CLIMATE CHANGE, ETHICS AND HUMAN SECURITY

This book presents human security perspectives on climate change, raising issues of equity, ethics and environmental justice, as well as our capacity to respond to what is increasingly considered to be the greatest societal challenge for humankind. The authors – a group of international experts – represent a variety of fields and perspectives. Taken together, the chapters make the argument that climate change must be viewed as an issue of human security, rather than simply as an environmental problem that can be managed in isolation from larger questions concerning development trajectories, poverty and equity issues, human rights, and ethical and moral obligations towards the poor and vulnerable, and to future generations. The book shows that the concept of human security offers a new way of understanding the challenges of climate change, as well as the responses that can lead to a more equitable, resilient and sustainable future.

Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security will be of interest to researchers, policy makers, and practitioners concerned with the human dimensions of climate change, as well as to upper-level students in the social sciences and humanities who are interested in climate change.

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CLIMATE CHANGE, ETHICS
AND HUMAN SECURITY

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Foreword

In May 2009 the International Social Science Council (ISSC) convened the first ever World Social Science Forum.¹ The theme of the Forum – One Planet, Worlds Apart? – challenged social scientists from different parts of the world, working with different theories and different methodologies, to join forces in tackling the most important global problems of the day, and to do so in ways that make sense of shifting geopolitics, address global inequalities and preserve human culture, dignity and diversity.

Can science save us from climate change? This was one of the key questions posed at the Forum. Those asked to address it included the Nobel laureate Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Roberta Balstad, Co-Director of the Center for Research on Environmental Decisions at Columbia University and Editor-in-Chief of Weather, Climate, and Society; a new journal of the American Meteorological Society. Both speakers issued a clear and concise message: climate change research needs a stronger social science voice; more than that, to produce the kind of knowledge we need to respond effectively to the complexities of global environmental change, an integration of natural and social sciences is no longer a choice but a simple necessity.

ISSC President Gudmund Hernes reminds us that today we know that climate change is not about ‘the forces of nature, so to speak, autonomously at work, like planetary motions’; we know that what has set those forces in motion is human action. The key causes of climate change are primarily social and the grave consequences of such change will also be social. ‘Land for agriculture will be destroyed by inundations and drought. Poverty will increase. Water and food will be in shorter supply. Diseases will spread. Social inequality will be sharpened. Migration will mount from climate change refugees. Social crises can multiply, and

¹ The Forum was held in Bergen, Norway, from 10 to 12 May 2009. It was hosted by the University of Bergen and co-organised by the University’s Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Studies.
conflicts may be provoked. In these circumstances we can no longer afford to talk only about natural phenomena but must talk also – and urgently – about human behaviour, about human perceptions, values and rights, human responses and responsibilities.

*Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security* talks exactly about these things. In doing so it places human beings – individuals and communities – at the centre of analysis and eliminates once and for all remaining doubts that social – and human – scientific knowledge is necessary knowledge for the future of our planet. The book draws attention to a wide range of new important questions that the social sciences and humanities bring to the climate change research agenda. And it insists on an integral approach to tackling such questions; an approach that considers both subjective and objective dimensions of climate change and incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The value of this approach is clear in the way that it serves to place poverty and the poor at the centre of our understanding not only of the risks posed by climate change but also of our responses to it. This in turn necessitates a fundamental reassessment of standard development models and cautions against uncritically accepting those ideas about poverty that perpetuate them. This kind of connected thinking, the intellectual approach that facilitates it and the new frames of reference that it provides, creates much needed space for innovative, alternative knowledge on major issues, like the links between climate change and poverty. Such knowledge must be incorporated in international assessments like the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report.

Turning more specifically to the integration of the type of social science and humanities knowledge forwarded here with that produced by the natural sciences, it is not always entirely self-evident what this means and how best it can be accomplished. The ISSC is taking the call for integrated research seriously and has committed itself to working across lines of division between the sciences to the benefit of our common humanity and shared physical environment. In this, the International Council for Science (ICSU) and, increasingly, the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (CIPSH), are key strategic partners.

ICSU and the ISSC share a positive history of collaboration in the field of global environmental change research. Recognising that a polarisation between social and natural sciences serves only as an obstacle to addressing key global problems, the two organisations agreed in 1996 to co-sponsor the International Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Programme (IHDP). Without diminishing the value of the IHDP experience to date, both organisations now recognise

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3 The ISSC and ICSU established the IHDP in 1996; it originated from what had been called the Human Dimensions Programme (HDP), which was launched by the ISSC in 1990. Since 2007, the IHDP has been Co-sponsored by the United Nations University.
the need to take collaboration between the sciences to a deeper, more constructive and complementary form. This means moving beyond multi- or even interdisciplin ary collaboration. It certainly means moving beyond the idea that some sciences, or some disciplines, should serve others; that they should wait in the margins to assist with the translation and take-up of research findings. It means promoting integrated research: research that in its very design, execution and application demands the joint efforts of natural and social scientists.

This book makes the strongest possible case for integrated research on climate change, also drawing in the humanities. More than that, it brings to the integration imperative two essential insights; lessons that will equip us to make integration a reality in the promotion, funding, practice and evaluation of climate change research. The first lesson is that integration demands an openness to asking new questions, different questions, invisible questions. Integration does not, in other words, mean getting social scientists to join in attempts at addressing problems, which have largely, if not solely, been framed by natural scientists. Framing climate change as an issue of human security does not negate the importance of those problems. If anything, it enhances our understanding of them. It also allows us to better inform the likely consequences of the policy choices made to address those problems. And, perhaps most importantly of all, it urges us to recognise that in addition to the fact that the causes and consequences of climate change are primarily social, so must the solutions be.

The second lesson concerns the fragmentation of the social sciences themselves. When it comes to climate change there seems to be not one social science but many. Again, the issue of framing is critical. What type of social science sets the climate change research agenda? Whose research questions are being asked? What theoretical approaches and methodologies dominate debates? By raising these questions, *Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security* raises fundamental questions – not least of all for the ISSC – about the need to define common tasks and set shared agendas within the social sciences. With our planet imperilled, with deep inequalities evident within and across countries, with vulnerability to poverty increasing and with persistent severe poverty a reality, can the social sciences afford to work as worlds apart? And with expectations that science can indeed save us from climate change higher than ever before, can we afford, as social scientists, not to speak with one voice?

The effects of climate change are inescapable and relentless. They pose severe challenges to all human beings from all parts of the world. If science is to play a role in meeting these challenges, scientists have to get their act together. And they have to do so jointly, across disciplinary and organisational boundaries, across issues and methodologies, across national and regional borders. This book shows us what that means, and points the way forward towards the kind of integration of knowledge that climate change demands of us.
For the ISSC it is particularly important – and gratifying – to see knowledge networks from two of its primary international programmes – the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), on one hand, and the International Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Programme (IHDP), on the other hand – coming together to tackle the single most important issue facing our planet today. This book, which results from collaborative work between the leaders of CROP and one of the IHDP’s core projects – the Global Environmental Change and Human Security (GECHS) project – is an example of the innovations that come from joint efforts.

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June 2009
Preface

This book is the result of a European Science Foundation (ESF) Exploratory Workshop on ‘Shifting the Discourse: Climate Change as an Issue of Human Security’, which was held 21–23 June 2007 in Oslo, Norway. This was the same year that the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report was published, and the year that both the IPCC and former US Vice President Al Gore received the Nobel Peace Prize for their work on climate change. Since then, the amount of attention paid to climate change has increased dramatically, particularly in the run-up to the 2009 Conference of the Parties (COP) in Copenhagen, where new international agreements to address climate change will be discussed. Yet, although the connection to peace and security was recognised in 2007 and many more voices and perspectives can now be heard, the discourse itself on climate change has not changed significantly. It is still framed as an environmental problem that can be managed through international agreements for emissions reductions, through market mechanisms for carbon management and through technological advances that will create clean and green societies. Many voices, including some that have long been sceptical about climate change, are now advocating geo-engineering as a solution. The institutionalised, mainstream discourse on climate change has not recognised it as an issue that is first and foremost about the security of individuals and communities and their relationship with the world around them, which includes responsibilities to one another, to other species and to future generations. As the contributions to this book make clear, the equity, justice and ethical dimensions of the problem must be included, and voices from the social sciences, humanities and other fields must be heard. We argue that a more integral understanding of the problem and solutions associated with climate change can only be forged by developing a ‘new science’ on climate change – a science that recognises that the drivers and consequences of climate change go far beyond what can be measured by econometrics and statistics alone. This new science also recognises the normative dimensions of climate change and the non-material aspects that are differentially valued, yet play an important role in culture and
human experiences. As we approach 2010, the time has come to recognise that climate change is as much an ethical issue as it is a ‘scientific’ issue, and it cannot be decoupled from debates about the ethical demands posed by equitable development, the feasibility of the eradication of poverty, sustainability and the way that we as human beings perceive of and create the future.

We are grateful to many individuals and institutions for their support of this book project. In particular, we thank the sponsors of the 2007 workshop, which, in addition to ESF, include the Ethics Programme of the University of Oslo and the Global Environmental Change and Human Security (GECHS) project, one of the core projects of the International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP). GECHS is based at the University of Oslo and is funded by the Norwegian Research Council, with generous additional support from Norad and the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We would also like to thank all of the workshop participants for their comments and discussions, even if not all could contribute to this book. We would specifically like to thank the two keynote speakers, Henry Shue from Oxford University and Helge Drange from the University of Bergen and the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research.

We thank the staff of the GECHS International Project Office, especially Lynn Rosentrater and Kirsten Ulsrud for their assistance in organising the workshop, and Linda Sygna and Øystein Kristiansen for post-workshop support and editorial assistance. Many thanks go to Kristian Stokke for his assistance with the tables and figures. We also thank four anonymous reviewers for very insightful comments and suggestions based on the original book proposal. We are grateful to Matt Lloyd, Christopher Hudson and Laura Clark at Cambridge University Press for support, professional advice and, most of all, continued patience. Finally, we thank our friends and families, and would like to dedicate this book to our children, Jens Erik, Espen, Annika, Thomas, Nicholas and future generations.

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November 2009
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