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Climate refugees, refugees or under own protection?

-A comparative study between climate refugees and
refugees embraced by the United Nations Refugee
Convention

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Abstract

Global warming is a current topic on the international agenda. The rise of temperature in the atmosphere threatens populations living on island, deltas and coastal areas, and people living nearby the Arctic and areas covered by permafrost are threatened. In turn this leads to the people in these areas being projected to be homeless or displaced due to climate change and the rising numbers of natural disasters. Those people are what you can label as climate refugees. According to IOM and Brown (2001) climate refugees are persons who for compelling reasons of change in the environment which change their living conditions have to escape their homes, either within their country or abroad.

The United Nations Refugee Convention is the binding legislation followed by 147 (in 2008) of the UN member states. Either the UN Refugee Convention or any other international law recognizes climate refugees, and those people are due to that not granted any legal status. Who will protect these people when they have to escape their homes? This paper aims to explore what distinguish climate refugees from the refugees embraced by the UN Refugee Convention by a comparative literature review, for in this way be able to recognize the assumptions that make the United Nations to not classify climate refugees with refugee status.

Both groups of refugees has in common that they live under the pressured decision they have to make as they flee their native homes to ensure their own and their families survival according to Grove (2006).

In the long run both climate refugees and the UN Refugee Convention embraced refugees face the same traumatic experiences escaping their homes and have due to that the similar right to get the same mental help and be protected under international law. But populations facing the effects of global warming do not want to leave their land and believe it is an issue of human rights.

Keywords: Climate refugees, The United Nations Refugee Convention, Climate change, Human rights

Sammanfattning

På den internationella dagordningen är den globala uppvärmningen ett aktuellt ämne idag. Den ökade av temperaturen i atmosfären hotar populationer som lever i närheten av Arktis, områden som är täckta av permafrost och områden som hotas av de stigande havsnivåerna. Detta i sin tur leder till att dessa människor beräknas bli hemlösa eller fördrivna på grund av klimatförändringar och det stigande antalet naturkatastrofer. Dessa människor kan klassificeras som klimatflyktingar. Enligt IOM och Brown (2001) är klimatflyktingar personer som är tvingade att fly sina hem, antingen inom landet eller utomlands, på grund av miljöförändringar som förändrar deras livsvillkor.

Förenta Nationerna Flyktingkonventionen är en bindande lagstiftning som följs av 147 (2008) av FN: s medlemsländer. Varken FN: s flyktingkonvention eller någon annan internationell lagstiftning erkänner klimatflyktingar. Detta i sin tur leder till att dessa människor inte beviljas någon rättslig status. Vem ska skydda dessa människor när de måste fly sina hem? Denna uppsatts syftar till att undersöka vad som utmärker klimatflyktingar från de flyktingar som omfattas av FN: s flyktingkonvention genom en jämförande litteraturstudie. Detta för att förstå varför FN inte klassificera klimatflyktingar med flyktingstatus.

Bägge dessa grupper av flyktingar har enligt Grove (2006) gemensamt att de lever under samma pressade beslut som de måste ta för att fly från sina hem för att se till sitt eget och sin familjs överlevnad.

På lång sikt så upplever både klimatflyktingar och de flyktingar omfattade av FN: s flyktingkonvention samma traumatiska upplevelser när de flyr sina hem och borde därför inneha samma rätt att få psykisk hjälp och att vara skyddade enligt internationell rätt. Men befolkningsgrupper som utsätts för effekterna av den globala uppvärmningen vill inte lämna sina länder och anser att det är en fråga om mänskliga rättigheter.

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1 Introduction

According to the current literature, the creation of man-made climate changes is one of our times greatest challenges. The aftermath of climate change is predicted to lead to consequences that species may disappear, and in the future natural disasters such as floods are expected to be a common event that may hit a large proportion of the population. Also it has been predicted in many scientific literature that there will be inadequate food and water supply for the earth's growing population, which will affect the population health and wellbeing (UNEP, 2010).

The rise of temperature in the atmosphere threatens people who live in arid regions and nearby the Arctic, areas that traditionally are covered by permafrost and populations living on islands, deltas and coastal areas threatened by higher sea levels (Collectif Argos, 2010). The communities that will take the hardest punch due to the climate change are the poor population in the world, especially those who live in Asian and African regions. A huge number of people in these regions are projected to be homeless or displaced due to climate change and rising number of natural disasters.

1.1 Background

As sea level has risen, Tuvalu, a small island in Pacific Ocean, has experienced lowland flooding. Saltwater intrusion is adversely affecting its drinking water and food production. Coastal erosion is eating away at the nine islands that make up the country. According to Lester Brown (2001) Tuvalu is the first country where people are being evacuated because of rising sea levels, but it will undoubtedly not be the last. It is seeking a home for 11, 000 people who need to be migrated. The Tuvalu issue raised question about the future of 311, 000 inhabitants of Maldives, who are living close to sea level and are in threat to leave the country. There are millions of others living in low-lying countries that soon may join the flow of climate refugees.

1.1.1 Refugees, facts and figures

According to the UNHCR, today about 36, 5 million people worldwide are displaced by war, conflict, violence, abuse, persecution and terror. Of these, half are refugees in their own country (UNHCR Statistics, 2009). Humans fleeing inside their own country are called IDPs,

internally displaced people, due to the fact that they have not crossed an international border to find sanctuary. IDPs are not called refugees, even if they have fled for the similar reasons as the conventional refugees, for example, armed conflicts, and generalized violence or human rights violations. IDPs instead legally remain under the protection of the government, in many occasions a government who is the cause of their flight. (UNHCR, 2009)

1.1.2 The UN Refugee Convention

In December 2008, 147 United Nation (UN) member states had signed the UN Refugee Convention which legislates about people who escape their homes and losing their native lands (UNHCR, 2009).

The UN legislation of refugees is handled by The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, which were established by the General Assembly in 1950. The agency is mandated to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide by leading and co-ordinate international actions. (UNHCR, 2009)

According to the UNHCR charter Article 1 a refugee is a person who, due to *"...fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself for the protection of that country..."* (Svenska FN-förbundet, 1994). The UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees formed in 1951 is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee (UNHCR, 2009). The Convention seeks to provide for victims of gross violations of human rights (The Swedish government's website about human rights, 2010). In 1967 a protocol that abolished the geographical limitation and the 1951 deadline, making the Convention universal was elaborated (UNHCR, 2003).

It is the people covered by the UN Refugee Convention, and after assessment gets "refugee status", who have right to asylum according to international law (The Swedish government's website about human rights, 2010).

Today countries hide behind the restrictive definition of the UN Refugee Convention to refuse asylum to individuals who *"had to flee the place they lived to escape danger"* (Collectif Argos, 2010). That is problematic for people who lose their native land due to climate change. Because if you then live and have to flee inside a third world country it is hard for the government to give you the protection and help you need. Due to the fact that one of the

criteria's of being a refugee according to the UN Refugee Convention is that you have to be outside the boundaries of your country of origin (RIFO, 2009).

In the year of 1984, as refugees increasingly came from developing countries, the definition of "refugee" had to be extended. Resulting in bringing international protection to people who *"are forced to move for a complex range of reasons including persecution, widespread human right abuses, armed conflict and generalized violence"* by the end of the 20th century. (UNHCR, 2003). Refugees are also mentioned in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that *"everyone is entitled to that in other countries seek an enjoy asylum from being persecuted"* (Franzén, 2001). Either the UN Refugee Convention its extended definition or the UN Declaration of Human Rights touches areas of refugees fleeing their homes due to the environment.

Climate refugees therefore do not exist in regard to current international law. People who are forced to leave their home country due to environmental reasons are not granted any legal status.

1.1.3 What is a climate refugee?

What is a climate refugee? That is a hard question to answer, because there is no existing definition about the concept. One of the problems is to define who flees from man-made climate change and who flees from natural environmental changes. Is, for example, a person fleeing his or her home due to a flood caused by a monsoon a climate refugee? Because of the reason that a monsoon is a natural weather element but at the same time man-made climate changes could make monsoon rains appear more often. Or does, for example, displacement due to an earthquake qualify for the same kind of status as a climate refugee as displacement from farmland that is degraded as to be useless?

Such a large group of people can, according to the critics, be classified under the umbrella of climate refugee that the usefulness of the concept has been questioned.

According to Dun and Gemenne (2008) *"The main reason for the lack of definition to migration caused by environmental degradation or changes is linked to the difficulty of isolating environmental factors from other drivers of migration"*.

Climate refugees are far from the only term for people fleeing their home because of man-made environmental changes; environmental refugees, eco-refugees, climate change-induced migration and environmental migrants are all synonyms.

In 1984 the term of “environmental refugee” were used for the first time in an International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) briefing document. It was then stated; *“Third World environmental refugees are increasingly fleeing worn out lands for the industrialized countries of the North”*. But it was El-Hinnawi’s (1985) paper in 1985 and Jodi Jacobson’s (1988) report in 1988 that popularized the term. (Kibreab, 1997)

To define people displaced due to climate change Norman Myers (2005) in 2005 defined environmental refugees as *“people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification and other environmental problems, together with associated problems of population pressures and profound poverty.”*

Even the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has proposed the following definition to be able to categorize these people; *“Environmental migrants are persons our groups of persons, who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or chose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad”* (Brown, 2001).

Due to the fact that most of the refugees fleeing environmental degradation escape inside of their home country both the UNHCR and IOM all use the term “environmentally displaced persons” rather than “environmental refugees”. According to them environmentally displaced persons are defined as *“persons who are displaced within their own country of habitual residence or who have crossed an international border and for whom environmental degradation or destruction is a major cause of their displacement, although not necessarily the sole one”* (UNHCR, 1996).

But we have to remember that either Myers (2005) definition or other definitions has any legal basis and are not defined in any international law.

The concept of climate refugees, and all the other synonyms of the word, remains somewhat unclear.

1.1.4 Climate change and refugees

About two and a half thousands inhabitants of a small coral atoll of the Carteret Islands, Papua New Guinea, have been called the first climate refugees (Miljöaktuellt, 2006). In November 2005 the government of Papua New Guinea started a total evacuation of the islands. They have been forced to flee ten miles away to Bougainville because of the higher sea level. In Shishmaref Alaska the rising sea level in relation to permafrosted land break have made the population vote to relocate the village by 2015 (Collectif Argos, 2010). The relocation of the population on Carteret Islands is supported by the government and in Alaska it is the state who is responsible and who pays for the relocation (Collectif Argos, 2010).

Low lying countries in South Asia like Bangladesh is expected to face the problems related to internal migrants due to climate changes. The problems taking place in Bangladesh are growing more entrenched: a cycle of flooding, land erosion, and due to this people are already forced to move to new areas. (Munna, 2008)

Table 1 shows the International NGO Germanwatch Global Climate Risk Index for 2009 prepared for the UN Climate Change Summit in Poznan, Poland 2008.

Table 1: The Annual Climate Risk Index (CRI): Results in specific indicators of the 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events in 2007.

Ranking 2007 (2006)	Country	CRI score	Death toll	Deaths per 100,000 inhabitants	Absolute loses (in million US\$ PPP)	Loses per unit GDP	For comparison: Human Development Index (2005)
1 (20)	Bangladesh	3.00	4,729	2.98	10,774	5.17	140
2 (2)	Korea DPR	10.33	554	2.33	623	1.49	no data
3 (120)	Nicaragua	12.25	111	1.98	509	3.20	110
3 (116)	Oman	12.25	49	1.89	4,269	6.92	58
5 (11)	Pakistan	13.17	928	0.57	2,539	0.62	136
6 (17)	Bolivia	13.42	131	1.38	646	1.61	117
7 (52)	Papua New Guinea	15.75	172	2.72	135	1.13	145
8 (4)	Vietnam	16.25	346	0.40	1,639	0.74	105
9 (79)	Greece	17.50	99	0.89	1,789	0.55	24
10 (58)	Tajikistan	17.83	34	0.50	1,235	10.44	122

Source: (Harmeling, 2008)

According to different estimations climate refugees can be between 50 million and one billion in the year of 2050, but the most believable is a number of 200 million people, largely in Asia and Africa (global.finland, 2010).

1.1.5 Refugees and related problems

Today both the migration and environmental issues are profiled political issues that often give rise to agitate debates (The UN, 2006). Conflicts, different political ideologies and climate changes are all reasons why people today are escaping their homes due to an increased risk of their lives. But all these groups do not receive the protection and assistances as needed; to obtain this protection you must receive "refugee status" after evaluation according to the United Nations Refugee Convention. Humans who flee their homes due to climate changes are today not classified with "refugee status" under the UN Refugee Convention. (The Swedish government's website about human rights, 2010). Resulting in that these people are not entitled to asylum under international law, neither the international community can give them the protection they need.

Due to Rebert (2006) if so-called climate refugees were to receive protection, either the Geneva Conventions (the UN Refugee Convention) would have to be updated or a new internationally protective status would have to be developed, likely under the purview of the UNHCR.

1.2 Problem formulation

During the last couple of years the issue of climate refugees has been on the key international agenda, as the consequences of climate change is becoming large. Recent reports often concerns the rising sea-level in the Maldives, floods and monsoons in Bangladesh, heat waves in India and dry in Sudan and other African countries reaches us on a daily basis. Today most of the people fleeing their homes due to these consequences escape inside their own state borders. The present situation raise a big question: who will protect them when they have to flee outside those boundaries due to the fact that there are not under any protection by international law?

1.3 Objective

The literature review aims to understand the concepts of climate refugees and the refugees who are embraced by the United Nations Refugee Convention, and also highlight the causes and problems that both the conventional and the climate refugees face in a refugee situation. This through doing a comparative study with the base of how climate refugees and conventional refugees life situations is registered in scientific articles and research in that field.

The expected result of the study is to be able to see what the differences between the two groups are, for in this way be able to recognize the assumptions that make the United Nations to not classify climate refugees with refugee status. To be able to draw some conclusions the paper aims to highlight how the two groups social situations looks like, the reasons why they are fleeing their homes, where they escape to and how they manage the situation of being on the run.

1.4 Research question

Main question:

- What distinguishes climate refugees from the refugees who are embraced by the United Nations Refugee Convention?

Sub-questions:

- How do the two different groups social and health situations look like?
- Why are they fleeing from their homes?
- Where do they escape, outside or inside the state borders?
- How do they cope with the situation about being on the run?

2 Method

The aim of the thesis is to make a comparative study between two different groups of refugees in the form of a literature review of scientific articles, thesis and documents. I have chosen this method because a literature review is the preferred method when there is lack of data, available for meeting study question, and also a literature review is the preferred method for making a comparative study of this kind (Friberg, 2006). Literature review has been chosen as the method due to the fact that there is no possibility to do any kind of interview or questionnaires instead the study has to rely on publications of various kinds.

In a literature based study the data is consisting of various types of literary documents. These texts must be chosen with a systematical approach so that “answers” can be given on the problem and objective. (Friberg, 2006)

2.1 Material and selection

According to Bryman (2002) newspapers, magazines, TV shows, film and other mass-media products represent possible sources for a social scientific analysis. An analysis of this kind often includes a search for different themes in the sources studied (Bryman, 2002). That is why the material used in the survey is based on different scientific articles, thesis, information expressly from the United Nations and their refugee agency UNHCR, the Swedish government and some NGO: s as well as literature relevant for the area.

To find relevant articles for this study, search was conducted using the electronic database of Science Direct. Different key words i.e. *climate* and *refugee*, *environment* and *refugee*, *migrants* and *refugees*. Different grammatical variations of the words were also examined. In the order to get as many articles and publications as possible in the area of climate refugees’ searches also have been done on different terms of the combinations of *refugee*, *migration*, *climate change*, *environment*, *global warming* and *the greenhouse effect*.

Key words:

Climate AND Refugees

Environment AND Refugees

Environmental AND Refugees

Climate refugees

Environmental refugees

Climate changes AND Migration

Climate change AND Refugees

Environmental change AND Migration

Refugees AND Social situation

Refugees AND Social problems

Scientific articles and thesis could be immense and therefore the reading of abstracts was in focus when selecting relevant literature. When reading the abstracts the main focal point was the searching on the different refugee group's situations and experiences. By reading abstract it enabled an easier selection process and by that narrow down the articles and papers to ten, five each for the two groups of refugees.

During a literature search process a boundary is of importance. Then the quality of the texts is examined, resulting in some texts are selected out (excluded) and other documents are retained for analysis (included) (Friberg, 2006). According to Friberg (2006) the quality of the selected texts is necessary because otherwise it becomes unclear "what" the analysis is based up on.

A substantial stepping stone in the paper has been the Collectif Argos (2010) book on Climate Refugees. The Collectif Argos *Climate Refugees* (2010) is a synoptic book where the group of 10 journalists, photographers and writers spent four years meeting with the first climate refugees. This to get a firsthand look at how people in certain parts of the world are already being forced into exile by global warming's detrimental effects. The main focus for the book was "to raise the world's awareness of the many people who will soon be displaced and how great the resulting losses in ethnic and cultural diversity are likely to be" (Collectif Argos, 2010). In this study the book was used as an unsystematic information retrieval source. In the working progress of literature search both systematic and unsystematic information retrieval are equal important due to the fact that they complement each other. The unsystematic approach can be used to find new inspiration and ideas and to make progress if you get stuck during the working process. (Friberg, 2006)

When choosing articles the parameters included publication within the past 20 years, this time span was chosen as pertinent to be able to do some kind of comparative study. But due to the fact that climate refugees has not been a topic in focus before in the latest couple of years, the five articles chosen on that group of refugees instead is not from more than ten years back in

time. Conventional refugees in turn has been in focus for social science researchers for decades, due to the fact those articles has been searched in a wider span back in time. But when selecting articles for the review focus was on the past ten years to get a more cohesive study. The final acceptance criteria were as follows:

- Paper published in English;
- Related to conventional and climate refugees;
- Explore migration situations;
- Published between 1990 and 2010, but especially between 2000 and 2010.

2.2 Analysis

The analysis used as method is a literary survey. Doing a literary survey means taking out existing research in a specific area to get an idea of what is studied. This is to see what method or theoretical approaches that have been used in the scientific articles or reports studied. In a literary survey there are no limitations for choosing either quantitative or qualitative research or both can be used. (Friberg, 2006)

The selected literature was analyzed and then qualitative reviewed which resulted in a descriptive overview of the area of the thesis. The qualitative review was made through analyzing the articles and reports abstracts, for in this way decide the relevance of the literature. It was in this part that the focus was on the sub-questions. During the analyze part of the texts answers on this questions was the main focal point; How do the two different groups social situations look like? Why are they fleeing their homes? Where do they escape, outside or inside the national borders? How do they cope with the situation about being on the run?

When doing a comparative study of this kind it is important during the analysis to try to explore the differences between, in this case, the two groups of refugees.

2.2 Reliability

Reliability means how reliable a surveys result is. Reliability is assessed according to how likely it is that the survey results would be the same if it was done again (Bryman, 2002).

When using newspapers articles in a survey it is substantial to be aware of the question of authenticity. Because when you build a study on that kind of material the reliability of the paper is low, which in this situation I am fully aware of.

2.3 Limitation and restrictions

The concept of climate refugees will be used throughout the paper, although it is a non coined term and there are no direct descriptions of its exist. It is though that used in the hope that it projects a reasonably accurate impression of the increasing phenomenon of non –voluntary population displacement, just as likely as the impacts of climate change grow and accumulate. Climate refugees are the term used in the paper even though the concept has a couple of synonyms, for example, environmental migrants can also be used. Those terms are slightly different but develop out of the same strain of thinking and engender similar critiques. The term of environmental refugees is also used though climate refugee is the core of this thesis.

The area of climate refugees is relevant un-touched compared to the large supply of literature in the refugee field. This in turn makes it difficult to find comparative literature in the two areas. The areas of refugees and migration are often very delicate and because of that the subject often is up for debate.

2.4 Theory and earlier research

Even though climate refugees just recently appeared on the agenda, it is not a new phenomenon. People have been displaced from their homes by man-made climate change before, reflex about the desertification in Northern Africa caused by Roman grain production (Monbiot, 2009). But in media and on the political agenda it has been taken in consideration more recently. That is why research in this area only is found in a small scale. But relevant earlier research in the area of climate refugees and much of the research is about the question of a future wave of migrants fleeing, for example, Asian and African states because of man-made environmental changes.

Suhrke (1994) divides the perspective on climate refugees into two categories; the maximalist and the minimalist view. According to the maximalist view they claim that climate change is the direct cause of the migration. The minimalist view in another hand see climate change as

one of numerous contributing variables. But the minimalist view also emphasizes that it is impossible to analytically and empirically isolate climate change as the cause of migration. For example both El-Hinnawi (1985) and Myers (2005) subscribe to a maximalist view.

2.5 Relevance

The study is of relevance in terms of climate refugees will become a larger group of people because of the increasing climate change. According to different estimations climate refugees can be between 50 million and one billion in the year of 2050, but the most believable is a number of 200 million people, largely in Asia and Africa (global.finland, 2010). This situation increases the need of protection for the group of people forced to flee their homes due to man-made climate change. In order that these refugees should be able to get the protection they need it is required that they would be classed with “refugee status”. Therefore, it is considered relevant to compare these two groups to see what it is that prevents the climate refugees from gaining the status of such people fleeing their homeland due to persecution may be.

The subject of doing this kind of research is of significant importance because if we cannot do anything about the rising man-made climate changes the international body have to make up plans how to handle the future wave of climate refugees. To make this possible it is important to see these persons as refugees so they have the possibility to seek asylum in “safe” countries.

3 Result

For the study ten articles have been selected, five concerning refugees in a large scale and five concerning climate refugees.

3.1 Articles

Conventional Refugees:

Review of Child and Adolescent Refugee Mental Health in *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Vol. 43.*

The article review stressful experiences and stress among child and adolescent refugees, within the framework of the chronological experiences of child refugees, in the phases of preflight, flight and resettlement. In focus are refugee populations such as unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers and former child soldiers. (Lustig, Kia-Keating, Grant Knight, Geltman, Ellis, Kinzie, Keane, Saxe, 2003)

Emerging paradigms in the mental health care of refugees in *Social Science and Medicine, Vol. 52.*

This paper addresses a range of issues concerning the mental health care of refugees. In examining services the emergence of new paradigms in mental health care is identified. These paradigms include the growth of holistic approaches that take account of refugees own experiences and expressed needs. This addresses the broader social policy contexts in which refugees are placed. (Watters, 2001)

Exploring identity, culture, and suffering with a Kashmiri Sikh refugee in *Social Science and Medicine, Vol. 65.*

This article explores the concepts of identity, culture, and suffering with a displaced Kashmiri Sikh in a camp settlement in Kashmir. It presents how the refugee interviewed draws upon culture and religion for solace in an environment where secular state institutions such as the military and civil bureaucracy fail to provide justice. (Aggarwal, 2007)

Mental health care needs of refugees in *Psychiatry, Vol. 8.*

In refugee populations an increased prevalence of stress-related common mental disorders is seen. The causes to these conditions differ according to stress experience and the journeys the refugees take in their migration to new countries and cultural settings. Due to their

experiences of victimization, refugees can be reluctant to disclose experiences of trauma. (Craig, Mac Jajua, Warfa, 2009)

Our health and theirs: Forced migration, othering, and public health in *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 62.

This scientific article use an ‘othering’ theory to explore how forced migrants are received in developed countries and considers the implications of this for public health. The chapter of Forced migration: motivations for movement and responses of resistance, take up the part about being a refugee and the asylum seeking progress. (Grove, Zwi, 2006)

Climate refugees:

‘We do not want to leave our land’: Pacific ambassadors at the United Nations resist the category of ‘climate refugees’ in *Geoforum*.

This paper explores how people living in the Pacific who are most at risk of being made landless by climate change are portrayed in policy discourse. In the center is the dispute over the portrayal of Pacific Island people as climate refugees. (McNamara, Gibson, 2008)

New Issues in Refugee Research, “Environmental refugees: Myth or Reality?” UNHCR Working Paper No. 34.

This working paper by Richard Black (2001) for the UNCHR seeks to go further in questioning the value of international policy-makers focusing on environmental refugees as a significant group of migrants.

Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict in *Political Geography*, Vol. 26.

In this article Reuveny (2007) argue that we can predict the effects of climate change on migration by exploring the effects of environmental problems on migration in recent decades. People living in lesser developed states may be more likely to leave areas affected by climate changes, which may cause conflict in receiving areas. He argues about what implications climate change brings for migration and conflict. (Reuveny, 2007)

Environmental migration and cities in the context of global environmental change in *Current opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, Vol. 2.

This paper take up the fact that cities are the most common destinations of migration inflows,

and environmental change outside of cities can exacerbate the influx of migrants to cities. (Adamo, 2010).

Migration and Climate Change in *IOM Migration Research Series*, No. 31.

In this report by Oli Brown (2001) for IOM the focus are on forced migration and climate change, the predictions of climate migration, development implications and policy response. There has been a collective, and rather successful, attempt to ignore the scale of the problem. Forced climate migrants fall through the cracks of international refugee and immigration policy. According to Brown (2001) there is today no “home” for climate migrants in the international community, both literally and figuratively. (Brown, 2001)

3.2 Why are they fleeing?

Climate refugees:

McNamara (2008) argues for the fact that climate change will displace millions of people in the future as a result of intensive fossil fuel consumption and over-consuming lifestyles. Adamo (2010) in turn discuss that global climate change could directly and indirectly affect migration movements through the intensification of natural disasters, changes in water availability, rising sea levels, and general scarcity of natural resources.

In South Asian countries like India and Bangladesh the reason to escape is, according to Brown (2001), extreme weather events such as droughts, storms and floods. These extreme events are expected to become more increasingly frequent and severe. In these countries coastal areas and in the low lying island states, Brown (2001) mentions the slow onset change of sea level rise as the for most reason for the populations to leave their homes. The main cause is salinization that sea level rise in turn brings to the agriculture land of this countries. McNamara (2008) brings forward a second reason why the low-lying states of the Pacific are vulnerable to sea level rise. This is due to the fact that those states is particularly vulnerable because their freshwater reserves are limited to a shallow subsurface lens, which in turn makes them at further risk to depletion in drought and contamination from salt water.

Even Adamo (2010) talks about sea level rise, extreme weather (for example heat waves and storms) and changes in water availability (drought) that are the climate change events most likely to impact population mobility.

In the Saharan African and in many other African states and regions, Brown (2001) instead talks about the lack of rain causing serious impacts for the agriculture which in turn leads to food insecurity and a growing water scarcity. The Saharan countries also have huge problem handling desertification that in turn destroys agriculture land.

At the same time melting glaciers makes the opposite problems in other parts of the world with increasing risk of flooding during the wet season and reduce dry-seasons water supplies to one-sixth of the world's population, according to Brown (2001). This will affect the Indian sub continents, parts of China and the Andes. In the IOM report Brown (2001) describes the mountains countries of Nepal, Peru and Bhutan in an increasing risk of glacial lake outburst floods in the future. Which in case can lead to large populations in those countries have to flee their homes due to this kind of climate change.

Brown (2001) refers to the states in South and East Asia as both numerically and geographically is particularly vulnerable for large-scale forced migration. This is due to the fact that sea level rise will have a disproportionate effect on this countries large populations living in those low-lying areas. The scarcity of this sea level rise is that six of Asia's ten mega-cities are located on these low-lying coastal areas, the cities of Jakarta, Shanghai, Tokyo, Manila, Bangkok and Mumbai.

In China 41 percent of the population and 70 percent of its megacities are located in coastal areas in danger of sea level rising (Brown, 2001).

According to Reuveny (2007) environmental problems can be divided into two groups. One group is problems involving extreme weather events, which have tended to be oversensitive and localized. The other group of problems includes accumulating changes such as rising sea-levels, land degradation, and declining freshwater resources, which tend to exert comparatively more permanent and out spread effects. According to Reuveny (2007) societies who are underdeveloped are at higher risk for such problems that in turn result in forced migration and in hand climate refugees.

According to Black (2001) the question of predicting how many people who might be forced to leave their homes due to shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agriculture disruption linked to climate change is far from being clear-cut.

Reuvenys' (2007) premise *"is that individuals decide to migrate if the benefit (total benefit minus total cost) from migrating is larger than that from not migrating"*.

For the small island states in the Pacific the climate refugee question is a sensitive one (McNamara, 2008). The population on those low-lying islands does not want to be called climate refugees; they do not want to leave their land. According to McNamara (2008) the population in for example Tuvalu think it is a human rights issue. They do not think that they have to suffer for the rising sea level created by climate change induced by the worlds developed states.

Conventional refugees:

In the case of Kashmir, Sikh Hindus had to flee their homes because of their religion (Aggarwal, 2007). But refugees interviewed by Aggarwal (2007) also blamed politics, economics, India, Pakistan, and the United States as reasons to flee their homes.

According to Craig (2009) *"many refugees and asylum seekers have experienced severe pre-migration trauma, including protracted mental and physical torture, mass violence and genocide, witnessing the killings of family members and friends, sexual abuse, kidnap of children, destruction and looting of personal property, starvation and lack of water and shelter"*. Towards these terrors of violence and persecution losses of family and friends, money, employment and status can be added as reasons to the traumas that may make people flee from their homes (Craig, 2009).

What both these groups of refugees has in common is referred to Grove (2006) the fact that forced migrants has a limited choice available to them and the pressured decisions they are compelled to make as they leave their homes in an effort to ensure their own, and their families, survival.

Grove (2006) also discusses that conditions of conflict, political unrest and economic difficulties are likely to occur simultaneously and interact to contribute to the difficult decisions to flee.

3.3 Where do they flee?

Climate refugees:

A majority of people displaced by climate change will likely stay within their own borders (Brown, 2001). According to Brown (2001) those who cannot find new homes inside their own country, all types of refugees, tend to seek sanctuary in places where they have existing cultural or ethnic ties. Brown (2001) gives the example of the Bangladeshis who might seek refuge in India or Pakistan and Indonesians from Sumatra in turn would look to Malaysia. Also paths of colonial relationships are visible, for example, the United Kingdom is an obvious destination for Pakistan's and West Indians, and Australia and New Zealand is the destination for some groups in the South Pacific.

As well Black (2001) takes Bangladesh as an example of climate forced migration in South Asia. The Bangladesh migrants have expanded the population of neighboring areas of India by an estimate of 12 to 17 million over the last forty years. This estimated number is though not only climate related refugees it also account for all kind of migration.

One example of migration flows given by Adamo (2010) is the worsening floods in the Mekong Delta (Vietnam) who has contributed to increase rural displacements and seasonal mobility to urban centers, notably Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City.

During the man-made created dust bowl in the United States prairie in the 1930 most of the population fleeing from those areas found their refugee in California (Brown, 2001).

McNamara (2008) in turn takes the example of the Pacific island of Tuvalu which alleged that their state have signed an treaty with New Zealand to be able to move their population there when sea level rise threatens the island state.

According to Adamo (2010) a study found that migration to cities is triggered by economic and environmental issues, among the coastal erosion and gradual salinization of drinking water and agricultural land. Adamo (2010) also ads changes in water availability to likely triggers of environmental migration to cities.

Conventional refugees:

Craig (2009) declare that during 2008 there were some 383 000 applications for asylum or refugee status in the industrialized world. The majority of this applications were to Europe, 290 000.

According to Grove (2006) the vast majority of involuntary migration involves the displacement of people within state borders. The statistics on these persons in 2004 was 7.6 million internally displaced (IDPs) and stateless persons.

To reconnect to Craig (2009), Grove (2006) point out that it is an undersized minority who eventually settle in developed countries. Instead 90 percent of those who manage to flee outside their own country remain in the same region.

3.4 The social and health situations of climate- and conventional refugees

Climate refugees:

According to Brown (2001) forced migrants, especially those forced to flee quickly from climate events, are in greater risk of sexual exploitation, trafficking and gender-based violence. He argues that those people of forced migration in response to climate stress are also at higher risk to spread epidemic diseases.

Facing severe environmental problems people in less developed countries (LDCs) may have to leave affected areas due to the fact that LDCs are less likely to mitigate such problems since they lack wealth and experience. According to Reuveny (2007) this in turn may cause conflict in receiving areas due to several reasons.

Conventional refugees:

Significant conflict-related exposures are what child and adolescent refugees suffer from according to Lustig (2003). Lustig (2003) also brings forward the fact that children and adolescent are particularly vulnerable to psychological distress. This due to the fact that war-affected refugee children commonly experience anxiety and depression, rage and violence, psychic numbing, paranoia, insomnia, and a heightened consciousness of death.

Due to Lustig (2003) refugees experiences before or during their flight affect physical health, which in turn may affect or reflect mental health status even in those people with a high level of social functioning.

Many of those refugees searching for asylum have according to Craig (2009) been exposed to organized violence or torture perpetrated by governments, security services or different rebel groups. It is not only the men who are exposed to this, women are just as likely to have been tortured and the most common form is beating and sexual assault. Craig (2009) means that there is no existing unique pattern of long-term mental responses to torture, but just as Lustig

(2003) says experiences commonly include anxiety, flashbacks, somatic symptoms and a loss of a sense of a just world.

Grove (2006) also discuss the information about refugees who have horrific experiences of being subjected to, or witnessing, torture trauma or human rights abuses. This due to the fact that they may have seen family and friends being killed, been subjected to gender based violence like rape, or participated in, or been themselves forced to carry out abuses.

According to Grove (2006) circumstances like that clearly represent risk factors for a range of serious and weakening mental health stresses.

3.5 How to they cope with the situation being on the run?

Climate refugees:

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005 a large amount of evacuees were displaced in the cities of Colorado Springs, Colorado, San Antonio, Texas, and Salt Lake City, Utah. According to Adamo (2010) these evacuees experienced extended hardship in terms of unemployment, food insecurity, transportation, and lack of health services.

Conventional refugees:

Due to Watters (2001) the recent debates in the field of refugees mental health has concerned on the role of Post Dramatic Stress (PDST). After arousing in social and economic context following the Vietnam War it has today gone on to be applied universally to victims of war and persecution regardless of cultural group and place of origin (Watters, 2001).

According to Watters (2001) more than 700 000 people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia suffer from severe psychic trauma.

Watters (2001) also discuss that studies of the mental health of refugees have tended to emphasize the impact of past events, particularly those in the country of origin and in the process of flight, as the key factors in mental health problems. Refugees who had experienced the higher levels of trauma in their home country were due to Watters (2001) more susceptible to experiencing mental health problems as a result of post-migration stressors.

Other post-migration experience such as separation from family, under-employment, loneliness and isolation and concerns about the refugee application is mentioned by Watters (2001) and has negative impact on mental health.

According to Lustig (2003) four broad responses to stressful experiences among refugees have been described: anticipation, devastating events, survival and adjustment.

During the time before the escape, the preflight phase refugees face social upheaval and increasing chaos in their region due to Lustig (2003). Limited access to schools disrupts education and social development and at family and individual levels refugees often face threats to their safety and to their family members. Lustig (2003) also discuss the fact that before flight, refugees anticipate and they cope with devastating events.

During the flight refugees also due to Lustig (2003) have to survive displacement from their homes and transit or transitional placements amid great uncertainty the future. The children born in this phase endure important stages of psychological development amid turbulence (Lustig, 2003).

Lustig (2003) describes different kind of preflight stress among refugee children, witnessing of murders or mass killings, enduring forced labor, living in segregated camps and lacking sufficient food for long periods of time.

During the flight refugees is subjected to flight stress according to Lustig (2003). Among refugee children separation from caregivers is one kind. Children indentified as refugees may become separated from caregivers by accident or because of unsafe circumstances at home. Political violence or natural disasters can render entire villages suddenly completely lacking of adults (Lustig, 2003).

Lustig (2003) also discuss the fact that refugee camps are what he calls "*total institutions, 'places where...the inhabitants are depersonalized and where people become numbers without names*". According to Lustig (2003) are traumatic events common in those camps.

Craig (2009) also discusses the high rates of PTSD among refugees. Half of the worlds refugees is comprised by children and adolescents among those high rates of PTSD, depression and behavioral problems are commonly reported (Craig, 2009).

Craig (2009) concludes that refugees are approximately ten times more likely to have PTSD than age matched native populations.

Due to Grove (2006) refugee's journeys from home to their final destination may include multiple border crossings, exhausting land journeys, and delayed stays in formal or informal refugee camps. These refugees are due to Grove (2006) typically marked by ongoing fear of

violence and persecution: from militants, from authorities in the host countries, from other refugees and from those who controls the camps.

4 Discussion

4.1 Study limitations

Due to the limited data in the area and the lack of time the preferred method was to do a literature review. For this Science Direct was the only search engine applied. If there had been more time available for the thesis, search engines such as ISI and GoogleScholar could have been used and could have provide some more scientific publications on the topic. In that way a broader study could have been constructed, this in turn affected the result and of course the study area in focus for the thesis.

When searches were made one of the acceptance criteria was to search only for papers published in English. In this way it was not possible to reach national documents, especially does written in native language. This affected the study due to the fact that documents of that kind could have been resourceful for the current review.

It is complex to assembly a study on two different groups of refugees. This due to the fact that it is sometimes hard to be able to recognize which problem the escaping people fleeing from, because of the fact that they are all called refugees. This makes it hard to not know if the articles chosen for the UN Refugee Convention embraced refugees also cover populations fleeing due to environmental causes.

Scientific research in the area of climate refugees is yet an area in development, due to this fact information about these peoples social and health status is hard to find. You cannot find scientific articles in the same extent as you can do with conventional refugees. This in turn led to different steppingstones between the two groups in a comparative study like this.

4.2 Result discussion

Many conflicts and war-fairs over the world have roots in environmental problems. Reuveny (2007) covers the fact that conflict could be caused in receiving areas when climate refugees appear. This leads to confusion about who to call a climate refugee or a refugee by conflict. As the situation looks today you would rather be classified as a refugee of war and conflict due to the fact that you then have a right to seek asylum and in that way apply for refugee status.

Craig (2009) discuss the fact that not only terror of violence and persecution are reasons to

flee, he mentions money, employment and status as reasons that also can be added as the traumas that make people flee from their homes. Also Grove (2006) discusses conditions like conflict, political unrest and economic difficulties as all likely to occur simultaneously and interact to contribute to the difficult decision to flee.

This group of people is defined as refugees who are under protection by the UN Refugee Convention. So getting a definition by law for climate refugees' maybe not would be so good for these people due to the fact that they then should be defined as climate refugees and in that turn not be under the protection by the international body. It is not before you get asylum as you will be recognized as a refugee who are in need for international protection.

Grove (2006) talks about the horrific experiences which has been the reasons for the refugees to leave their homes, experiences of subjected or witnessing torture trauma and human rights abuse. It could be the horrific witnessing of family or friends being killed or gender based violence for example rape or to self be forced to carry out abuse. Brown (2001) in turn discuss that the people who flee their homes fast due to environmental events are in greater risk of sexual exploitation, trafficking and gender based violence. Grove (2006) means that these experiences lead to serious and weakening mental health stresses among the refugees. Climate refugees may not flee for the same traumatic experiences that refugees fleeing due to persecution or violence but it is not said that they could not experience the same traumatic and horrifying experiences during the flight.

Both Brown (2001) and Lustig (2003) discuss the same traumatic experiences for both of the refugee groups when coming to escape their native homes. Climate refugees is in the same need of mental help as the conventional refugees due to the fact that fleeing their own homes is in itself a traumatic experience.

According to Grove (2006) both of this groups has in common that they are forced migrants who have a limited choice available to them and they live under the pressured decision that they are compelled to make as they leave their origin homes in an effort to ensure their own, and their families, survival.

A majority of the climate refugees remains inside their own country due to Brown (2001). Those escaping outside the borders of their origin country often find sanctuary in places with existing cultural or ethnic ties. This includes both climate and conventional refugees but it is more likely for the climate refugees to stay inside their own state. The question about why

climate refugees are more likely to stay is hard to answer. Is it due to the fact that they are not given any helping hand by the international body when they are forced to escape their homes due to climate events, or is it because they do not want to leave their home nation? But if they never go outside their own boundaries they would never have a chance to get sanctuary in any other nation. This due to the criteria of being a refugee according to the UN Refugee Convention is that you have to be outside the boundaries of your home country. For persons being in the situation of losing their native land due to climate changes and living in a third world country it is problematic. Because in a situation like that it is hard for the government to give the protection and help the refugees is in need of, however if they escape outside the borders it is not likely that they get any help. According to Collectif Argos (2010) countries today hide behind the restrictive definition of the UN Refugee Convention to refuse asylum to individuals who might had to flee from the places they live to escape danger.

Is it the UN Refugee Convention who stops the climate refugees to escape their own country though the fact that their lives are in danger? What is going to happen when forced migration due to environmental problems grow to a much more wider and troubled issue? That is a difficult question which is hard to answer as long as climate refugees not are under any protection beneath international law. This thesis does not answer that question but it could be a subject for further research.

The review aims to understand the concepts of climate refugees and the refugees embraced by the UN Refugee Convention and in that way highlight the causes and problems that both the conventional and the climate refugees face in a refugee situation. This to be able to recognize the assumptions that make the United Nations not classify climate refugees with refugee status.

In the end the difference between the groups of refugees is not immense, it is small and they both need the same protection when it comes to their escape from their country of origin. This is complex due to the fact that environmental changes often not only alone stand for the migration. It is together with other factors like economic and under development or factors described by Craig (2009) and Grove (2006).

Climate refugees and the refugees embraced by the UN Refugee Convention separate when it comes to the part about why they escape their homes. But they have in common that they both flee their homes in fear for their own or their families' survival. They maybe not have undergone the same traumatic experiences before their flight but as both Brown (2001) and

Lustig (2003) discuss they share the same distressing experiences when it comes to escape their native home. In the end it is not much that differs between these two groups of refugees due to the fact that they are in the same need of mental help and international protection. If climate refugees were to receive protection according to Rebert (2006) either the UN Refugee Convention would have to be updated to embrace climate refugees or a new internationally protective status would have to be developed. But the question is if this is done do we take action against the core of the problem; climate change or is this just a path around the real problem? As McNamara (2008) discuss the populations subjected to sea level rise does not want to leave their land, they see it as an issue of human rights. Would it not be better to urge the world to act on climate change and fund sustainable development instead for investigate the prospects for a new category of refugees? That is a question for further research.

5 Conclusion

It is hard to be able to make a comparative study in a full sense between these two refugee groups at the present due to the fact that climate refugees today in a large sense only escape inside of their own countries. According to the Geneva Convention a refugee has to cross the state border of their origin country. What makes it even more complex is the fact that no clear definition of climate refugee exist and cannot be discussed in comparing with the concepts of conventional refugees.

It is clear that both refugee groups face traumatic events that may differ with nature and intense. To be able to draw some more conclusions the topic requires further attention and more research is needed.

Even though the distinction between climate and other types of refugees is vague, it is of great importance that a categorization is needed due to know how international law will protect and distinguish people who have to escape their homes through reasons that they cannot handle. We have to remember that refugee questions are and have always been a sensitive issue. But the problem today is that climate refugees still is not officially recognized as a difficulty at all. It is not handled in its core issue; global warming.

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