



XI National Conference of Environmental Sociologists

Climate Change, Territory, and the Dynamics of Migration

Chieti, 22-23 September 2017

Keynote Speakers: Joseph Tainter (Utah University), Valerio Calzolaio (journalist, former Member of Parliament and Undersecretary to the Ministry of the Environment)

The issues related to environment and climate change are among the main challenges current public policy are facing nowadays, in their complex variety of problems, on different territorial levels. If on the one hand territories are “producers” of greenhouse gases (within a complex dynamic of interaction on a global level) on the other, climate change affects those same territories differently, giving rise to additional phenomena such as desertification, flooding, soil salinization and so on. For this reason, one has to reflect on the potential role of both local and global networks in developing creative solutions to environmental issues, especially considering how city governments (as part of international networks) may contribute to global governance in a meaningful way.

The relation between climate change, environmental degradation, and migration is particularly important and demands close attention, if we want to avoid it to become a pressing emergency. When we talk about environmental refugees and migrants, we are referring to a growing number of people who are not leaving their home in search of a better life, nor joining relatives who have previously migrated. We are not talking of people fleeing wars or dictatorships, despite the many relationship existing between political and environmental variables. The category of environmental refugee, rather, refers to the millions of people who have left their homes as a result of (over)ambitious “development” programs (such as large dams), as well as those who - from nineteenth-century Pennsylvania to contemporary Niger Delta - have been forced to abandon their lands due to oil drilling. Furthermore, environmental refugees are also those who have had to leave their home for reasons related to the consequences of climate change or other geological phenomena such as earthquakes and tsunamis.

In broad terms, the push factors characterizing environmental migration are related to ecological degradation while the pull ones (i.e. attractive elements of potential destinations), are frequently lacking. The global nature of these interdependencies is emphasised by the fact that environmental migration creates a problematic link between two territories — the area from

where people emigrate and the area where people relocate. The former is usually affected by forms of deterioration while the latter is often unprepared to accommodate and manage population flows which are likely to intensify in the near future.

The focus of the conference, therefore, is the relationship between environmental and territorial changes, as well as between environmental impacts and migration. We invite theoretical reflections and empirical research on the following themes:

- The problem of environmental migrants and refugees: quantification, characterization of local contexts, scenarios etc.
- The impact of environmental changes and emergencies on social contexts on the local level
- The significance of environmental variables as push factors in migratory phenomena
- The relationship between environmental, economic and political variables in determining migration flows
- The relationship between development projects, infrastructure, and local socio-environmental contexts
- The ecological consequences of territories abandonment
- The strengths and weaknesses of the concept of “resilience” in analysing the relationship between local settlements and environmental transformations
- The potential role of local and global networks of agents (political and otherwise) in responding to environmental challenges
- The socio-ecological impact of migration within the affected territories
- Migration routes, destinations and biographies of environmental migrants and refugees
- Climate change and regional wars
- Legal definition of environmental refugees
- Fragile territories and climate change
- Catastrophes (floods, earthquakes etc.) and populations displacement
- Commons, ‘commoning’ practices, ecosystem services and territorial resources enhancement from a local and “transcalar” perspective

It is possible to present proposals for thematic sessions and papers (send to alfredo.agustoni@unich.it).

Deadline for session proposals: 1 April 2017. Proposals can be submitted either in Italian or in English (max 300 words, with title, organizers, and 5 keywords).

Publication of accepted session proposals: 15 April 2017.

Deadline for paper proposals: 1 June 2017. Abstracts can be submitted in Italian or English (max 300 words, with title, author(s), 5 keywords and optional indication of the preferred session).

Notification of acceptance of submissions: 1 July 2017. Organizers can allocate accepted papers to a different session from the one selected.

Participation fee € 50

Conference chairs convenors: Alfredo Agustoni and Mara Maretti

Scientific committee: Aurelio Angelini, Marco Castrignanò, Enrico Ercole, Alfredo Mela, Giorgio Osti, Luigi Pellizzoni, Lauro Struffi, Enrico M. Tacchi, Anna Maria Zaccaria

Organizing committee: Thea Rossi, Rita Salvatore, Sonia Brondi, Serena Sansevierio