

Book Review: Environmental Conflicts, Migration and Governance

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Book Review

Environmental Conflicts, Migration and Governance

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Environmental Conflicts, Migration and Governance

Edited by Tim Krieger, Diana Panke and Michael Pregernig

Bristol University Press, 2020

240 pp.; doi: 10.2307/j.ctvvsqc5m

The impact of environmental conflicts and migration, together with the need for good governance, is recognised internationally. Human migration represents a key strand of the globalised and interconnected 21st century. This poses both a challenge and opportunity for governance, along with the potential for controversy and backlashes.

A major driver of migration flows is environmental conflict. With the ongoing effects of climate change, one of the world's most pressing issues, this is likely to increase. Indeed, in January 2020, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled that countries could not deport people who had sought asylum due to climate-related threats. This was the first decision by a UN human rights treaty body based on a complaint filed by an individual seeking protection from the effects of climate change. It was noted that the decision could lead to numerous legal claims by displaced people around the world.

Although numerous books have been written about the environment, conflict and migration, their scope is generally specific and/or they utilise a monodisciplinary approach. *Environmental Conflicts, Migration and Governance* contrasts this. It seeks to shed light on various aspects of interdependencies between migration, environmental and resource conflicts. The development and roles of national, regional and global migration governance regimes are also examined.

Four broad themes are covered. These are: environmental and resource conflicts as causes for migration; individual-level selection and sorting of migrants; and the political regulation of conflicts and migration. The final

theme focuses on migration, either as a cause for conflict in host countries, or expected migration as an incentive for potential host countries to participate in the governance of environmental or resource-related conflicts in the countries of origin.

Environmental and resource-related conflicts are defined as a struggle for power, or control over resources or property. This is within the context of resource scarcity or fundamental environmental change. Migration is defined broadly as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. This might be either within a country, or across borders. A particular focus is placed on migration that is witnessed in reaction to, or in anticipation of, environmental or resource-related conflicts.

A timely, detailed and thoughtful analysis of important issues facing the global community is provided by Tim Krieger, Diana Panke and Michael Pregernig. This is achieved via the effective use of a multifaceted theoretical and methodological approach to address key questions and concerns surrounding migration, climate change, and conflict. The ongoing impact of these issues, and the extensive and up-to-date literature review, ensures the publication's relevance and longevity. The use of numerous and diverse case studies reinforces this effective approach. For instance, the evaluation of the Kimberly process aimed at reducing the international flow of conflict diamonds (rough diamonds used to finance wars against governments) is especially informative.

A clear and logical structure enhances the book's quality. The first chapter outlines the analytical framework for studying environmental and resource-related conflicts along with linkages between conflict, migration and governance. It provides the rationale for the approach adopted, a brief overview of the following chapters, and lists the core questions that are addressed. These include:

- When do environmental and resource-related problems lead to conflict, and how does this incentivise migration?
- Who leaves a country and when do they go? For instance, migrants might belong to an ethnic minority

forcefully blocked from utilising a scarce resource by the majority. Their migration is encouraged by their ability to leave and to enter their destination.

- What do the trajectories of migration governance regimes look like?
- What is the effect of migration on possible conflict in destination countries, and what is the role of governance arrangements here?

The chapters then investigate different aspects of environmental conflicts, migration and governance. Here insights are gained into how environmental and resource problems can create conflict, which then can trigger migration. They assert that governance plays an important role in whether environmental changes and scarce resources are successfully managed. The same applies to the successful management of related conflicts, migration and its direction, and potential impact in host countries. The contributors, who are from diverse fields, frequently refer to other chapters to ensure readers are aware of additional relevant material.

The last chapter provides a helpful overview, and draws together concluding remarks. The chapter argues that it is essential to comprehensively, context-specifically and correctly model the interplay between governance, environmental problems, induced conflict, and out-migration. In order to ascertain how governance shapes migration flows, the composing of migration policies needs to be understood. With migration policies made in strategic interdependence of potential host countries there is a need to study the strate-

gic interaction that occurs. While migration policies may be effective, restrictions might lead to illegal behaviour which erodes the intended effect. Each link in the chain from environmental problems to conflict and to migration can be influenced by governance.

Ultimately, the editors and contributors achieve their goal of making an important contribution to the subject area. They illuminate various aspects of the interdependencies between migration, environmental and resource conflicts, along with the development and roles of national, regional and global migration governance regimes. Added value is provided by chapters including extensive and helpful bibliographies, identifying areas requiring more research, and often displaying illustrative figures and tables.

Environmental Conflicts, Migration and Governance is a well-researched and written book. It is founded on a perceptive analysis of an important topic that warrants discussion, and will become increasingly important in the forthcoming years.

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Paul Bellamy has published on diverse topics, and most recently examined threats to human security for an international study. The views expressed here are those of the author alone and do not represent those of his employer.
