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GLAWCAL COMMENT #155

WHICH FUTURE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE MIGRANTS?

Based on

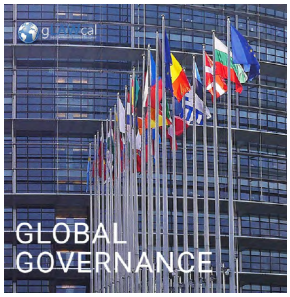
Tarja Ketola: "Climate Change Immigrants or Refugees of the Anthropocene — Adapting to or Denying Climate Change?"

gLAWcal
Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development

A gLAWcal comment on Tarja Ketola's *"Climate Change Immigrants or Refugees of the Anthropocene — Adapting to or Denying Climate Change?"* in Pasi Heikkurinen (Ed.) Sustainability and Peaceful Coexistence for the Anthropocene

In his chapter, Professor Ketola, by using qualitative case studies, aims at building a model that could turn chaotic climate refuge seeking into planned climate migration by learning from history.

In Professor Ketola's view, climate change will have more devastating impacts than wars. The point of view of climate change migrants (so-called cli-migrants) is here used. Immigration is a part of globalization, just like climate change. The unpleasant future prospect of immigration is climate change immigration, which has taken place through the ages, but not on such a scale as predicted now. The even more unpleasant future prospect of refuge (or asylum) seeking, already present in many areas, is climate change refuge seeking, which may explode into uncontrollable floods, if not organized into controllable flows. The United Nations Refugee Convention from 1951 says that a refugee is any person who seeks refuge, 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' (UNHCR, 1951, p. 14). Climate change is not yet included in the reasons for gaining a refugee status, therefore climate refugee and climate refuge seeking are still theoretical concepts. According to Professor Ketola, climate change migration erodes the position of indigenous peoples both when their habitats remain unaffected or are favorably affected by climate change, and when their habitats are badly affected by climate change. This problem is emerging already with the world's first cli-refugees on Pacific Islands where relocation from sinking islands onto others' lands has been a sensitive issue but has not yet become a violent conflict. Since most of Australia and the UK and large parts of the USA will eventually also be uninhabitable most of their citizens will migrate to colonialize either those small, developed nations or those developing nations of any size least affected by climate change. In conclusion, the more extreme global warming with weather extremes and sea level rise becomes the more pronounced will human displacement and migration becomes. Whatever the global governance decisions are, it is clear that comprehensive international cooperation between all countries in the world is crucial. The global community needs to share the burdens caused by global climate change by preventing and mitigating environmental shocks and stresses as well as by opening migration channels for the temporarily, longer-term and permanently displaced cli-refugees/cli-migrants.



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The gLAWcal comments are insight and short analytical pieces written by the gLAWcal team. The gLAWcal comments are based on, and inspired by, the books and chapters published within one of the gLAWcal book series published by Routledge Publishing (New York/London).

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