Biermann and Boas, 2010; Byravan and Rajan, 2010; de Shalit, 2011; Heyward and Ödalen, 2016), and especially concerning the case of 'sinking' small-island states (see, for example, Dietrich and Wündisch, 2015; Kolers, 2012; Nine, 2010; Ödalen, 2014; Risse, 2009), it is not clear that these accounts have taken the varied ways in which climate change will impact upon migration. Mostly, they engage with international migration, whilst the majority of climate-induced migration is projected to be domestic (Piguet et al., 2011). Undoubtedly, international migration is in some cases likely to occur as a result of climate change, and this does pose distinctive questions for political theorists, which certainly have not been conclusively dealt with. However, debates about what is owed as a matter of justice, responsibility and equity ought not only to take an idealised 'climate migrant/refugee' as the locus of their concern, but rather to identify and engage with the range of normatively significant features of migration relating to climate change in different contexts.

For example, resettlement of entire communities in the face of climate change poses important questions of procedural justice and of the value of community-led processes. Issues of participatory parity and cultural recognition might be fruitfully compared with other accounts of justice in adaptation (see, for example, Paavola and Adger, 2006; Schlosberg, 2012), or with development-induced resettlement (see, for example, Drydyk, 2013; Penz et al., 2011). This is, however, only one example. There are a range of different concerns arising in the context of climate-induced migration, including those concerning borders and justice, international duties of assistance and/or compensation, the role of international law, and concerning the 'background conditions' with which climate change intersects in order to make migration more or less likely to occur.

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