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978-1-107-02821-0 - Climate Change and Human Mobility: Global Challenges to the Social Sciences

Edited by Kirsten Hastrup and Karen Fog Olwig

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Climate Change and Human Mobility

Global Challenges to the Social Sciences

‘The greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration’, stated the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1990. Since then there has been considerable concern about the large-scale population movements that might take place because of climate change. This book examines emerging patterns of human mobility in relation to climate change, drawing on a multi-disciplinary approach, including anthropology and geography. It addresses both larger, general questions and concrete local cases, where the link between climate change and human mobility is manifest and demands attention – empirically, analytically, and conceptually. Among the cases explored are both historical and contemporary instances of migration in response to climate change, and together they illustrate the necessity of analysing new patterns of movement, historic cultural images, and regulation practices in the wake of new global processes.

KIRSTEN HASTRUP is a professor of anthropology and leader of the *Waterworlds* research project funded by the Economic Research Council (ERC) at the University of Copenhagen. She has done substantial research on Icelandic history and society; human rights and legal language; theatre and social action; and the beginnings of Danish anthropology in early polar expedition; this led on to research in contemporary Greenland. In addition to publishing within these fields, she has published critical explorations of the philosophical and epistemological foundations of anthropology, textbooks in anthropology, and general introductions to the history of the human sciences and their contributions to society.

KAREN FOG OLWIG is a professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen. She has carried out extensive research on migration, taught numerous courses on various migration related topics, and was the director of ‘The Migration Initiative’, a cross-disciplinary research network at the University of Copenhagen from 2008 to 2010. Among the many topics she has investigated and published on within the area of migration are the significance of migration as a social and cultural resource in third world societies and the role of mobility in livelihood strategies.

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QUENTIN GAUSSET, PhD (Bruxelles), is an associate professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen. His research has dealt with different themes and regions, from classical ethnography with focus on religion and ethnicity in Cameroon, to AIDS prevention in Zambia and Burkina Faso, and to socio-cultural aspects of natural resource management in Burkina Faso, Tanzania (agro-forestry), Cameroon (agro-pastoral conflicts), Malaysia (management of Niah national park), Thailand, Botswana, Swaziland, South Africa (sustainable use of natural resources), and Denmark (reduction of CO₂ emissions).

KIRSTEN HASTRUP, DPhil (Oxford) and dr.scient.soc. (Copenhagen), is a professor of anthropology and leader of the *Waterworlds* research project funded by the Economic Research Council (ERC) at the University of Copenhagen. She has done substantial research on Icelandic history and society; human rights and legal language; theatre and social action; and the beginnings of Danish anthropology in early polar expedition. In addition to these more specialized fields, she has published critical explorations of the philosophical and epistemological foundations of anthropology, text-books in anthropology, and general introductions to the history of the human sciences and their contributions to society. The Icelandic work spans the entire history of the island society and traces the intricate links between environmental changes – notably the warm middle ages and the later ‘Little Ice Age’ – and historical and social developments. In recent years, Kirsten Hastrup’s research interest has centred on the environmental and social changes in the Arctic, notably in Greenland, where she has started a series of fieldworks in a small hunting community with the aim of studying local perceptions of threats and opportunities over a five-year period.

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construction of a large dam (Mphanda Nkuwa) proposed for the lower Zambezi River. The focus of his current research is using a political ecology lens to explore the discourse of ‘environmental refugees’ through a comparative study of human migration within different federal states in the highlands of northern Ethiopia.

KAREN FOG OLWIG, PhD (University of Minnesota), is a professor of anthropology at the University of Copenhagen, and has been the leader of the interdisciplinary ‘Migration Initiative’, funded by the Rector of the University of Copenhagen. She has published extensively on Africa-Caribbean cultural processes in colonial and post-colonial contexts. Through subsequent fieldwork she has examined migration processes, social networks, and notions of belonging in migrant families. This eventually led her to studying immigration and integration in Denmark, which has also led to some important publications. Her most recent research focuses on the family as an integrating institution in Danish society with a focus on children and youth of different ethnic backgrounds.

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Preface and acknowledgements

The relationship between climate change and human mobility is a highly charged issue – politically, economically, and morally. It is therefore pertinent to temper the vague sense of a pending disruption of the global order by offering some firm knowledge about the actualities of climate-induced migration. This book explores a variety of cases and patterns of human mobility in relation to environmental changes, with a consistent view also to local social, cultural, and economic factors, without which we cannot begin to understand the imperatives for movement. The varying scales of analysis presented underscore the need to rethink the object of the social sciences, which has become increasingly fluid in the wake of global processes – among which climate change is certainly not alone.

The major challenge to the social sciences, which in this book are represented by anthropology, geography, archaeology, and political science, is precisely the fluidity of the analytical object. The social sciences were originally based upon an idea of clearly identifiable units that could be studied as bounded frameworks of action and responsibility. Today such units are increasingly permeated, and the social sciences must acknowledge the part played by global factors at any local level. This is the major challenge surfacing in this volume. A more implicit challenge is posed by the social sciences to the conventional image of climate belonging to the domain of natural sciences. This is not so, because whenever climate is even talked about it spills over into the social domain.

This volume has its beginnings at an international conference in Copenhagen in the spring of 2010. We would like to acknowledge the input from the participants and the many conference presenters who could not be included here. They made an important contribution to the event and hence to our thinking. We would also like to acknowledge the financial support from the *Migration Initiative* at the University of Copenhagen, and from the European Research Council (ERC)-funded project *Waterworlds*, analysing the social responses to climate change. We want to thank Rasmus Hastrup for his skilful help with matters of standardizing language and other editorial issues, and

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Karen Fog Olwig