

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## 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.

Dr Karen L. O'Brien is a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo, Norway, and Chair of the Global Environmental Change and Human Security (GECHS) project of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP). Her research focuses on climate change vulnerability and adaptation, on interactions between globalisation and climate change, and on the role that values and world views play in responding to environmental change. She currently leads a large social science-based project on the Potentials of and Limits to Climate Change Adaptation in Norway (PLAN). She has recently published a book with Robin Leichenko on *Environmental Change and Globalization: Double Exposures* (Oxford University Press, 2008), which received the 2008 AAG Meridian Book Award for the Outstanding Scholarly Work in Geography. She was a lead author on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Fourth Assessment Report* and the *Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation*. She is on the editorial board of *Global*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*Environmental Change*, the *Annals of the Association of American Geography* and *Ecology and Society*, and on the steering committee of the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), the Norwegian Global Change Committee and Concerned Scientists – Norway.

Asunción Lera St.Clair is Professor of Sociology at the University of Bergen, Norway, and Scientific Director of the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), one of the leading programmes of the International Social Science Council (ISSC); co-leader (with Victoria Lawson) of the WUN Critical Global Poverty Studies Research group; Vice-President of the International Development Ethics Association (IDEA); board member of the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights and a member of the editorial boards of various international journals and other international organisations. Her work is primarily interdisciplinary, focusing on ethical issues related to development and poverty with a special focus on human rights and attempting to provide alternative perspectives on global poverty. St.Clair has also focused attention on the challenges posed by climate change in relation to poverty and development studies, aiming to offer holistic ethically grounded perspectives on both challenges. She has recently published in the journals of *Global Governance*, *Global Social Policy*, *Globalisations* and *Global Ethics*. Her most recent publications are *Global Poverty, Ethics, and Human Rights: The Role of Multilateral Institutions* (2009, Routledge, co-authored with Desmond McNeill) and *Development Ethics: A Reader* (2010, Ashgate, co-edited with Des Gasper).

Berit Kristoffersen is a political geographer and PhD student at the Department of Political Science, University of Tromsø, Norway. Her PhD research is on human and environmental security in Norway, in the context of the state and industry's strategies for petroleum development in Arctic territories. She is a research fellow in the research programme, The Potentials of and Limits to Climate Change Adaptation in Norway (PLAN), where she is also working on a project on values and climate change in Norway. Before starting a PhD she was involved in Norwegian organisations and social movements emerging in the post-Seattle globalisation movement and worked as a freelance writer and editor of several reports and book chapters for NGOs, such as Forum for Environment and Development, Zero, Adbusters Norway, and Attac.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# CLIMATE CHANGE, ETHICS AND HUMAN SECURITY

*Edited by*

KAREN O'BRIEN

*University of Oslo, Norway*

ASUNCIÓN LERA ST. CLAIR

*University of Bergen, Norway*

BERIT KRISTOFFERSEN

*University of Tromsø, Norway*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security  
Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521197663](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521197663)

© Cambridge University Press 2010

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*  
Climate change, ethics and human security / [edited by] Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair,  
Berit Kristoffersen.

p. cm.  
ISBN 978-0-521-19766-3 (hardback)

1. Human beings – Effect of climate on. 2. Human security. 3. Human rights. 4. Climatic changes – Social aspects. I. O'Brien, Karen L. II. St. Clair, Asuncion Lera. III. Kristoffersen, Berit. IV. Title.  
GF71.C56 2010  
304.2'3–dc22  
2010015149

ISBN 978-0-521-19766-3 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in  
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,  
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	page vii
<i>Foreword</i>	ix
<i>Heide Hackmann</i>	
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Karen O'Brien, Asunción Lera St.Clair and Berit Kristoffersen</i>	
<b>Part I Framings</b>	1
1 The framing of climate change: why it matters	3
<i>Karen O'Brien, Asunción Lera St.Clair and Berit Kristoffersen</i>	
2 The idea of human security	23
<i>Des Gasper</i>	
3 Climate change science and policy, as if people mattered	47
<i>Jon Barnett</i>	
<b>Part II Equity</b>	63
4 A "shared vision"? Why inequality should worry us	65
<i>J. Timmons Roberts and Bradley C. Parks</i>	
5 Fair decision making in a new climate of risk	83
<i>W. Neil Adger and Donald R. Nelson</i>	
<b>Part III Ethics</b>	95
6 Ethics, politics, economics and the global environment	97
<i>Desmond McNeill</i>	
7 Human rights, climate change, and discounting	113
<i>Simon Caney</i>	
8 Climate change as a global test for contemporary political institutions and theories	131
<i>Stephen M. Gardiner</i>	

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security  
Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
	<b>Part IV Reflexivity</b>	155
9	Linking sustainable development with climate change adaptation and mitigation <i>Livia Bizikova, Sarah Burch, Stewart Cohen and John Robinson</i>	157
10	Global poverty and climate change: towards the responsibility to protect <i>Asunción Lera St.Clair</i>	180
11	Social contracts in a changing climate: security of what and for whom? <i>Bronwyn Hayward and Karen O'Brien</i>	199
12	Towards a new science on climate change <i>Karen O'Brien, Asunción Lera St.Clair and Berit Kristoffersen</i>	215
	<i>Index</i>	228

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contributors

**W. Neil Adger** Professor in the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

**Jon Barnett** Associate Professor at the Australian Research Council and Fellow and Reader, Department of Resource Management and Geography, University of Melbourne, Australia.

**Livia Bizikova** Project Manager at the International Institute for Sustainable Development, Winnipeg, Canada.

**Sarah Burch** Visiting Research Associate, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford, UK.

**Simon Caney** Professor of Political Theory and Fellow and Tutor in Politics at Magdalen College, University of Oxford, UK.

**Stewart Cohen** Senior Researcher with the Adaptation and Impacts Research Division (AIRD), Environment Canada, and Adjunct Professor with the Department of Forest Resources Management, University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada.

**Stephen M. Gardiner** Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy, University of Washington, Seattle, USA.

**Des Gasper** Professor at the International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, a university institute within Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

**Heide Hackmann** Secretary-General of the International Social Science Council (ISSC), Paris, France and Associate Research Fellow, Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

**Bronwyn Hayward** Political Scientist at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand and Visiting Fellow at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asunción Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

*Contributors*

and the RESOLVE Centre for the Study of Environmental Values, Attitudes and Lifestyle Change at the University of Surrey, UK.

**Berit Kristoffersen** Research Fellow, Department of Political Science, University of Tromsø, Norway.

**Desmond McNeill** Research Professor at Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM), University of Oslo, Norway.

**Donald R. Nelson** Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Georgia, and Visiting Fellow, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research University of East Anglia, UK.

**Karen O'Brien** Professor in the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, Norway, and Chair of the Global Environmental Change and Human Security Project of the IHDP.

**Bradley C. Parks** PhD Candidate in the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science and Research Associate at the College of William and Mary's Institute for Theory and Practice of International Relations Virginia, USA.

**John Robinson** Professor at Institute of Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

**J. Timmons Roberts** Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies and Director of the Center for Environmental Studies at Brown University in Rhode Island, USA.

**Asunción Lera St.Clair** Professor, Department of Sociology, and Scientific Director, Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), University of Bergen, Norway.



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Foreword

In May 2009 the International Social Science Council (ISSC) convened the first ever World Social Science Forum.<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

conflicts may be provoked.<sup>2</sup> 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).<sup>3</sup> Without diminishing the value of the IHDP experience to date, both organisations now recognise

<sup>2</sup> Hernes, G. (2009). One planet – two cultures? *Public Service Review: Science and Technology*, 2, 54–5.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Foreword

xi

the need to take collaboration between the sciences to a deeper, more constructive and complementary form. This means moving beyond multi- or even interdisciplinary 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.

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security  
Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

xii

*Foreword*

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.

*Heide Hackmann*  
Secretary-General  
International Social Science Council (ISSC)  
Paris, France

*June 2009*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## 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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19766-3 - Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security

Edited by Karen O'Brien, Asunción Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

*Preface*

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.

*Karen O'Brien,  
Asunción Lera St. Clair and  
Berit Kristoffersen  
November 2009  
Bergen and Oslo, Norway*