

KlimaCampus Kolloquium

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at the invitation of the of Institute for Peace Research
and Security Policy of Universität Hamburg

Environmental Change and Migration

Environmentally induced migration has gained a lot of attention in the climate change context. While there is a broad consensus that environmental factors might play an important role on human mobility, the ex post empirical evidence is inconclusive. We contribute to the emerging empirical literature in this field by focusing on the micro-level. We examine whether and how environmental change leads to internal migration. We argue that individual perceptions of different types of environmental change play an important role on migration decisions. We then examine the plausibility of this argument with newly collected survey data from 5 countries which include both individuals who migrated and individuals who decided to stay. The results suggest that individual perceptions of long-term environmental events, such as droughts, have no significant effect on internal migration, but that sudden-onset environmental events, such as floods, significantly increase the likelihood of migration. The findings suggest that spectacular "climate refugee" scenarios are most likely exaggerated and hence a more differentiated perspective on the issue of environmental migration based on adaptation is urgently needed.

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