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Competing definition of climate change and the post-Kyoto negotiations

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the definitional debates linked to climate change and their impact on the policy actors' position and on policy content. It is suggested that while discussing about "climate change", different policy arenas perceive different problems implying different responsibility attributions and different solutions.

Design/methodology/approach – The study mobilizes different sources, such as regulations, research reports, and scientific papers, combined with personal interviews with international agents participating in the climate policy negotiations process.

Findings – Initially, climate change has been defined as an environmental degradation problem. Progressively, other competing definitions of the problem occupied the public debate. Alternatively, climate change has been discussed as a development issue, a migration issue and a security issue. The paper argues that while this polyphonic discourse persists, the problem definition process remains unaccomplished, new institutional equilibriums cannot be established and, consequently, policymaking cannot follow.

Practical implications – By focusing on the different perceptions and debates of the climate issue, this paper points to the conflicts transcending the international arena. This gives policy actors a wider view of the negotiating process in which they are involved.

Originality/value – Most analyses explain the success or failure of international agreements by pointing to either the presence/lack of governmental compliance or the institutional complexity and need for coordination between enforcement agencies. Less attention is paid to the way public problems are perceived by different policy communities. This paper focuses on the definitional debates accompanying the post-Kyoto negotiations and their impact on the policy making process.

Keywords Climate change, Climate change strategies, Decision making, International cooperation, Conferences, Problem definition, International negotiations, Mitigation, Adaptation

Paper type General review

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the alternative definitional debates linked to climate change and their impact on the post-Kyoto negotiations process. The analysis is based on the "definitional approach" suggested by Spector and Kitsuse. The authors propose to consider public problems as a discursive interactive process driven by the policy actors. In that sense problems are not considered as "facts" whose components are objectively determined. Their content depends on the actors' way of perceiving them. Indeed all policy actors do not define a situation in the same manner as their definition depends on personal and collective cognitive frames through which these actors operate. The study and confrontation of the actors discourse, written of oral, becomes thus a major analytical source.

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Most analyses of international agreements explain the success or failure of such agreements by pointing to either the presence/lack of governmental compliance or the institutional complexity and need for coordination between enforcement agencies. Less attention is paid to the way public problems are perceived by different policy communities and the fact that, under the same term, not all actors refer to the same problem and, consequently, to the same solutions. This paper focuses on the definitional debates linked to climate change and their impact on the process of post-Kyoto negotiations.

The UNFCCC defines "climate change" as an environmental degradation problem and encourages industrialized countries to adopt measures in order to mitigate their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The same mitigation rationality is respected by the Kyoto Protocol. However, the climate change discussions have considerably evolved. The environmental definition initially promoted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) weakened and other competing images entered the public debate, legitimizing new policy actors in the field. Through more or less parallel debate forums, climate change has been defined as a development problem, a migration problem and a security problem. These interactive definitions consider climate change as one of the causes of other major problems to be dealt with (development, migration, security) and less as one of the consequences of human induced air pollution. They reflect an anthropocentric approach of climate change pointing more to adaptation-oriented measures than to mitigation as suggested in the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol.

The second section discusses the importance of problem definition for the policy-making process. The third section presents the definition of climate change as an environmental problem which must be dealt with by the adoption of mitigation policies. The forth section examines the expansion of the anthropocentric definitions of climate change that converge on the need for adaptation. The last section discusses the impact of these definitional evolutions on the present institutional equilibriums.

2. The policy relevance of problem definition process

The definition of a situation as a public problem and its registration on the political agenda are purely political actions that involve the search for a compromise between multiple actors supporting different positions. The recognition of a problem by policymakers results into the allocation of a budget, the distribution of authority and the designation of persons to blame and to protect. To put it another way, problem definition is an issue of power, since it divides the social and public actors into winners (who profit from the recognition of the problem) and losers (who will lose material or symbolic resources). For example, the recognition of climate change as an autonomous problem will strengthen the positions of the agency asked to manage this problem, which will probably in turn have its budget and its personnel increased. It will also help people affected by the deterioration of the environment who will benefit from positive measures. On the other hand, this same recognition can prove harmful for businesses with high carbon footprints that must assume the cost of CO_2 reduction measures and for the agencies that lose control of the problem.

When a situation becomes a problem to be dealt with by the public authorities, it passes through a double definitional debate (Vlassopoulos, 2007). The first determines the causes of the problem and answers the question "what is the problem?". The second

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determines the consequences of the problem and answers the question "why does this situation constitute a problem?". The causes define the responsible that should pay for solving the problem. The consequences define the victims to whom the policy should be addressed. Schematically we could present public problems like continua composed by interlinked sequences of "cause-problem-consequence". An example of such a continuum could be:

- industrial production (cause) produces inter alia GHGs (problem) which generate climate change (consequence);
- climate change (problem), caused by GHG emissions (cause), produces drought [part of climate change effects] (consequence);
- drought (problem) caused by climate change (cause) further results underdevelopment (consequence); and
- underdevelopment (problem) caused by drought (cause) engenders [among other negative effects] migration (consequence), etc.

In that sense, each one of the components of this continuum can be simultaneously debated as a cause of different problems, as an autonomous problem and as a consequence of other problems.

The policy implication of this discursive complexity is that each sequence comprises its own rationale of victimization and responsibility attribution and this, not only leads to different policy solutions but also influences the recognition of authority to one or another policy sector. Thus, each sequence of "cause-problem-consequence" do not refer to the same policy content and the same policy sector. Different scenarios are possible (Figure 1).

In the sequence "GHG emission-climate change-environmental degradation (drought, sea-level rise, extreme weather events [...])" climate change is considered as an

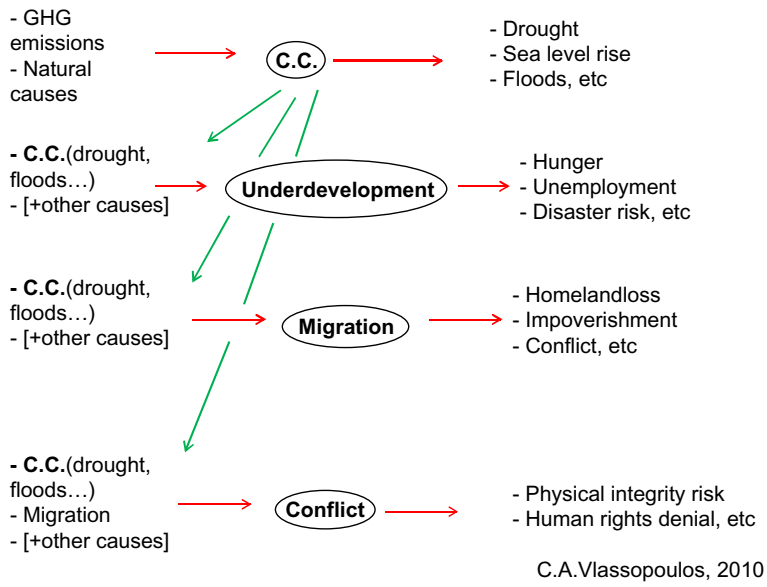

Figure 1.
Concurrent definitional scenarios of climate change and climate-related problems

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autonomous environmental problem whose origins must be combated by the adoption of pollution abatement measures guaranteeing ecological equilibriums (Section 4). The environmental sector appears to be the most relevant to tackle these causes by adopting traditional *ex post* "polluter pays principle" measures, to mitigate the problem.

In the sequence "climate change-underdevelopment-hunger, unemployment [. . .]" (Section 4(b)) the main problem is underdevelopment that, among other causes, can be enhanced by climate change. In this case the development sector has competence to propose development and adaptation measures to protect populations against the negative effects of global warming but has no authority to address environmental measures.

In the sequence "climate change-migration-impoverishment, loss of traditional habitat [. . .]", migration is the autonomous problem (Section 4(c)). Climate change is debated as one potential cause of migration (others can be conflict, economic crisis, or deliberate choice). In this case, the migration sector is most relevant to deal with migration flows but it has no competence to tackle the environmental causes of migration. In that case, policies are oriented towards the protection of vulnerable populations by the adoption of adaptation measures (for instance infrastructure plans), if necessary of relief responses (post-disaster intervention) and, suggested recently the International Organization for Migraiton (IOM), by planned displacement projects.

In the sequence "climate change-security-physical integrity, human rights [. . .]", security is the autonomous problem (Section 4(d)). Climate change is one of the potential security causes (others can be war, forced migration, political regression). Here the security sector appears as most relevant to deal with the problem but it lacks the competence to tackle the environmental causes of security. Policies in that case are mostly oriented towards conflict preventive measures and if necessary urgent responses to human crisis situations.

The variety of the definitional frames through which climate change is actually debated places it at the intersection of different policy arenas, each one with its own rationality, objectives and functioning and its own policy actors. Important incompatibilities separate these policy arenas, making their collaboration difficult. More specifically, the environmental sector was built in the 1970s on an ecocentric approach to reality against the anthropocentric approach dominant until then. This means that the environment constitutes a new autonomous social value to be protected in itself and not as by the past, through reference to human health (Lascoumes and Vlassopoulos, 1998; Theys, 2007). The new environmental policies are based on the responsibility concept embodied in the "polluter-payer" principle. The development, the migration and the security sectors are built on an anthropocentric approach to reality. This involves giving priority to human wellbeing. Underdevelopment, migration and security policies are responses to human crisis situations, and as such, they cannot be based on the individual responsibility concept. Costs are shared by the community.

Neither the objectives (environmental protection vs human protection) nor the means (constraint and sanction through pollution mitigation, help and inducement through community adaptation) are common to these policy arenas whose discourses generate a dissonant definitional process as suggested through Sections 4 and 5. If no compromise is found between policy actors to converge towards a common definition and, thus, towards mutually acceptable policy solutions and redistribution of authority between policy sectors, it is unlikely that a common policy will ever be agreed.

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3. Setting the agenda of climate change: the construction of an environmental policy issue

The climate change issue is not new. First the French mathematician and physician J. Fourier described the green house effect in his article published at the *Annales de la Chimie et de Physique* in 1824. Half a century later, in an article written in 1896, the Swedish Arrenius (1896), focused on the increased CO_2 emissions, and the effects of burning coal to the earth's temperature, but did not appreciate its negative impact. Many years of scientific debate followed until climate change was considered as a global public problem requiring the intervention of the international community and national governments.

Until 1970 the climate debate was mostly confined to the scientific community of climatologists. Climatic variations were perceived as a scientific issue and climate research was fragmented into diverse university ventures. In 1971 a first international study group of experts was created at Wijk Lidingö (Sweden) in order to define the state of knowledge in climate research and make proposals for further research. Based on this first international cooperation a broader group of experts was organized three years later by the WMO and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) within the frame of the Global Atmospheric Research Program (GARP) to examine the highly complex problem of the physical basis of climate (Flohn, 1977). This is the first United Nations' initiative on the climate issue followed by the first World Climate Conference (WCC) organized by the WMO in 1979. This was an entirely scientific meeting of some 400 experts from more than 40 countries but participants were asked to recommend whether a conference at the ministerial level should be convened to take necessary international policy actions.

While the participants were climate scientists and researchers on energy, land use or water resources, the topics discussed in this conference were not merely scientific. The debate on climate models and predictability went together with environmental concerns pointing to the interdependence between climate and society. More specifically, the meeting focused on the effects of climatic hazards for developing countries and the potential of greenhouse effects to question the sustainability of the industrial civilization (Ausubel, 1987). The declaration of the WCC, unanimously adopted by the participants, gave for the first time a clear definition of human induced climate change as a major environmental problem necessitating *ad hoc* measures in order to prevent the degradation of the world's environment:

> The long term survival of mankind depends on achieving a harmony between society and nature. The climate is but one characteristic of our environment that needs to be wisely utilized. Degradation of the environment in any national or geographical area must be a major concern of society because it may influence climate elsewhere. The nations of the world must work together to preserve the fertility of the soils; to avoid misuse of the world's water resources, forests and rangelands; to arrest desertification; and to lessen pollution at the atmosphere and the oceans. These actions by nations will require great determination and adequate material resources, and they will be meaningful only in a world at peace.

The 1979 conference and declaration thus identified climate change as an autonomous public problem to be addressed by the establishment of environmental policies to combat desertification, deforestation and pollution. Further, the participants founded the World Climate Program, under the joint responsibility of the WMO, the ICSU and the UNEP, to address needs in research, data collection, climate services

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and impact assessment. By defining climate change as an environmental problem the UNEP appeared as the most suitable international institution to propose specific policy measures.

The WMO, insuring the scientific expertise, and the UNEP, insuring the policy expertise, thus became the main institutional actors in the field. Their environmental perception of climate change gave to the UN policy approach two directions. First, the emphasis is placed on the causes of the problem and in particular to GHGs and CO_2 emissions, one of the most studied issues for the scientific community of climatologists. Jointly, WMO, UNEP and IUSC organized in 1980 a meeting on "CO_2-induced climate change" followed by the 1985 "International Conference on Assessment of the Role of Carbon Dioxide and of other GHGs in Climate Variations and Associated Impacts". Since then, CO_2 and GHG emissions were considered as the main cause of global warming. Second, mitigation measures are considered as the most suitable response for combating the causes of climate change. The second WCC in 1990 added pressure in the same direction through the publication of a strong statement about the risks of climate change. This is also the dominant approach of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created by the UNEP and the WMO, which published its first report just in time for this conference. The UNFCCC first envisaged during the second WCC and directly influenced from the first generation of IPCC reports, confirms the direction through its policy orientations. The ultimate objective of the convention and its related legal instruments set out in article 1 is:

> [. . .] to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, stabilization of GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

In reference to the Kyoto Protocol, its main official objective is to "set binding targets for 37 industrialized countries and the European community for reducing GHG emissions". Although some work on adaptation has been made by the UNFCCC and by the Kyoto Protocol, which established the adaptation fund, mitigation remained the priority for climate policy.

The environmental perception of the 1970s and 1980s, giving priority to the causes of climate change and to mitigation strategies started declining during the 1990s. The beginning of the new century confirmed the trend. This is not only due to the lack of commitment by certain big GHG-emitter countries and to the inappropriate application of the emissions trading system. It is also, and probably most, due to the growing diversity of the policy actors supporting competing definitions of the climate change issue and claiming for the recognition of authority during the policy-making process.

4. Alternative definitions: climate change as a challenger for the humanity's wellbeing

Stripple (2008) notes that:

> [. . .] global climate governance is marked by a multiplication of functional interlinkages and communication channels, apparent in the observation that the future of global climate governance is currently negotiated in different and often non-synchronized discussion fora.

Many researchers emphasize the institutional complexity of climate governance and presume that under the designation "climate change" all the actors discuss about the same policy issue. Yet, as we try to demonstrate in this section, while discussing about

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"climate change", the various policy communities perceive different problems. This makes the convergence towards a common policy scenario very uncertain.

Mee (2005) remarks that the agenda, in the period following the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, has moved strongly towards a debate on how to deliver sustainable development rather than how to protect the environment *per se*. Our view is that this shift commenced earlier, after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Indeed, since the 1990s the term "global warming" is experiencing a gradual definitional shift: from an autonomous environmental problem whose causes (particularly CO_2) must be combated, it has moved to being discussed as the cause of other global public problems threatening humanity's wellbeing (mostly poverty, migration, and security).

UN agencies and other international organizations, with no environmental competency, have entered the debate. Their concern is not how to mitigate GHGs but how to adapt to a changing climate in order not to aggravate under-development, to administer population displacement and prevent the emergence of conflict over scarce resources. International organizations are not alone in participating in this process. New scientific communities of social scientists have got interested in the climate topic and produce new research that defy the dominant climate surveys and focus on risk assessment and adaptation.

(a) The diversification of scientific knowledge

Climatology is the main scientific community for the study of climate change until the 1980s and is still dominant inside the IPCC working groups. If climatologists are the only legitimate scientists to make assertions about the evolution of the earth's climate they are not the best suited to analyze human behavior in relation to the changing environment. However, in order to politically establish the urgency of the climate issue, the IPCC reports could not exclude the social and economic impacts of global warming. As Yearley (2009) remarks, the IPCC was clear that global climate change could not be studied in the absence of social science analyses, particularly economics. Thus, the supplementary report to the impacts assessment presented in 1992 by the Working Group II contains a section entitled "Human settlements: the energy, transport, and industrial sectors; human health; air quality and changes in ultraviolet-B radiation" which served as a starting point for the development of many researches in social sciences dealing with the human dimension of climate change. The last two decades economists but also, geographers, policy scientists and sociologists have demonstrated a growing interest for research on the impacts of climate change, social vulnerability and policymaking.

As in the post-WSSD period the international community, NGOs' and local governments directed their interest towards the impact-adaptation scenarios, the progressive availability of social science studies focusing on the human dimension of climate change reinforced, that tendency. Simultaneously, IPCC's fourth assessment report "Climate Change 2007" (WG I) concluding that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal" and that "impacts can't any longer be seen as hypothetical outcomes", pushed in the same direction. At the opening session of the International Human Dimension Programme on Global Environmental Change in 2009, a physicist of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impacts Research suggested that 90 percent of research should be done by social sciences[1].

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The considerable growth of social science studies the last ten years did not constitute a unified domain of "social climate studies". Instead, different preexisting research communities adapted the climate topic to their traditional research inquiry. Consequently, each one serves as an intellectual background nourishing different alternative definitional frames of the climate change.

(b) The development perception

During the 1990 Second WCC in Geneva, it became clear that there was a "north-south" divide on how developed and developing countries viewed climate change. For the former it was primarily a scientific and environmental issue, while the latter emphasized the implications for poverty and development of any future regime. Developing countries considered that the new legal instrument should not obstruct their economic development (Boisson-de-Chazournes, 2008).

Indeed the declarations of the group of 77 (and particularly the least developed countries) call for efforts to address climate change not as an environmental issue but as a development issue: climate policy must enhance and ensure the sustainable development, promote economic growth of the developing countries and the eradication of poverty, hunger and disease. As far as the international community continues to adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, mitigation is not absent from the G77 discourse. However, its principal claim concerns the obligation of developed counties to support adaptation of developing countries by warranting financial and technological assistance.

Contesting the dominant environmental perception, the G77 succeeded for the first time to marginalize the WMO and the UNEP by imposing an International Negotiating Committee (INC), working under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, to lead the adoption process of the UNFCCC. This new equilibrium gave the opportunity to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which has played until then a marginal role to climate policy, to join the debate (Levy and Downie, 2000).

Mee (2005) remarks that until the 1990s "UNDP's work had little environmental emphasis – so little that it only received a single passing mention in the 1987 Brundtland report", despite its involvement in several high-profile relief efforts). The development-oriented discourse of developing countries legitimized the UNDP as a new UN partner to climate policymaking. Simultaneously, the agreement with the World Bank in April 1991 to become a partner in the newly created Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the active participation in the UN Conference on Environment and Development, confirmed the entrance of the UNDP into the environmental agenda. The nomination of the environmentalist James Gustave Speth from 1993 to 1999 as Administrator of UNDP has also contributed to the UNDP's environmental turn. Mee points out that Speth was a strong advocate of the concept of "mainstreaming" the environment into all aspects of UNDP's work rather than through separate streams of finance or operational units.

If the environment was no longer seen as an enemy but as a partner for "sustainable" development, particularly since the Rio Conference, the concept of sustainable development reflects, however, the integration of the environment into the need for development and not vice versa. The participation of the developing countries to global environmental governance has also contributed to this evolution, most significantly by turning the global environmental discourse from "global environmental politics" into "global politics of sustainable development" (Najam, 2005).

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The reinforcement of the UNDP's role and the pressure exercised by the G77 considerably strengthened the perception of climate change as a development problem and put the emphasis on adaptation measures.

The 2007-2008 Human Development Report entitled "Fighting climate change: human solidarity in a divided world" represents the new definition of climate change at the international arena. Instead of taking an ecocentric approach, climate change is viewed with an anthropocentric approach that mostly emphasizes the impacts of global warming rather than its causes, and human vulnerability rather than ecosystem equilibrium: "The battle against dangerous climate change is part of the fight for humanity". The redefinition in based on the assumption that "The world is already committed to further warming because of the inertia built into climate systems and the delay between mitigation and outcome". Thus, adaptation appears as the most relevant climate policy strategy "For the first half of the twenty-first century there is no alternative to adaptation to climate change". It is therefore suggested to "Put climate change adaptation at the centre of the post-2012 Kyoto framework" (UNDP Human Development Report, 2007-2008). For a UN representative the notions of climate adaptation and development are hard to distinguish (personal interview, June 2010). If the term adaptation is used, this is due to monetary considerations; developing countries are now in a position to request adaptation financing on top of traditional official development assistance. On the contrary, mitigation is seen for developing countries as irrelevant and dangerous if not sustained financially by developed countries.

This conceptual shift is also reflected in the changing titles of the three IPCC Working Group II assessment reports completed between 1990 and 2001: 1990: *Impacts Assessment of Climate Change*; 1995: *Impacts, Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change*; 2001 and 2007: *Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*.[2] The emphasis is consequently put on the most vulnerable regions, which generally coincide with the poorest regions lacking the necessary infrastructure to cope with the effects of global warming (droughts, floods, extreme weather events). In other words, environmental policies no longer appear as the only response to the problem. Development projects offering improved resilience to vulnerable regions start to be seen as priority instrument for climate policy (Vlassopoulos, 2010).

The climate discourse of developing countries and the UNDPs position mutually reinforce each other. They and both profit from the growing social sciences bibliography on social vulnerability and development focussing on the links between the changing environment and the human condition. The development-vulnerability discourse is not however the only one defying the environmental perception promoted by the UNEP, the WMO and the UNFCCC secretariat. As suggested bellow, other policy communities give alternative definitions that further legitimize the anthropocentric view of climate change.

(c) The migration perception

Environmental migration constitutes a research issue for migration specialists since the 1980s. The UN report of El-Hinnawi in 1985 has identified different causes of environmental migration, like dam constructions, industrial accidents, natural disasters, etc. Only recently did the scientific community, NGO's and international agencies focus on what they call a "climate migrant" (Felli, 2008). European Greens have also pointed to the climate migration issue by organizing a conference

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at the European Parliament in 2008. This growing attention coincides with the summary for policymakers of the IPCC's Working Group II, which also refers to "the potential population migration" in the areas affected by climate change (IPCC, WG II, p. 14).

Migration studies and debates perceive climate change as a cause for population displacement. Forced displacement is thus considered as the main problem to deal with, while the environmental dimension is marginalized. The main questions addressed by social scientists in that field are in relation to the number of environmental refugees, their distinction from other types of refugees and their legal protection. Myers was one of the first researchers who estimated the number of people that will be forced to migrate because of environmental reasons. His writings considerably influenced the public debate (Myers, 1997).

The 2007/2008 UNDP report on "Fighting climate change" contains only one reference to migration. The argument is that, if development and adaptation are not seriously considered, migration will become a threat for human development across the developing world: "Losses of productivity linked to climate change will increase inequalities between rainfed and commercial producers, undermine livelihoods and add to pressures that are leading to forced migration". The climate-migration debate is more actively engaged by the IOM and more recently by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Both emphasize the human impact of global warming.

The IOM, based on the latest IPCC reports (that predict temperature increases throughout the globe), is directing its attention to people's livelihoods, especially in poor and vulnerable areas. While proposing further research and public debate, the IOM promotes itself as the most suitable international institution to prevent, organize and manage environmental migration in general and climate migration in particular. One of the IOM's approaches is to consider migration not only as a negative climate impact that needs combating but also as a proactive adaptation strategy that helps prevent human suffering in vulnerable areas.

The UNHCR responsible for asylum policy around the world left itself out of the "environmental refugee" debate until the climate-migration nexus was formulated. Since then, it defines climate change as a humanitarian problem that must be dealt as such by the UN:

> [...] climate change is likely to pose humanitarian problems and challenges. [...] UNHCR would encourage more reflection on the humanitarian and displacement challenges that climate change will generate [...]. As such it is of direct interest to humanitarian agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Guterres, 2008).

Similarly to the IOM, the High Commissioner of the UNHCR claims a leading role in climate-migration policymaking. As it has jurisdiction not only for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) but also for forced migration beyond the national frontiers, it appears like the most appropriate organization to deal with climate migrants in the field:

> UNHCR is a leading agency of the United Nations responsible for and possessing the expertise in the area of forced displacement. It is projected that climate change will over time trigger larger and more complex movements of population, both within and across borders, and has the potential to render some people stateless. Since climate change is certain to have a major impact on future patterns of human mobility, approaches which address environmental issues in isolation from other variables and processes will not be sufficient to solve the problem [...] It is clear [...] that some movements likely to be prompted by climate change could indeed fall [...] within UNHCR's mandate (Guterres, 2008).

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Therefore, a "UNHCR climate change strategy" is announced by the High Commissioner.

The active mobilization of the IOM, NGOs and the UNHCR led to the adoption, by the Conference of the Parties at the Cancun Meeting, of the document prepared by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention referring to: "Measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation [. . .]".

(d) The security aspect of climate change

The definition of climate change as a migration issue has generated further interest by security specialists who propose an alternative definition of climate change as a security problem. The dominant argument is that if climate change generates large-scale human displacements, these migration flows are expected to cause conflict and insecurity for displaced people as well as for hosting communities. In that sense, Myers (1989) argues that environmental degradation makes for a plausible prospect of instability and insecurity around the world.

This additional framing strengthens the anthropocentric approach of climate change for at least two reasons. First, the security discourse focuses on human living conditions and not only on the quality of the environment. Human security and environmental security are not two different issues. Like economic development, food availability, health and political conditions, the environment is also a component of "human security". In order to ensure that climate vulnerability does not become a threat for human security, the majority of measures that have been advocated are development measures, typically those that are associated with the international development agencies (Christie, 2007). In that sense, the increasing security considerations of the humanitarian and development organizations should not come as a surprise. Indeed, the 1994 UNDP's report on human security is one of the first into connect global warming to security by defining "human security" as the need to shift attention from state centered to people centered security issues and by presenting environmental change as one of the major stressors for human security. In the same direction, the UNHCR recognizes that: "Climate change is already undermining the livelihoods and security of many people" (Guterres, 2008). In 2009 during the Global Environment Forum in Korea the Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-moon warned that "If we fail to act, climate change will intensify droughts, floods and other natural disasters [. . .] Tensions will worsen. Social unrest – even violence – could follow"[3]. Under these conditions, the environmental specialists and NGOs, originally attracted by the idea of "environmental security" thinking that it could make obvious the urgency for more efficient environmental measures, have denounced the militarization of the issue (Liotta and Shearer, 2007).

Second, new institutions are added at the list of non environmentally focused organizations seeking participation in climate framing and policymaking. Since 2004, NATO joined five other international agencies to form the Environment and Security (ENVSEC)[4] Initiative and from 2009 is challenging a leading role in climate security. Having lost much of its importance after the end of the cold war, NATO has found in the climate issue a new "raison d'être". Its Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in his speech at Lloyd's Conference in 2009, recognized that the changing climate may potentially have major security implications and called for a change in the dominant approach. He further invited the organization's allies to discuss on "how NATO could do better to address the security aspects of climate change"[5].

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5. In lieu of conclusion: will the United Nations deliver as one?

Under the leadership of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon the United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) has initiated a process, known as the "UN system delivering as one", to achieve a coordinated action-oriented approach to the global and multifaceted challenge of climate change[6]. During the Copenhagen side event "The UN delivers as one" Ban Ki-moon reminded that: "no one has the monopoly to deal with climate change". However, the expected unity does not seem to be shared by the various international agencies.

In April 2009, before the Copenhagen meeting, the humanitarian and development UN agencies (UNDP, UNHCR, FAO, OCHA, WFP, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHABITAT) together with the IOM, the World Bank, and humanitarian NGOs (ICRC, ICVA, IFRC, InterAction), as parts of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), addressed a letter to Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, asking for "the humanitarian implications of the climate change to be duly acknowledged and addressed in a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol". They also claimed the establishment of "a joint action considered as the only way forward" and affirmed their determination to "continue to engage with the climate change community and all other relevant stakeholders to identify and implement solution that address the growing challenge that climate change presents to humanity".

The growing influence of the anthropocentic perception of climate change is visible since 2007 with the adoption at the COP 13 of the Bali Action Plan considered by the UNFCCC officials as the first consensus document identifying adaptation as one of the key building blocks required for a strengthened future response to climate change[7]. The representation of climate mitigation and adaptation as parallel processes is also observable in the IPCC's fourth assessment report which increasingly puts the emphasis on development and adaptation needs and, attempts to redress the climate problem in a more locally oriented sustainable development storyline (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2007). During the Poznan and the Copenhagen conferences, this trend is confirmed by the organization of side events dealing alternatively with mitigation and adaptation issues. The Copenhagen Accord also gives increasing importance to climate impacts and adaptation. Further, the third WCC in 2009, organized by the WMO, made for the first time considerable place to human impacts and adaptation measures. It proposed the creation of a Global Framework for Climate Services:

> [. . .] through which the developers and providers of climate information, predictions and services, and the climate-sensitive sectors around the world, will work together, to help the global community better adapt to the challenges of climate variability and change (Background paper prepared by WMO secretariat, dated 2 September 2009)[8].

Although today there is growing acceptance that adaptation should be a second pillar of climate policy, the institutional framework responsible for the negotiations of the post Kyoto Protocol remained unchanged; it did not follow the definitional evolutions and the diversification of the policy actors involved. Instead of a process engaging the new actors brought on stage by the definitional shift, the environmentally focused international organizations attempt to incorporate the impact-adaptation dimension into their administrative structures. They do so to reconfirm their institutional leading position. It seems that, heads of government also support the institutional status quo. As said in the 2008 CEB publication at:

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> [. . .] the high-level event on climate change, convened by the United Nations Secretary-General on 24 September 2007 to galvanize political consensus, [. . .] world leaders [. . .] concurred that the United Nations provides the appropriate multilateral framework for action and that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the only forum in which agreement can be crafted on the objectives and scope of international action.

This position does not meet the new balance of power between policy actors. Kasa and co-authors (2008) note that developing countries refuse to discuss new commitments under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. In that sense, an UNDP representative affirms that: "If environmentalists continue to pilot the post-Post Kyoto negotiations no agreement can be achieved. Climate change today is something much larger and goes beyond environmental degradation" (personal interview, 2010).

The post-Copenhagen period introduces nevertheless some doubts about the growing importance of the impact-adaptation topic. Tubiana *et al.* (2010) argue that the acceptance by the developed countries to consider adaptation demands coming from developing countries was founded in a win-win compromise: developed countries should offer new and additional resources for adaptation while emerging economies, particularly China, India and Brazil, should engage to limit their carbon footprints. Yet, the Copenhagen negotiations marked a certain de-solidarization of emerging economies from the G77. Under these circumstances and so far as developing countries have nothing to propose in exchange, developed countries seem less interested to support adaptation onto the policy agenda. If at the same time the advocates of the anthropocentric definition of climate change continue to operate into fragmented policy arenas they cannot alter the present institutional equilibriums.

No definite conclusion can be advanced about the recent evolutions of the climate change definitional debate and policy. Post-Kyoto negotiations seem however taking place in a context where governments, international institutions and scientific communities continue their dissonant discourse, where the problem definition process remains controversial and the present institutional equilibriums are contested. Under those circumstances policymaking for 2012 becomes, at best, uncertain.

Notes

1. www.openmeeting2009.org/pdf_files/Conf%20Book_WEB.pdf
2. www.adaptation.nrcan.gc.ca
3. www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/sgspeeches/search_full.asp?statID=557
4. The five other agencies are: the UNEP, the UNDP, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). NATO collaborates mostly with the UNDP as both organizations have agencies to the local level.
5. www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-47090647-599A4E35/natolive/news_57793.htm?selectedLocale = en
6. www.un.org/climatechange/pdfs/Acting%20on%20Climate%20Change.pdf
7. www.unfccc.int/adaptation/items/4159.php
8. www.wmo.int/wcc3/documents/brief_note_en.pdf

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