

World Conference on

Climate Change

October 24-26, 2016 Valencia, Spain

Environmental change-migration nexus in the Philippines: Overcoming limitations and filling in the gaps

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Environmental migration has always been part of human history. The need for prompt actions to overcome the limitation is not due to its novelty, rather to scientific and empirical evidences on the current (and possibly future) effects that environmental change will have on people. In recent years, environmental change and natural hazards increased their intensity and frequency. In countries such as the Philippines and the Pacific Islands, where the environmental problems are categorized as existential and security threats, such challenges need to be tackled and solved in order not to become unmanageable issues. Current researches and work done on environmental migration demonstrate how this issue is still weakly conceptualize and contextualize. The main limitations are: firstly the lack of a common definition and reliable data; secondly the lack of a linkage between environmental change and internal migration in policies measures and practices; thirdly adaptation measures considered as the main (an only) strategy; and lastly the lack of adequate financial resources and operational capacities, especially in developing country such as the Philippines. There is a need to deepen and broaden the range of conceptual tools for researchers interested in the relationship between environmental change and mobility. In particular, in the international debate, there is still missing a clarification of terminology. It is important to underline how to overcome these limitations the measures proposed needs a holistic and simultaneous intervention both from the international community and national states, especially those considered as highly prone to environmental change and natural disasters. The role of this research is to be instrumental within the environmental migration discussion in order to find a way to include this issue inside the international and national political agenda. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to draw definitive conclusions on the nexus between environmental change and its consequent migration impact. Yet, this thesis can be regard as a starting point for potential future investigations on this still hidden phenomenon of migration due to environmental change.

Biography

Elena Giacomelli obtained a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations, participating in two exchange programs: one in Universidad de Valencia (one year), one in the University of Melbourne (one semester). She is currently enjoying and actively taking part in the Master's degree in International and European Studies at the University of Trento. Within this program she studied as an exchange student at the Metropolitan University Prague and at the University of Adelaide. She participated in the research project "Current Migration to Europe: Research of Smart Population Dynamics". She worked as an intern in the Australian Population and Migration Research Center. She developed her Master's thesis on the theme 'Environmentally Displaced Persons' taking as case study the Philippines. She won a scholarship to conduct her research in the Third World Studies Center in the University of the Philippines. She will graduate the 13 of October 2016.

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