



MOBILIZING GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE: REFUGEE RESEARCH IN AN AGE OF DISPLACEMENT

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ISBN 978-1-77385-086-3

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What Constitutes Environmental Displacement? Challenges and Opportunities of Exploring Connections across Thematically Diverse Areas

Pablo Bose and Elizabeth Lunstrum

Introduction

As the nascent RRN began to take shape its leadership, including then-director of CRS Susan McGrath, observed a consequential and somewhat surprising gap. While many of the other major thematic areas regarding refugee research—international legal regimes, policy analysis, educational opportunities, and integration initiatives among them—were key thematic areas for the network, environmental issues represented an important new area of both conceptual and practical concern, and largely fell beyond the realm of refugee research proper. As a result, she sought to draw together scholars in this emergent field to help create a new research cluster with an emphasis on networking, interdisciplinarity, and knowledge generation. In this chapter, we explore the successes and challenges of the Environmental Displacement Cluster with a particular focus on four areas—1) the origins and structure of the networking model; 2) making the case for “environmentally induced displacement” as a substantive conceptual field

and our main organizing concept; 3) how our cluster enabled other interventions into knowledge production concerning our main organizing concept; and 4) reflections on what has worked in this model and what remain as challenges moving forward.

Creating the Network

Building the Environmental Displacement Cluster of the RRN initially had as much to do with personal career trajectories as it did with the particularities of the research projects and themes that eventually came to characterize the cluster. York's Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS) had already hosted a multi-year, multi-site study focused on forced migration due to development called the Ethics of Development-Induced Displacement (EDID) Project. Issues related to the environment—including resource extraction and conservation in particular—had played a major role in several of the case studies undertaken by the project, yet the environmental theme remained secondary to the issue of development (understood broadly to include social, economic, political, and environmental aspects). Dr. McGrath brought together the outgoing research coordinator of the EDID project, Pablo Bose (a doctoral student in Environmental Studies at York at the time), with two recently arrived faculty members, Elizabeth (Libby) Lunstrum in Geography and Anna Zalik in Environmental Studies, to discuss shared research interests to ensure the RRN had at least some focus on the environment. The three of us brought together diverse academic backgrounds (geography, development sociology, environmental studies) and seemingly disparate topics of study (conservation, resource extraction, responses to climate change), and we had each conducted fieldwork in different parts of the world (Southern Africa, Nigeria and Mexico, and India). Our initial conversations suggested that there was something important connecting these separate strands of training, research, and regional focus; namely the displacement of populations and livelihoods due to broadly understood environmental factors. We decided therefore to pursue the creation of an “Environmental Displacement Cluster” and to see whether such a network made sense conceptually and practically.

The first question we faced was to ask ourselves whether we would be interested in pursuing the cluster and why. Reflecting on this, our answer is more complex than even we had initially assumed and is tied to a

whole host of personal and professional reasons (see chapter 10). We find it telling to walk through some of these reasons in the hope that it might facilitate others in their own development of research clusters.

Let us begin with personal reasons. When Susan McGrath approached us about the possibility, we were intrigued but somewhat uneasy. After all, the three of us focused on very different empirical phenomena, and it was not clear what—if anything—united them (a theme we return to in detail below). We were also already integrated into our own research and activist networks, so how could embarking on a new cluster advance our personal research interests and the particular lines of scholarly inquiry that inspired and shaped our work? But we decided nevertheless to engage in preliminary conversations—primarily via Skype and telephone—to explore this question. Our decision to proceed was partially motivated by the fact that we all liked one another personally, found each other’s work compelling, and looked forward to getting to know one another better. We were all recently minted PhDs and new arrivals at our respective institutions. This research cluster therefore offered us the opportunity to broaden our institutional networks as well as our disciplinary ones. For Libby and Anna, it provided the opportunity to become better acquainted with new colleagues at York; for Pablo, the cluster afforded an opportunity to both remain connected to York and to build closer working relationships in geography, a new discipline for him.

In terms of our motivations, apprehensions, and eventually the cluster’s outcomes, both concrete and less tangible, it is also important to note that we were all pre-tenure when we began. This made the prospect of developing a cluster somewhat nerve-wracking. It was not clear our efforts would pay out in terms of the main “currency” of tenure these days—that is, scholarly publications—especially since we were not entirely convinced the cluster had a clear focus. But being pre-tenure, and having a very sincere commitment to advancing the study area through collaborative exchange, also motivated us to ensure that the cluster would have concrete results, especially various forms of scholarly dissemination. Looking back at this period of pre-tenure cluster development, one of our core observations is that working on the cluster through development to final outputs put in place the roots of a deep and sincere friendship among the three of us. This is tied, we feel, to the timing of the cluster; precisely that it did unfold over the time we were also going up for tenure. This is not

insignificant. The outputs of the cluster, including a workshop and multiple publications, and the connections the cluster made possible were all important elements of our tenure files, but the friendships generated by the cluster also provided a very real sense of moral support for a stressful time in our careers. We mention this to reinforce an important point: the development of research clusters includes benefits that extend well beyond the tight focus of the cluster or even the larger projects of which they are a part. They help develop a moral community based on not only shared interests and political commitments but also recognition, belonging, and friendship (see the introduction and chapter 10).

Our motivation to develop the cluster was, of course, not solely personal. We were also intrigued by the idea of what we could gain by pulling our three diverse areas of scholarship together. Could we gain new insight into the relationship between displacement and environmental factors, logics, and processes? Certainly, there has been substantial literature in each of our individual areas of study, so what fresh understanding might come from bringing them together? Despite some of our previously articulated trepidation, we remained excited to reach for new horizons in our work and decided to take a leap of faith and see where we might end up. What we describe below is where we landed. To perhaps spoil the surprise, we are still not entirely convinced harnessing these diverse phenomena under a broad rubric of environmentally induced displacement leaves us with needed scholarly precision. But, nonetheless, it is in part through the discomfort with this imprecision that we have been able to produce meaningful scholarly interventions in our work as part of this cluster, our work as individual scholars, and in the possibilities opened up to us in the period since we began our collaboration.

Before we arrive there, let us make a few more observations about creating the network, both to chronicle our own history and that of the RRN and, more importantly, to provide insight to others hoping to develop their own research clusters. The first thing to mention is that the cluster came with start-up funds (offered from the larger RRN grant) (see chapter 1). As pre-tenure scholars who did not all have access to research grants just yet, this was vital. The money allowed us to hire a PhD student in geography at York, Ryan Hackett, as our assistant to help us organize the cluster's first scholarly output, which was a workshop. We chose Ryan out of a larger number of qualified applicants because he had the needed

logistical skills but also direct research expertise on our topic (his dissertation examined conservation-induced displacement tied to conservation offsets from the Alberta oil sands). It soon became obvious that Ryan was more than merely an assistant; he was shaping the contours of the cluster through his workshop inputs. We realized that he should be asked to join us as a collaborator rather than an assistant. It was he who was central in organizing the workshop, and bringing together our disparate ideas and goals. While we had initially intended to put together a small and mainly locally based workshop, with Ryan's aid we significantly expanded our vision and began to conceive of an international gathering. We applied for and received additional SSHRC funding through the Workshops and Conference Grants program to make the event a reality. The larger budget we now had allowed us to include a wider range of cases, methodological approaches, and participants. As we developed the cluster, moreover, we were careful to invite a range of scholars, from world-renowned experts to mid-career scholars pursuing innovative research, as well as both senior graduate students who presented results from their fieldwork and new graduate students who joined the discussion as participant observers.

We retell this part of our cluster's early days because it highlights two important points. First, the development of clusters—especially those organized by pre-tenure faculty members—is greatly facilitated by seed funding. We strongly doubt our cluster would have taken off without such financial support. In addition, it likely would have proven overwhelming to the cluster leaders had it not been for logistical support offered by York's Centre for Refugee Studies with tasks such as reimbursement for travel and booking accommodation and the workshop venue. This is a reminder that financial and logistical support is not merely appreciated but actually necessary for clusters to succeed—perhaps even more so for a mega-cluster like the RRN.

Secondly, this part of our history also highlights the importance of engaging graduate students from a cluster's inception (see the introduction and chapters 1 and 10). Perhaps selfishly, we had not initially set out to provide opportunities for graduate students as one of our primary aims. It is not that we were against this, it simply was not front and centre on our radar. But we are proud to say that this indeed did become one of our primary contributions. We successfully provided graduate students opportunities for research dissemination and networking with

senior scholars and other emerging scholars along with opportunities for logistical training and workshop organization. Hence, learning from our somewhat serendipitous success on this front, we would advocate all networks integrate graduate student training and engagement as a core contribution from the outset.

Making the Case for Environmental Displacement as a Concept and Research Cluster

Perhaps unlike the other clusters of the RRN, ours faced a challenge from the start regarding our core concept. In short, it was not clear to us where to draw the limits around environmentally induced displacement to determine what it would embrace and what it would leave behind.¹

Reflecting the particular challenges of our cluster, in both the scholarly world and that of environmental policy, ideas such as “environmental refugees” and “environmental forced migration” have long provoked vigorous debates, not only echoing but indeed surpassing the previous controversies in extending protections to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other groups not sufficiently addressed by the existing refugee mechanisms (Gemenne and Brücker 2015; Lister 2014; Swyngedouw 2013). We found ourselves confronted with a similar set of challenges. For instance, both conservation and climate change offer clear examples of how environmental processes and logics provoke displacement. But even here there is ambivalence. Displacement linked to climate change is largely “agentless,” as it is often environmental processes themselves—albeit ones influenced by human behaviour—that are most immediately inciting forced migration. It is often not a planned or actively orchestrated eviction. With conservation, however, it is most often conservation managers and related government officers who are actively organizing displacement and relocation. And newer trends of climate change related displacement—particularly displacement caused by climate change adaptation and mitigation measures—better fit what is happening with conservation, in the sense that they are active, intentional forms of displacement. Things get even more complicated when we look at resource extraction as a catalyst for environmental displacement. Here it is the desire to access and remove environmental resources that leads to eviction. Depending on the context,

these situations may be substantively different than what we see in the cases of climate change and conservation.

Despite these differences, we decided to move forward to develop the cluster and address these three phenomena. Our approach was to allow for connections to emerge, and indeed allow for often-contested understandings of our core concept of environmentally induced displacement, *through* our cluster. In other words, we approached even our core concept as an emergent entity from the beginning, one that was open to much debate both internally within the cluster and externally within our broader scholarly and activist networks. The question that was posed to us time and again is whether the concept itself is valid and whether its application helps in either our understanding of or intervention into the dynamics we are interested in.

If we say something to the effect that “environmentally induced displacement is unethical,” does that mean anything? Surely different instances of such displacement are unethical in part because people are dispossessed from their land and livelihoods and separated from their communities, but that is arguably the case for all forms of involuntary relocation. Is there any inherent relation between the diverse “environmental” aspects of displacement and the ethics of that displacement that covers all similar examples of environmentally induced displacement? Arguably there is not, in large part because “the environment” plays such diverse causal roles in each example—sometimes it is the cause of displacement (climate change), sometimes environmental protection is the rationale for displacement (conservation), and other times it is the value of environmental resources that is motivating displacement (resource extraction).

Such imprecision proved challenging at many points. After our workshop, for example, we submitted a proposal for a special issue based on workshop papers to the journal *Geoforum*. We thought *Geoforum* would be a good fit, given that it is a reputable journal well versed in debates on environmental politics/political ecology and displacement. Our anticipation built up to disappointment as our proposal was rejected on the ground that the editors failed to see the “there there”; that is, they failed to grasp the utility of bringing the different cases of displacement induced by climate change, conservation, and mining together under one concept. The upshot, however, is that the challenge posed to us by the journal editors, by participants in our network, and perhaps most of all by ourselves

as cluster leaders regarding the usefulness of this research concept and cluster has helped us to refocus and refine the ways in which we theorize the connections between environment and displacement.

In this sense, it was the workshop itself—where we brought what had been a primarily virtual and intermittent network into physical contact and intensive discussion over a focused period—that served as the catalyst for the transformation and continued evolution of the research cluster. To show the utility in our still-emergent concept of environmentally induced displacement and outline the work of the cluster, let us now turn to describing the workshop on the topic we held at York in 2012. It is here that we worked to define the concept and the cluster itself and here that we can locate the roots of our scholarly contributions, which included two peer-reviewed special issues of scholarly journals.

Our workshop proposal and later the workshop—held in 2012 and entitled “Environmental Displacement in a Global Context”—itself began from a set of related observations. From climate change to resource extraction projects, landscapes are being transformed at an unprecedented scale. Conservation efforts are at the same time being instituted to address the loss of habitat and to make urban spaces more sustainable. While seemingly distinct from one another, these share an important feature: they all provoke forms of environmentally induced displacement. As such phenomena have an impact on ever-larger spaces, communities are confronted with the loss of their land and other vital resources. These groups are often vulnerable to begin with, lacking secure rights and access to resources and to formal recourse once these are jeopardized. While scholars have begun to address these kinds of displacements, their conversations tend to focus on particular phenomena, leaving their insights somewhat insulated from one another. There is consequently need for a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of such processes.

This workshop brought together a number of researchers (twenty-one in total) along with an audience of discussants and observers, each with their own expertise in different contexts of environmentally induced displacement. The conversations that resulted were designed to help develop an overarching framework to better grasp the linkages and distinctions between these cases and to chart trends across seemingly disparate contexts. The workshop convened researchers at different points in their careers, and included activists, graduate students, and leading scholars.

Our conversations focused on displacement caused by climate change (including desertification, polar melting, and extreme weather), extractive industries (mineral, forest, and agro-industrial-based extraction), and conservation (in both rural and urban settings). We considered these to be among the most pressing and consequential forms of environmentally induced displacement globally, covering a broad range of practices and contexts.

Our workshop focused on three key questions that cut across these empirical areas.

1. What constitutes environmentally induced displacement? Who or what is being displaced and with what impact? This allowed us to both address and move beyond traditional notions of displacement—that is, dislocation from a particular place—to understand broader causes and impacts. Our discussions examined, for instance, how climate change, extraction, and conservation may prevent groups from accessing natural resources, employment, cultural sites, family connections, and so forth, even in instances where people are not physically removed from the places they inhabit.
2. What practices, discourses, calculations, etc. are employed to rationalize, organize, and undertake environmental displacement? We sought to investigate whether different forms of displacement unfolding in a variety of empirical and geographical contexts are organized and carried out through the deployment of similar practices, calculations, and conceptual frameworks. Furthermore, we examined ways in which these practices and processes may differ from case to case and what impact this may have on groups experiencing forms of dislocation.

3. How do different groups respond to environmentally induced displacement and with what impact? More specifically, how do groups directly impacted by such displacement respond to both actual and potential dislocation? And how do their advocates as well as states and private interests respond? What are the results of such responses? What lessons can be drawn from these experiences in understanding and addressing environmentally induced displacement in a range of contexts?

The backgrounds of those who participated in the workshop and subsequent publications were diverse, as were their approaches, the focus of their respective investigations, and their insights into the three areas of inquiry above. Table 11.1 presents a list of the participants, through whose collaborations and discussions we began to build the case for EID.

Through the workshop we attempted therefore to define environmentally induced displacement as our core, unifying concept. As discussed previously, there was much discussion about definitions and the use of the term environmentally induced displacement to describe our diverse topics and empirical contexts. Several participants raised specific concerns regarding the “fit” of the concept within broader scholarly and policy realms—how would “environmentally induced displacement” relate to established traditions within refugee studies or international development work or the policy debates on environmental refugees within the UNHCR, some asked? There was also significant discussion of the broad application of the term displacement to describe a wide variety of phenomena, many of which did not include forced migration. Several of the workshop presentations conceptualized displacement as processes leading to restricted access to natural resources, employment, cultural sites, or family connections. Others explored the discursive techniques used to rationalize and carry out displacement, while still others dealt with the psycho-social impacts of these varied forms of displacement and connections between place, identity, and belonging. Given the breadth of empirical contexts and topics being discussed under the heading of displacement, several participants suggested that terms such as dispossession, exclusion, or uprootedness might be more appropriate descriptors. Additionally,

TABLE 11.1: Environmental Displacement Cluster Workshop Participants

PARTICIPANT	DISCIPLINE	INSTITUTION	SPECIALIZATION
Pablo Bose	Geography	University of Vermont	Climate change, Bangladesh
Elizabeth Lunstrum	Geography	York University	Conservation, Southern Africa
Anna Zalik	Environmental Studies	York University	Resource extraction, Nigeria, Mexico
Ryan Hackett	Geography	York University	Climate change, Canada
Andrew Baldwin	Geography	Durham University	Climate change discourse, global
Paula Butler	Canadian Studies	Trent University	Resource extraction, Africa
Claire Major	Geography	York University	Resource extraction, Canada
Jacqueline Medalye, Aaron Saad, and Anders L. Sandberg	Environmental Studies	York University	Climate change discourse, global
Amita Baviskar	Sociology	Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi	Development and displacement, India
Evans Rubara	Environmental Studies	York University	Resource extraction, Africa
Jennifer Hyndman	Geography	York University	Disaster and violence, Sri Lanka, global
Andrea Nightingale	Urban and Rural Development	Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences	Climate change, Himalayas
James Igoe	Anthropology	University of Virginia	Conservation, global
Rachel Hirsch	Social Justice	Brock University	Food security, Arctic
Ulrich Osleider	Geography	Florida International University	Resource extraction, Colombia
Joyce Barry	Women's Studies	Hamilton College	Resource extraction, United States
Robin Roth	Geography	Guelph University	Conservation, Canada
Matthew Himley	Geography	Illinois State University	Resource extraction, Peru
Roderick Neumann	Geography	Florida International University	Conservation, Africa

some participants questioned the way in which the term “environmentally induced” was being foregrounded, which suggests that the environment is the driving factor in displacement. Some suggested that eco-genic displacement or environmentally mediated displacement might be a more appropriate label. Others argued the need to think about “environment” as a discursive formation; in other words, that it is not the environment, per se, that induces displacement, but the ways in which discourses regarding the environment—its conservation, utility, and management, for example—are used to enable, justify, and resist displacements.

This, in fact, emerged as one of the key insights of the workshop and of our cluster overall. Despite significant focus on terminology, a definitive answer to these questions was not reached. Participants suggested that while we in our discussions as scholars might autonomously decide what constitutes displacement, the process of defining and categorizing must involve considerations of how people beyond our research cluster might adopt and use specific terminology, and how meaning moves across cultures, languages, and geographic locations. Discussions of appropriate terminology and classifications will likely remain an ongoing and iterative process.

The (Other) Outcomes of Connecting Disparate Research Interests: Innovative Knowledge Production

It is precisely through the openness of our concept and the diversity of members of our workshop and cluster (in terms of their personal backgrounds, specializations, and empirical cases) that we were able to make important and timely contributions to our understanding of different articulations of environmentally induced displacement. This included not only extending our empirical and theoretical knowledge of displacement tied to climate change, conservation, and resource extraction but also connections across them, including similarities, causal links, and so forth. These contributions are the most important scholarly outputs of our cluster and point to the fact that our main goal from the beginning was knowledge production in a rather classic scholarly sense, reflecting an important goal of the larger RRN (see the introduction). Following the success of the workshop we sought to capitalize on our momentum by organizing a

special issue of a journal. We worked closely within the leadership group of the cluster and with our workshop co-organizer Ryan Hackett to craft a proposal for a coherent set of articles based on our discussions. It also became clear that there was substantial interest in two separate aspects of our work as a cluster: a theme that focused on conceptual matters and one that was more concerned with empirical detail and interventions.

Over the next four years, we worked to produce two special journal issues, building on our workshop (and in some cases including participants from that workshop); these are among the major contributions of our cluster. For the journal *Refuge*—an open-access publication that has widespread practitioner as well as scholarly appeal—we chose to focus more on some of the practical debates ongoing in the world of refugee protection (Bose and Lunstrum 2014). These included articles on policy and legal responses to climate change and natural disasters, a discussion of the volume and character of environmentally induced migration, and the specifics of Canadian state policy in this regard. Other contributors took up ethical questions such as the role of social workers in addressing forced migration, the particular context of Indigenous communities in Canada facing displacement, and the need to understand the historical legacies of colonialism and the importance of geographic location in assessing risk and vulnerability of environmentally induced displacement. For our more conceptual special issue, published in *Area*, we focused more specifically on many of the contradictions and debates regarding environmentally induced displacements from a critical geography and political ecology perspective (Lunstrum, Bose, and Zalik 2016). In this issue, we expanded on a number of workshop presentations to explore not only the common ground between conservation, climate change, and resource extraction, but also to examine some of the key contradictions between (and within) each area. Our papers look therefore at particular cases in Bangladesh, Southern Africa, and Mexico and additionally at climate change politics in Canada and eco-tourism and extraction in Latin America.

While the full scope of our conceptual and empirical contributions goes well beyond the themes listed below, we would like to highlight some of the specific interventions that our research cluster has made into our understanding of environmentally induced displacement from both the workshop and resulting publications. We do this to focus not only on these contributions on their own terms, but also to demonstrate the ways

in which they were developed by bringing together a diversity of perspectives made possible by the cluster and our open and emergent concept of environmentally induced displacement.

The Significance of Place, Identity, and Belonging: A number of participants in their articles and presentations highlighted the important linkages between place and identity, and a sense of belonging. The significance of place and identity takes a variety of forms and influences both displacement and the responses of communities to displacement in a variety of ways. In several empirical contexts, citizenship and rights are linked to place, or more specifically, to place-based identities. Some participants highlighted the contested nature of citizenship in their specific studies, for example by citing highly mobile populations and varied access to political participation and resources. Others called attention to the ways in which various environmental subjectivities—such as Indigenous identities—were mobilized in order to successfully resist displacement, and the dangers that the usage of such strategic essentialism posed for various marginalized groups. The theme of a connection between specific places and the formation or maintenance of social/cultural identity was evident in a number of empirical contexts and often meant that physical displacement entailed threats to cultural identity and in some cases the very existence of particular societies. These linkages between place and identity often dovetailed into discussions within the cluster of the socio-psychological impacts of displacement. Here we saw discussion of affect, emotion, and the sense of “uprootedness” that results from displacement (see chapter 2).

The Need for Historical Context and Recognition of Multiple Causal Factors: Several participants argued through their presentations, discussions, and articles that we need to recognize the multiplicity of factors influencing vulnerability to displacement and the need for a focus on the underlying social, political, and economic contexts in which displacement occurs. A number of different issues and constraints may influence a population’s vulnerability to displacement and ability to respond. These may include (but are not limited to) existing social or economic inequity, pre-existing or post displacement violence and conflict, colonialism, race and ethnicity, or physical location. Vulnerability and responses to environmentally induced displacement are thus conditioned by multiple factors operating across various scales. A focus on temporality also discourages us from seeing displacement as an isolated or discrete event,

instead encouraging critical thinking about causality and not seeing specific cases as discrete events, but rather as complex, multi-staged processes, influenced by a variety of social, economic, and political projects (see also chapter 5). Participants noted that while the growing prominence of environmental risks in global discussions of displacement has increased discussions of “environmental refugees,” there is a great deal of danger in adopting a short-term or myopic view of environmentally induced displacement that views it as primarily a new phenomenon.

Understanding the Role of Coercion: Many participants suggested that we must distinguish between forced migration and “voluntary” displacement. Forced migration is already recognized as politically unpalatable, but several people discussed more subtle strategies that also serve to involuntarily displace people. This included cases in which people’s ability to protect themselves against animal threats in parks were curtailed, or the removal and abandonment of essential infrastructure in specific locations, or the use of environmental pollution as a tool for displacing communities. Several participants also raised the need to consider people’s ability to participate in or resist displacement. Some mentioned the ways in which class, race, gender, or other factors play an important role in determining whether a particular community is able to resist projects and processes that might displace them, whether they are able to articulate “authentic” claims to territory or land usage, whether they are recognized by state or other authorities, or whether they have the means as well as motivation to protect themselves and their lands.

The Importance of Governance Structures in Displacement: Many of the papers presented during the workshop and subsequently developed into scholarly articles included discussions of the specific governance regimes within various cases of environmentally induced displacement. While participants acknowledged that the role of the state remains important, it is no longer the exclusive centre of discussions on environmental governance and associated displacements. Governance was instead discussed in terms of multiple actors, public and private, operating at a variety of scales to secure norms, legitimacy, rules, and sanctions. These governance networks involve varying roles for states, NGOs and aid agencies, private corporations, and international or supra-national institutions. The ways in which these diverse actors operate and intersect to co-produce specific types of governance has a significant influence on displacement.

Different co-productions of governance may operate to rationalize and facilitate conditions for displacement, while in other instances networked governance structures are employed in strategies to respond to, or resist, displacement.

These themes (and others that developed from our collaborations) lead us to make two observations regarding our cluster and its outputs:

1. Through our discussions in person and through the writing, editing, and revising process, participants helped to greatly expand our understanding of environmentally induced displacement through diverse empirical cases and theoretical frameworks, and
2. It was our open and organic concept of environmentally induced displacement that in part allowed such a complex definition of the concept to arise out of our work together.

Conclusion: Reflecting on the Cluster . . . Outcomes, Challenges, and New Directions

In many ways, we feel the work of the official cluster on environmental displacement has come to a close. We were successful in organizing a major workshop in 2012, and we also produced those two scholarly special issues, which is precisely what we had envisioned. But the less tangible outcomes are also important (see the introduction). We have developed valuable friendships, trained graduate students, and learned about different articulations of environment and displacement across diverse locations and theoretical frameworks. We should also note here that the question of how active the cluster is remains an open one—we have collaborated intensively through efforts such as the workshop and the subsequent publications, but what sustains our ongoing work is primarily the personal relationships built between participants, rather than a formalized organization or affiliation. Most of the participants in the workshop and/or publications we have referenced previously have gone on to develop their work further

either on their own, in continued collaboration with research partners met through the cluster, or in new networks. While most would acknowledge their participation in the cluster events and outputs, it is uncertain whether they would still identify as members of the research cluster now.

As the leaders and organizers of the group, though, we absolutely embrace the outcomes of our cluster and are very grateful to the RRN for facilitating our work along the way. This latter point reminds us of the practical and indeed vital importance of support, both financial and logistical, for clusters to be effective—especially “clusters within clusters,” which we see with the RRN model. Despite our many successes, as we have described in this chapter, the issue of defining our concepts remained a significant hurdle. Yet this same challenge has produced one of the key outcomes of our discussion, whether in person and through our writing and research. This has been the notion that there is no single unitary logic to how environmental factors, values, or processes might provoke displacement along starkly different registers, scales, and contexts. There is thus considerable utility and insight to be gained by bringing these diverse examples together, which is precisely what the cluster enabled.

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of the cluster is the new possibilities it has generated. We continue to present on its findings in different locations. This includes twice presenting on it at the Centre for Refugee Studies’ annual summer school, which draws together a stellar mix of activists, practitioners, and scholars studying the latest trends in forced migration. And the special issue of *Refuge*, in particular, has allowed us to speak to an audience centrally concerned with questions of forced displacement. We have additionally integrated key insights from the cluster into our teaching. This includes units in two of our courses that brought together students from Toronto and the Dadaab Refugee Camp as part of the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) Project (see chapter 4). Here we were able to talk about environmental change, including the environmental aspects of displacement, across geographical locations in a way that treated students from the global south and north as equal partners in learning. In Pablo’s case, he has been able to develop a new concentration in migration and environment within the Global Studies program he directs and to introduce a new thematic area of focus on migration within the Gund Institute for Environment at the University of Vermont. Moreover, there are important lessons we have

learned as scholars and as teachers regarding our approach to collaboration and instruction, especially in terms of modelling ethical practices to student researchers.

We have also used the cluster and its work as a springboard to pursue related projects. For instance, emerging directly from the cluster and funded with seed money from the RRN, Libby and her PhD student Francis Massé have begun a project on the political ecology of international borders. So far, our work has consisted of an annotated bibliography of over 100 sources on the topic (Massé and Lunstrum 2013; see also chapter 13) along with our own empirical work on displacement from Southern Africa's Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Areas (Massé and Lunstrum 2016; Lunstrum 2014). The project foregrounds the question of displacement and, like the cluster, is focused on a broad swathe of environmental practices, processes, logics, and rationales that can lead to displacement at and across international borders. The project is also allowing us to build on a topic broached at the 2012 workshop, and that is the issue of security (see also chapters 3 and 5). Namely, we examine as a core intervention how security concerns articulate with environmental commitments and processes to produce novel rationales for displacement. Similarly, Pablo has built on his work regarding displacements caused through climate change mitigation and adaptation with a more sustained examination of some specific cases in Bangladesh through collaborations with a former student now working as a researcher in Dhaka at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (Meraz and Bose 2016). The involvement with the cluster also led directly to his involvement with a research consortium based at Leeds and including research partners in France, Norway, and Switzerland to investigate how deltaic societies in Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh, India, the Netherlands, and Tanzania are addressing climate change and displacement; another project on climate change and cashmere farming in Mongolia; and a third on climate change and social impacts in the circumpolar regions. Others involved in our cluster have had similar success expanding upon their work.

The workshop has thus provided participants with opportunities to expand research on environmental displacement in new empirical and theoretical directions by enabling face-to-face collaboration among participants and facilitated the development of a global network of scholars interested in environmental displacement. Given the diverse backgrounds

of the participants and geographical diversity of their research sites, the conversation enabled discussion across disciplines and locales. Participants' theoretical and empirical contributions are helping to develop a wider, more comprehensive, yet still organic and emerging conceptualization of environmental displacement—including the varied forms it takes, its diverse impacts, and strategies for addressing if not halting it.

Note

- 1 It is useful here to compare our challenges with those faced by other RRN clusters and networks: see in particular the introduction and chapters 10, 12, and 13.

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