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### The Representation of "Exceptional Migrants" in Media Discourse: The Case of Climate-induced Migration

Edited by Katherine E. Russo and Ruth Wodak

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Introduction The Representation of "Exceptional Migrants" in Media Discourse. The Case of Climate-induced Migration

In 1995, Giorgio Agamben interrogated the link between bare life and politics, as the exceptional and exclusionary foundation of Western politics, in order to abandon juridico-institutional models of sovereignty in favour of an unprejudiced analysis of the concrete ways in which power penetrates the very bodies and forms of life of subjects:

In Western politics, bare life has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men. It is not by chance, then, that a passage of [Aristotle's] politics situates the proper place of the *polis* in the transition from voice to language. The link between bare life and politics is the same link that the metaphysical definition of man as 'the living being who has language' seeks in the relation between *phonē* and *logos*.... The living being has *logos* by taking away and conserving its own voice in it, even as it dwells in the polis by letting its own bare life be excluded, as an exception, within it.<sup>1</sup>

According to Agamben, bare life is simultaneously defined and excluded from the political space of the sovereign state through discourse. In the juridico-political order of sovereignty, the power of discourse derives from the creation and definition of the space and boundaries of the juridico-political order itself, but also from the state of exception, i.e., the suspension of the juridical order's validity for certain subjects. Following this line of thought, climate-induced migrants/refugees may be defined as 'exceptional migrants' since their very definition has entered political, institutional and legal discourse but does not entail the recognition of rights granted by international legal frameworks.

Climate change has been a contentious and divisive issue in the international scientific and political debate of the last three decades. Political parties have applied different sets of logics and priorities to climate change over time, ranging from the frontline of anthropogenic climate change supporters to scepticism and active obstructionism. Climate change has been central to political election campaigns and debates throughout the years.<sup>2</sup> For instance, in 2001, the US President George W. Bush proclaimed his unequivocal opposition to the Kyoto Protocol to safeguard the US oil industry and the auto-industry lobbyists, while in 2009 the future Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott, announced his opposition to the Emissions Trading Scheme proposal, and eventually achieved Liberal leadership over this issue. Similarly, Donald Trump has been recently decisive not only in driving policy priorities on climate change, but in undermining public consensus on the science of climate change and the need for action. The same binary opposition can be applied to left-wing and right-wing populism: the link between rightwing populism and the denial of anthropogenic climate change has been on-going since its first appearance.<sup>3</sup> As in most right-wing populist discourse, antagonism has been central to climate change denialism.<sup>4</sup> Right-wing populists have blamed climate change science for threatening or damaging

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Standford, California: Stanford U.P., 1998), 7-8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Maxwell T. Boycoff and Jules Boycoff, "Climate Change and Journalistic Norms: A Case-study of US Mass-media Coverage", *Geoforum*, 38 (2007), 1190-1204.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Ruth Wodak, The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean (London: Sage Publications, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996); Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

society economically through appeals to common sense and a politics of anti-politics which constructs supporters of climate change and environmentalists as the selfish elite. Appeals to common-sense and anti-intellectualism have also been central in the construction of scepticism towards anthropogenic climate change and towards scientists. In this antagonistic relationship, climate change is an empty signifier "whose efficiency derives from its affective force and paucity of content"<sup>5</sup> and is constructed as a threat to the 'future' of an imagined homogenous community inside a well-protected territory.

As a consequence of the political debate on climate change, terms related to climate-induced migration have greatly expanded and present a high degree of instability, which is typical of new term formation and knowledge. Yet, migration and displacement are bound by shared and established terms based on international legal frameworks.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, denominations such as environmental refugees and climate refugees have been heavily criticized by legal scholars who warn news practitioners against their use.<sup>7</sup> Term choice related to the case of climate-induced migration is particularly relevant for the analysis of the many and often contradictory rhetorical and ideological strategies of political and institutional actors. During the last decade, climate-induced migration has become "a well-established policy field" and institutions such as the International Organization for Migration and the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) have strongly advocated in favour of its recognition.<sup>8</sup> In 2009, the European Council adopted the Stockholm Programme, which dealt with the potential effects of climate change on international migration and on the EU, and invited the Commission to present a research report on climate-induced migration. As a result of the outcome to consultations and the analysis by the Commission, a revisited Global Approach to Migration was adopted in 2011, emphasising the link between migration, climate change and environmental degradation and the need for a revision of terminology. As a consequence, the last fifteen years have seen a steady increase in the use of a wide range of highly creative and controversial terms, such as eco-refugee, environmental refugee, environmental migrant, forced environmental migrant, environmentally motivated migrant, climate refugee, climate change refugee, environmentally displaced person, disaster refugee, environmental displacee, ecological displaced person and environmental refugee-to-be. Yet, the use of the term 'refugee' has been highly contested in the legal field since climate-induced refugees are not a category under the 1951 landmark United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the subsequent 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which codified changes in the status of refugees. Moreover, the definition in the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees applies to people who have already crossed an international border, while many of those displaced by climate change are internally displaced people.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, numerous scholars have pointed out that the use of the term 'migrants', which involves the notion of mobility as a voluntary act, should not be applied, since "given the multiple factors determining migration, it is almost impossible to single out individuals or populations whose mobility is determined solely by climatic changes".<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the choice of the premodifier climate change instead of global warming may be contested as it invites differential associations. As Schuldt, Konrath and Schwarz found, the term 'global warming' was highly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Benjamin Glasson, "The Intellectual Outside: Anti-intellectualism and the Subject of Populist Discourses in Australian Newspapers", *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 26.1 (2012), 109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Paola Catenaccio, "Dehumanizing the Alien: The Construction of Migrants' Rights in EU Legislation", in Giuliana Garzone and Srikant Sarangi, eds., *Discourse, Ideology, and Specialized Communication* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 355-377.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Jane McAdam, *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2012).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Giovanni Bettini, "Unsettling Futures Climate Change, Migration and the (Ob)scene Biopolitics of Resilience", in Andrew Baldwin and Giovanni Bettini, eds., *Life Adrift, Climate Change, Migration, Critique* (New York: Rowland & Littlefield Publishers, 2017), 81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See McAdam, 2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Giovanni Bettini, "Climate Migration as an Adaption Strategy: De-securitizing Climate-induced Migration or Making the Unruly Governable?", *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.2 (2014), 182.

contested by climate science sceptics as it focuses on temperature increases, while the term 'climate change' was coined to recruit more general associations with temperature changes, which can easily accommodate unseasonably cold temperatures and record snowfalls. Global warming evokes stronger connotations of human causation, whereas climate change evokes stronger connotations of natural causation.<sup>11</sup> Hence, such terms may be used to frame political issues in ways that promote ideologically consistent attitudes and beliefs.

The ongoing labour of nomination and predicational representation of climate-induced migrants/refugees and the discursive power of language as an agent of subjectivation is the focus of several articles in this issue. As a matter of fact, while the aforementioned terms are not recognized by the members of the international legal discourse community, they have undergone a process of appropriation to facilitate structured 'mediation' and 'communication' between expert and non-expert readers.<sup>12</sup> More specifically, even though the denomination climate refugees is not recognized by international law it is widely distributed in news discourse. In order to communicate and interest the lay public, people must be sorted into facile and rigid social categories, whose meaning is compressed into a few words. In this light, news discourse 'recontextualizes' and transforms scientific, political and institutional social practices conveying them in new texts and social practices, including, crucially, everyday life conversations. This complex process, which spreads information across 'genre chains' or 'networks of texts', is central to the present issue on contemporary representations of the connection between climate change and migration as it focuses on the spread of information and science across news discourse.<sup>13</sup>

The representation of climate-induced migrants in news discourse is another important focus of analysis in this issue. As they have advocated on numerous occasions, climate-induced migrants' self-representations are largely filtered out of news media accounts and climate-induced migrants are often represented as helpless and powerless victims of climate change requiring salvation. The latter representations have been particularly contested by the very groups who are identified as climate-induced migrants: they have often reclaimed their role as active agents of change (i.e., developing mitigation and adaptation strategies such as mangrove planting and solar power), and have stressed their concerns over the loss of sovereignty, agency and self-determination related to forced migration and refugee status.<sup>14</sup> This is a particularly strategic call since, as Chouliaraki notes, the type of action that the sufferer plays out bears an effect on the spectator's own orientation to the sufferer. The possibility of the spectator to engage,

depends on the humanization of the sufferer  $\dots$  humanization is a process of identity construction that endows the sufferer with the power to say or do something about her condition, even if this power is simply the power to evoke and receive the beneficiary action of others. The humane sufferer is the sufferer who acts.<sup>15</sup>

The representation of distant suffering and victims of natural disasters through the spectacles of news media does not always result in the creation of a global public with a sense of social responsibility nor

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Jonathan Schuldt et al., "Global Warming or Climate Change? Whether the Planet is Warming Depends on Question Wording", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75 (Spring 2011), 115-124.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Mojka Pecman, "Variation as a Cognitive Device: How Scientists Construct Knowledge Through Term Formation", *Terminology*, 20.1 (2014), 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 48.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Tanja Dreher and Michelle Voyer, "Climate Refugees or Migrants? Contesting Media Frames on Climate Justice in the Pacific", *Environmental Communication*, 9.1 (2014), 58-76.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Lilie Chouliaraki, "Towards and Analytics of Mediation", Critical Discourse Studies, 3.2 (October 2006), 169.

orients the spectator towards certain options for action on the suffering and to connect with the spectacle of suffering.<sup>16</sup> According to Chouliaraki, it largely depends on the agency of the sufferer, the semiotic choice of inactivity annihilates the sufferer, depriving her/him of "corporeal and psychological qualities and removes her from the existential order to which the spectator belongs".<sup>17</sup> Therefore, another important way in which the present issue may be linked to Agamben's work is that "the living being has logos by taking away and conserving its own voice in it, even as it dwells in the polis by letting its own bare life be excluded, as an exception, within it".<sup>18</sup> The right to self-representation and to one's own voice may indeed be one of the few repositories of humanity for those migrants whose greatest fear is that of entering the rows of invisible and stateless citizens. As Jaworski has shown, the political silencing of oppositional voices occurs in situations marked by a significant power differential between participants. Similarly, the denial of access to public expression can be defined as a means through which influence, control and dominance is exerted in mediated communication.<sup>19</sup> The silence and absence of self-narratives impacts on the representation of climate-induced migrants just as much as the otherverbal and visual representations.

The definition of climate-induced migrants as 'exceptional' migrants may also be related to a preference for the 'extraordinary' and the 'sensational' in news coverage. In response to climate change scepticism, environmentalists and journalists often resort to dramatized representations of severely affected countries as a sensationalist "proof" to "concretize climate science's statistical abstractions", and in this context the dimension of climate-induced migration has often been amplified.<sup>20</sup> In the case of climate science, communication and news operators often background planning and forecasting and privilege spectacular, unexpected events, which have a much higher chance of becoming news. Particularly when the speculations level is high, it may provide a fertile ground for "media spinning, scaring the public, creating solidarity, and diverting attention".<sup>21</sup> The representation of climate-induced migration as an alarming and catastrophic scenario may, for instance, be traced in the use of exaggerating quantifiers in respect to the number of potential climate-induced migrants or the merging of climateinduced migrants with natural calamities of great magnitude and in need of urgent control and risk management by the nation. The focus on the mediation of crisis and the "aesthetic contemplation of suffering vis-à-vis the sublimity of the catastrophe"<sup>22</sup> rather than on the causes, chronic social problems or long-term consequences of climate change may indeed be rooted in the suspension of law and securitization of the 'state of exception'. It may also be due to sensationalism as the consequence of the increasing marketization of news discourse and to entertainment purposes. The personification of climate-induced migrants plays a vital rhetorical role in giving a human face and an imagined 'collective subject', to the inanimate or abstract idea of climate-induced migration. In this manner, it engages readers through affect and rhetorical pathetic fallacy, appealing to prejudiced emotions, opinions and convictions instead of employing rational arguments.<sup>23</sup>

The choice of the term 'climate refugees' is also related to the capitalization of news reporters on the framing of new stories according to shared typifications and schemata. As Reisigl and Wodak note, social

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Ibid., 154-155.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>18</sup> Agamben, Homo Sacer, 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Adam Jaworski, The Power of Silence: Social and Pragmatic Perspectives (Newbury Park, CA.: Sage, 1993).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Carol Farbotko, "Wishful Sinking: Disappearing Islands, Climate Refugees and Cosmopolitan Experimentation", Asia Pacific Viewpoint, 51.1 (2010), 58

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Motti Neiger, "Media Oracles: The Political Import and Cultural Significance of News Referring to the Future", *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, 8.3 (2007), 313

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Chouliaraki, "Towards and Analytics of Mediation", 158

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Wodak, The Politics of Fear, 65.

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actors are linguistically inscribed with certain qualities through the use of predicational strategies.<sup>24</sup> As has been shown in key studies in news discourse, lexical items such as migrants or climate-migrants are not "context-independent" units per se.<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, as the articles in this issue demonstrate, they are heavily "context- and cotext-dependent" and have to be described according to their functions in discourse, to their reliance on previous scripts, shared meaning and beliefs.<sup>26</sup> These may be realized as stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates.<sup>27</sup> The articles in this issue show how the consistent occurrence and prominence of a set of topics influences the implicit/explicit portraval of climate-induced migrants in news discourse. Such discourse domains have been relatively resistant to alternative framings. Unfortunately, news reporters often rely on prior reports in the same sphere (i.e., with those who have previously taken a stand with respect to an issue) and draw upon familiar images and language patterns to construct a discursive framework of alignment and rapport through which readers may be affected. Based on the premise that the power of news media discourse lies in the repetition and incremental effect of images and language patterns, which may be closely examined to reveal presuppositions, cultural stereotypes and ideological inferences in discourse, this special issue investigates the variation and change of familiar and seemingly new terms, discourses and ideologies within and across national borders.

The articles draw upon findings in the field of Critical Discourse Studies in order to analyse the representation of climate-induced migration in news discourse. News discourse has recently offered fertile ground for the combination of Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics. The use of quantitative techniques, such as keyword searches, concordance and collocational analysis using specialized corpus software, has been fruitfully combined with qualitative approaches to investigate concordances and collocations of the terms 'refugee(s)' and 'asylum seeker(s)' in large corpora.<sup>28</sup> Drawing upon these seminal studies, the articles in this issue take into account the following levels of analysis: frequency of language patterns, the level of the text, the relation between different texts and discourses, the context in which texts are produced and the wider historical and political context.<sup>29</sup> Although differently, they situate the quantitative analysis of language patterns and the qualitative analysis of a wide range of linguistic discursive strategies within a wider analytical framework which includes extra-linguistic social/sociological variables and situational frames.

More specifically, the discourse about climate-induced migration as a humanitarian crisis and adaptation, mitigation and resilience is addressed by several authors in this special issue as a cosmopolitan problem, which transcends borders. The opening article by Cinzia Bevitori and Jane Helen Johnson focuses on whether any significant discursive shifts may be identified in North-American and British quality newspaper discourse over the period of 2010-2017 through a critical diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analytical perspective, with interesting findings on the gradual shift of the discourse of adaptation from positive to negative. On the other hand, Massimiliano Demata analyses the discursive strategies used by the online editions of two leading newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, uncovering an important power imbalance between climate change refugees and host countries: host countries provide climate change refugees in terms of figures or metaphors of natural disasters communicates the idea of a dangerous phenomenon which should be controlled.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 54-55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Paul Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press", *Discourse and Society*, 19.3 (2008), 273-306.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, Society and Discourse: How Social Contexts Influence Text and Talk (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, Discourse and Discrimination.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy?".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*.

Terminological variation in news discourse is addressed by most articles in this issue. The choice between migrant and refugee as a cause of terminological confusion through which climate-induced migration is often construed, is addressed by Mirko Casagranda who adopts a discourse-historical approach when analysing the referential strategies by *BBC News Online*. He demonstrates that, by preferring 'refugee' to 'migrant', the Corporation frames social actors from a humanitarian perspective. Anna Mongibello addresses the terminological definition of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Canadian context and argues that in Canadian news discourse displacement is framed as an environmental rather than a climate-induced event. Antonio Fruttaldo, instead, focuses primarily on the complex legal challenges associated with climate change-induced displacement under international law and how it is popularised on the web.

The special issue aptly closes with two articles which strongly challenge the practice of news construction. Francesca Vigo argues that the shift towards infotainment in many news outlets may be the reason for the specific aesthetic visual representation of climate-induced migration. Nina Venkataraman illustrates how elite newspapers remain silent and mute discussions on climate-induced migration. She argues that while climate change is a global phenomenon and climate-induced refugees are "the human face for the glocal effects of climate change", climate-induced refugees are framed as a problem confined to the developing and least developed countries. In this light, the representation of climate change and climate-induced migrants in news discourse may be read as an example of the fantasy of border control.

Cinzia Bevitori and Jane Helen Johnson

# Human Mobility and Climate Change at the Crossroad. A Diachronic Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis of the Nexus in UK and US Newspaper Discourse

Abstract: While climate change has gradually and crucially become a 'defining symbol' of our mutual relationship with the environment, an investigation of its role in complex, multi-causal phenomena of human mobility has emerged as a salient policy-making issue only during the last years, with the period between the Cancun negotiations of the UNFCCC in 2010 and the 2015 Paris negotiations representing a crucial moment in policy making as regards the climate change and migration nexus. The purpose of the article is to explore representations of migration and displacement in the context of anthropogenic climate change in newspaper discourse through a critical diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analytical perspective. For the purpose of this study, a diachronic, domain-specific corpus of newspaper articles from a selection of UK and US broadsheets has been gathered through the Nexis online searchable database. Particular attention is placed on whether any significant discursive shifts may be identified in newspaper discourse over the periods concerned to coincide with a change in focus from 'climate refugees' to migration as adaptation.

Keywords: climate change, migration, diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analysis, SFL, CDA

#### 1. Introduction

The relation between human mobility and climate change has received ever-growing attention in the public sphere over the last decades. While as early as the 1990s, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlighted the potential "threatening short-term" effects of climate change on migration and resettlement in its first Assessment Report,<sup>1</sup> it was not until twenty years later with the adoption of the Cancun Agreement in 2010 (COP16) that countries formally identified "climate change-induced migration, displacement and relocation" as among major challenges the world would face in order to adapt to a warmer planet.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it was then that the climate-migration nexus significantly emerged at the top of the international agenda, contributing to "a distinct era of policy making".<sup>3</sup>

While climate-induced human mobility broadly refers to the movement of people due to changes in the climate,<sup>4</sup> research has recently suggested that the concept 'climate-induced' per se is highly

<sup>4</sup> Emily Wilkinson et al., "Climate-induced Migration and Displacement: Closing the Policy Gap", Report (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2016), https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10996.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> IPCC 1990, 5-9. The IPCC is an intergovernmental body set up by the World Meteorological Organization and the UN Environmental Programme in 1988 tasked with the assessment of the science related to climate change. See Cinzia Bevitori, *Representations of Climate Change. News and Opinion Discourse in UK and US Quality Press: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study* (Bologna: Bononia U.P., 2010), 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "Report of the Conference of the Parties in its Sixteenth Session, Held in Cancun from 29 November to 10 December 2010" (2011), 5, art. 14 (f), https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf; see also Koko Warner, "Human migration and displacement in the context of adaptation to climate change: the Cancun Adaptation Framework and potential for future action", *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 30 (2012).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Sarah L. Nash, "From Cancun to Paris: An Era of Policy Making on Climate Change and Migration", *Global Policy*, 9.1 (2017), 53-63.

controversial as it points to many different factors, contributing at different levels to their interrelation.<sup>5</sup> First of all, no clear-cut distinction can be drawn between core definitions of who counts as a 'migrant', a 'refugee', or a 'displaced person' within this context. In particular, classifying a refugee as a 'climate' refugee is problematic for a number of reasons. Indeed, according to the 1951 United Nations' "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees" – the key legal document formally setting out the status of people in need for protection – 'refugee' is defined as a person leaving his [*sic*] country of residence due to "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion",<sup>6</sup> but no environmental or climatic reasons are mentioned. This highlights the fact that any definition of 'climate refugee' or 'environmental refugee' is rather slippery, facing not only a crucial semantic problem but also a normative one. In fact, as Bettini suggests, climate-induced migration may be best seen as a "floating signifier";<sup>7</sup> a concept which, due to its high indeterminacy, is more susceptible to acquiring distinct meanings in distinct contexts.<sup>8</sup>

A further important aspect of the debate is the dividing line between 'forced' or 'voluntary' migration, which is somewhat hazy due to the fact that any decision people take to move may involve both aspects and therefore a simple dichotomization is, again, conceptually challenging.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the notion 'climate-induced' in describing patterns of movement within this context is seen as problematic also because it tends to obfuscate the intrinsically complex and "multi-causal" nature of the phenomenon, which involves a number of interrelated social, political, economic and cultural dimensions which may be difficult to disentangle.<sup>10</sup>

The aim of this paper is thus to explore the linguistic and discursive representations of human mobility in the context of climate change in a purpose-built corpus of UK and US news articles in the span of time between the Cancun negotiations of the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in November 2010, and the follow-up to the 2015 Paris negotiations, held in Marrakech in 2016, to the present day in order to trace patterns of change/stability occurring at the boundary of three distinct 'critical discourse moments'.<sup>11</sup> As a crucial site of the struggle over meanings, media are seen to play a pivotal role in shaping public perception and opinion of science, policy and institutional actors,<sup>12</sup> and more specifically here, in the social construction of critical issues, such as human mobility in the context of environmental-related problems. However, while the role of the social, political and cultural context of climate-induced migration is now widely established, language choices shaping these

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Jane McAdam, "Introduction", in Jane McAdam, ed., *Climate Change and Displacement, Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (Oxford and Portland: Oregon, 2010), 1-8; Benoit Mayer and François Crépeau, eds., *Research Handbook on Climate Change, Migration and the Law* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> UNHCR, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees" (1951), art. 1, par. 2, http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Giovanni Bettini, "(In)convenient Convergences: 'Climate Refugees', Apocalyptic Discourses and the Depoliticization of the Debate on Climate-induced Migration", in Chris Methmann et al., eds., *Interpretive Approaches to Global Climate Governance* (London: Routledge, 2013), 123. Bettini draws on Laclau's work, see Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The term 'floating signifier', or 'empty signifier', was coined by Claude Lévy-Strauss in the 1950s. See also Katherine E. Russo, "Floating Signifiers. Transnational Affect Flows", in Andrew Baldwin and Giovanni Bettini, eds., *Life Adrift: Climate Change, Migration, Critique* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 195-201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> McAdam, "Introduction", 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Foresight, "Migration and Global Environmental Change", Final Project Report (London: The Government Office for Science, 2011), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/287717/11-1116-migration-and-global-environmental-change.pdf; see also Etienne Piguet and Frank Laczko, eds., *People on the Move in a Changing Climate: The Regional Impact of Environmental Change on Migration* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Anabela Carvalho, "Media(Ted) Discourse and Society", Journalism Studies, 9.2 (2008), 161-177.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Maxwell T. Boykoff, *Who Speaks for the Climate? Making Sense of Media Reporting on Climate Change* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

discourses should also be emphasized. The aim of our research and the diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analytical approach proposed, in line with extensive research combining critical discourse analysis with corpus-assisted methodologies,<sup>13</sup> is to develop a broader understanding of the ways in which discourses of human mobility are produced and reproduced in the media debate. In addition, our focus here on the US and UK press separately highlights whether language choices with regard to climate change are common to some of the most widely read English-language newspapers or whether there are any fundamental differences in representation.

#### 2. Corpus and Methods

This study follows a corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) approach, according to which texts are collected in electronic form and queried using corpus software to extract quantitative information providing starting points for a more qualitative, manual analysis.<sup>14</sup> This means looking beyond the concordance line to the expanded co-text and the whole article as well as outside the text itself, to the widened context, gathering data through different strategies and research procedures, as well as testing findings where necessary against external data sources with the aim of detecting patterns of ideological meaning across texts and contexts.<sup>15</sup> Our discourse-analytical approach involves drawing on elements of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as well as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly as regards the transitivity patterns encountered in relation to our node words. In SFL, patterns of transitivity relate to the analysis of the experiential meaning in the clause, and choices made at the lexico-grammatical level include selecting processes, participants and circumstances.<sup>16</sup> The purpose of the analysis is thus to identify 'what is going on', as well as tracing the role of the participants involved in the events, as will be explained in a later section.

In order to investigate climate change discourses at the interface with migration in the press diachronically, we used the Lexis-Nexis interface to access all articles containing the node words "climate change" and/or *migra*\* and or/*refugee*\*<sup>17</sup> in *The Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph* as regards UK newspapers, broadsheets representative of the political left and the conservative party respectively; and from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, representative of the liberal and the conservative United States press. The articles were selected and stored for three distinct periods coinciding with the Conferences of the Parties to the UNFCCC. The first (Period I) spans the 5 years between the Cancun conference and the Paris conference, Period II covers one year between Paris and Marrakech, and Period III one year following Marrakech up to the time of writing (29/11/2017).

The articles were stored electronically after discarding irrelevant and/or duplicate texts and removing metadata. The whole corpus amounts to 476 articles in the region of 552,700 running words. The number of articles and total word count of each part of the US and UK sub-corpora is shown in Table 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> For an overview and inter alia see Gerlinde Mautner, "Checks and Balances: How Corpus Linguistics Can Contribute to CDA", in Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Sage, 2009), 122-143; Paul Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press", *Discourse and Society*, 19.3 (2008), 273–306.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Alan Partington, "Modern-diachronic Corpus-assisted Discourse Studies", Corpora, 5.2 (2010).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Michael Stubbs, "Grammar, Text, and Ideology: Computer-assisted Methods in the Linguistics of Representation", *Applied Linguistics*, 15.2 (1994), 201-221; See also Cinzia Bevitori, "Values, Assumptions and Beliefs in British Newspaper Editorial Coverage of Climate Change", in Chris Hart and Piotr Cap, eds., *Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 603-625.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Michael A. K. Halliday and Christian M. I. M. Matthiesen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Arnold, 2004). <sup>17</sup> The asterisk is used as a wildcard character to access word forms of the lemma. The \* replaces any letter or letters found in that position, so that *refugee*\* will return texts including both *refugee* and *refugees*.

Corpus /period	US sub	-corpus	UK sub	o-corpus
	no. articles	Word count	no. articles	Word count
Period I (29/11/2010 -29/11/2015)	133	151,942	105	108,230
Period II (30/11/2015 – 6/11/2016)	65	93,176	47	43,759
Period III (7/11/2016-29/11 <sup>/</sup> 2017)	92	119,989	34	35,605
Totals	290	365,107	186	187,594

Table 1. Articles and word count of the US and UK sub-corpora

We then made an initial quantitative analysis of the US and the UK sub-corpora, using a combination of corpus-assisted software tools such as WordSmith 6.0 and SketchEngine, beginning with wordlists to identify frequent terms and highlight areas of further interest.<sup>18</sup> The search terms *migra*\* and *refugee*\* themselves offered starting points for further analysis, since they represent some of the issues and the participants involved with climate change. A preliminary investigation of the collocational profile of the search words across the three periods was conducted in order to identify paths worth exploring. To do this, we took into consideration words commonly co-occurring with the node word with a certain frequency and within a given word-span of 10 words to the left and right of the node. Collocates were selected according to parameters with a z-score (i.e., a statistical calculation measuring the strength of collocation of an item with the node word) greater than 3 and an absolute frequency of at least 3. A detailed examination of the extended concordance lines was done with the aim of identifying dominant motifs around the climate-migration nexus across periods, bearing in mind cross-disciplinary literature relating to the issue. Prior to our research, in fact, and in line with CADS practice, extensive reading was done of climate change literature from a variety of sources including the reports themselves.

In the following section, we give quantitative details of the US and UK sub-corpora. We then discuss the UK and the US sub-corpora separately at first as regards the node words investigated, and typical discourses emerging across periods, before comparing and summarising the information gained in relation to the whole corpus.

#### 3. Quantitative Analysis

In this section we begin with a brief description of the quantitative data, first presenting details of subcorpus contents and then the occurrences of word forms across sub-corpora.

Not unexpectedly, the newspapers of a left-leaning political orientation in our corpus were more concerned with the issue of climate change than the more conservative newspapers, which meant that greater attention was given to the topic. The *Daily Telegraph* (DTELE) for example had only 10 articles on the topic of climate change with the selection criteria required, compared with 176 articles in *The Guardian* (GUA). Similarly, *The Washington Post* (WP) had 36 articles compared with 254 in *The New York Times* (NYT). As regards quantification, this has been taken into account by using relative frequencies throughout. Any skewing of results due to the smaller number of articles in the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Washington Post* has duly been taken into consideration in reporting the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Mike Scott, *WordSmith Tools*, version 6 (Stroud: Lexical Analysis Software, 2012); Adam Kilgarriff et al., "The Sketch Engine", in Geoffrey Williams and Sandra Vessier, eds., *Proceedings of the 11th EURALEX International Congress* (Lorient: Université de Bretagne-Sud, 2004), 105-115.

findings.

Table 2 shows the relative frequency of the lexemes  $migra^*$  and  $refugee^*$  across the four newspapers in the sub-corpora, divided according to the three periods considered.



Table 2. Relative frequencies of the lemmas migra\*/refugee\* across the UK/US press according to period

Relative frequencies of *refugee*\* tend to rise slightly in Period II, corresponding to the outbreak of the Syrian refugee crisis in both the UK and US sub-corpora. The behaviour of *migra*\* is rather different however, with a marked decline in the UK sub-corpus in Period II. While the US sub-corpus shows a fairly stable trend for both lexemes across the periods, a comparison of the relative figures shows an almost specular trend as regards the UK sub-corpus. Though starting out and finishing at almost the same level, Period II shows a dip in the number of occurrences of *migra*\* corresponding to an almost identical rise in *refugee*\*.

Closer investigation shows a higher frequency throughout of the noun form relating to the issue of migration compared with the noun referring to the people. While we have already mentioned the decline in incidences of *migra*\* as a whole during Period II, the biggest drop in Period II is in the incidence of the noun forms migration and – to a lesser extent – the reference to migrant/s the people, while less variation is found in the verb and adjective forms. This contrasts with the analysis of word forms on the US sub-corpus, which shows a gradual decline of all word forms over time. As regards the lemma *refugee*\*, the noun form *refugee/s* is more frequent than the premodifying noun throughout in the UK sub-corpus, a sign that the newspapers are talking about the people more often than the issue. However, there is a gradual decline in occurrences of the nouns in these articles from 2010 to the present, corresponding to a rise in the occurrence of *refugee* as premodifying noun as from Period II. In contrast, in the US while the noun form tends to increase slightly from 0.09 to 0.14 in Period II, it shows a sharp decline to 0.03 in Period III. The premodifying noun is less frequent but more stable, over the periods.

The following section presents a qualitative analysis of the node words presented above.

# 4. Contextualizing Data: Discourses around 'Migration', 'Migrants' and 'Refugees' across Time

'Climate-induced migration' may be defined as an umbrella concept entailing representations of migration, migrants and refugees. In this section, we aim at a comparative linguistic and discursive analysis of the most frequent word forms of *migra*\* and *refugee*\* across the three periods in order to explore how these items function in the construal of particular identities and discourses within their respective national outlets. Extracts are taken from all the four broadsheets in the UK and US sub-corpora as detailed in the previous section.

While relying on the notion of 'critical discourse moments', as explained in the introduction, provides us with a viable, or reasonable, way of dividing up the corpus to meet our research questions, it must be noted that we do not intend to suggest or imply that any shifts in discursive patterns of human migration have taken place at the edge of these 'critical' events; stability might be 'disturbed' either gradually or by sudden events and for a variety of reasons.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, considering that "no consistent discourse on climate change and migration has emerged from which to develop policy responses", we might also expect this to be reflected in media discourse.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, we will try to interpret the linguistic traces in the texts we examine in an attempt to map any changes in the representations of discourse over time. Since our focus is on diachronic changes, we will naturally begin by examining the first period, noting some characteristics which may or may not be carried over in subsequent periods. This analysis will give impetus for a more thematic progression, as different elements of interest arise across the UK and US sub-corpora.

#### 4.1 What's in a Name? Climate Refugees or Climate Migrants?

#### 4.1.1 UK Press

We mentioned in the introduction the problems associated with the use of the term *climate (change) refugee*. Beyond the critical normative quibble, this representational choice acts as a form of identification, which may be ideologically burdened.<sup>21</sup> In fact, as some scholars highlight, climate change refugees tend to be portrayed either as 'victims' or 'terrorists': two opposing narratives which are seen to misrepresent the complex nature of the phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> In the UK press, 25% of the occurrences of the noun form of *refugee*\* are premodified by *climate (change)* in Period I, slightly fewer with 20% in Period II. There is a higher frequency in Period I of instances between inverted commas, suggesting self-styled names or new coinages emerging from particular situations, as in the following:

Dire predictions of waves of forced climate change "refugees" have been made for more than 20 years. (I\_GUA: 04/02/2011)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Bevitori and Jane Helen Johnson (forthcoming), "Exploring Diachronicity in Specialized Corpora to Investigate Discourse: The Case of Climate-induced Migration".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Nash, "From Cancun to Paris", 54.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Theo van Leeuwen, "The Representation of Social Actors", in Carmen R. Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard, eds., *Text and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 32-70; see also Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse: The Case of Climate Change and Migration* (Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Alex Randall, "Either Victims or Terrorists", *New Internationalist* (8 December 2017), https://newint.org/blog/2017/12/08/climate-migrants-media.

We first hear about an attempt to apply for legal protection as 'climate refugee' in relation to the Geneva Convention in Period I:

A man from a tiny South Pacific island has asked a court in New Zealand to recognise his family as climate change refugees, saying they face "serious harm" if they return. (I\_GUA: 17/10/2013)

This particular application was ultimately dismissed, yet the polemics continue and there is a sense that changes are taking place on a legal level, as by Period III we read the following proposal:

New Zealand considers creating climate change refugee visas; Minister says experimental humanitarian visa category could be introduced for people displaced by rising seas. (III\_GUA: 31/10/2017)

And indeed association is much stronger in Period III, where 50% of the noun forms of *refugee*\* are premodified by *climate (change)*. While Wilkinson et al. claim that actors and experts in the climate change field are now ceasing to use the term 'climate refugee', we cannot say this is true in the UK press.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, as we have seen, in Period III we are much more likely to find refugees described as *climate (change) refugees* than in the earlier periods.

Migrants instead rarely appear with any qualification. This is perhaps not surprising, given the multi-causality of migration.<sup>24</sup> In Period I, 25% of occurrences of *migrant* that have any qualification at all are described in relation to the type: *economic* (8), with *climate change migrants* (3) appearing towards the very end of Period I. In the same period they are occasionally described as *forced* or *illegal*. Instead, migrants are hardly ever further described in Period II and III, and when they are it is in relation to their origin (Ethiopian in Period II and African in Period III). So there appears to be less need as time goes on to label migrants than refugees.

Refugees mentioned in Period I are mainly identified through their provenance, such as Afghan, Syrian, Rohingya and Somali. More specifically labelled 'climate change refugees' include America's first *climate refugees* in Alaska, as well as those from Bangladesh, and the Pacific. On another seven occasions, we have *refugee*/s co-occurring with word forms of *displace*. As discussed in Nash, forced movement is usually described as 'displacement', while 'migration' tends instead to be used for voluntary movement.<sup>25</sup> In the UK sub-corpus however, *migration* sometimes also co-occurs with *forced* in Period I. As in the case of refugees, *migration* also co-occurs with large numbers (e.g., *mass*) and this is increasingly the case through the periods. Indeed, 12% of all incidences of *migra\** in Period I (16% in Period II and 24% in Period III) co-occur with large numbers, in line with Baker et al. and Russo's findings that large numbers are the most consistent co-association, creating a sense of objectivity though factual sources and specific figures are rarely cited.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, there is little consensus about the extent to which such numbers correspond to fact,<sup>27</sup> and this is picked up in an early article in *The Guardian* quoting the International Institute for Environment and Development which disputes the cause-and-effect nexus between climate change and migration:

"The studies give no reason to think that environmental degradation linked to climate change will result in large flows of international migrants," says a senior researcher with the (IIED) in London. (I\_GUA: 04/02/2011)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Wilkinson, "Climate-induced Migration and Displacement", 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Foresight, "Migration and Global Environmental Change", 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Nash, "From Cancun to Paris", 58.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy?", 273–306; Russo, "Floating Signifiers", 195-201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Kate Burrows and Patrick L. Kinney, "Exploring the Climate Change, Migration and Conflict Nexus", *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*, 13.4 (2016), 443; Wilkinson, *Migration*, 3-4.

Whereas there was an increasing tendency over time to associate word forms *migra*<sup>\*</sup> with large numbers, the opposite is true for *refugee*<sup>\*</sup>. For example, 20% of occurrences of *refugee*<sup>\*</sup> in Period I are marked by some sort of reference to large numbers, a typical example being:

A concern for humanitarian groups is how to deal with long-term refugees or displaced people who are unlikely to return home – more than 20 million refugees are trapped in protracted exile. (I\_GUA: 16/10/2012)

Instead, 14% of occurrences of *refugee*\* co-occurred with large numbers in Period II and only 7% in Period III. To sum up, the use of the large number factor increases over time with regard to *migra*\* but decreases with regard to *refugee*\*. Perhaps we could conclude from this that we have evidence of a gradual shift from the standard images of the 'barbarians at the gate' arriving in their hordes, once applied to refugees and now to migrants.<sup>28</sup> This is also evident in the transitivity patterns associated with migrants and refugees across the periods. Verbs co-selected with migrants as Object in Period I include '*died*' and '*been killed*', but apart from these associations, which might give rise to an empathetic response, we have migrants viewed as a problem, being a burden, compelled to leave, dumped on impoverished states. Where migrants are the grammatical Subject, they are mainly associated with verbs of movement ('*arriving*', '*leaving*' their countries, '*heading for*'), or '*battling*' to stay. In Period II they are welcomed rather than criminalised – but it then emerges that the second is the status quo, the first verb is just a radical idea. In Period III migrants both as Subject and Object are mainly associated with verbs of movement.

In Period I, at first glance verbs associated with refugees as grammatical Object look positive. *'welcome'* figures highly but a closer look shows that refugees are welcomed – but only if they are *'deserving'* and not *'illegal'* or *'queue-jumpers'*, while the politicians who welcome them are *'brave'*. Verbs co-occurring with refugees in Period II tend to have negative associations (*'rape'*, *'abuse'*, *'imprison'*, *'treated with suspicion'*). Verbs of giving/taking are frequent: refugees are *'received'*, countries *'take them in'*. This is probably due to the focus on the Syrian refugee crisis at this time. A continuation of this 'taking in' occurs in Period III, where many verbs associated with refugees as grammatical Object refer to housing (or lack of): *'evict'*, *'house'*, *'accommodate'*. Like migrants, refugees as Subject occur with verbs of movement (*'arriving'*, *'fleeing'*, *'heading'*, *'spilling'*, *'ending up'*) throughout the periods.

When *migrant*\* co-occurs with another participant, it is mainly found together with *refugee/s* (in 14% of cases in Period I), as in the following:

Much less has been said about the macroeconomic push factors compelling migrants and refugees to leave their homelands and what we might do to address them. (I\_GUA: 13/07/2015)

*The Guardian* quotes Labour's Diane Abbott putting the relationship between migrants and refugees into words:

I would remind you, thousands of people crossing the Sahara, risking their lives in the Mediterranean, coming over the Balkans, are also economic migrants and we do not want to fall into the error of thinking that refugees are in some sense a class of migrant more deserving of our sympathy. (I\_GUA: 05/11/2015)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Bettini, "Climate Barbarians at the Gate? A Critique of Apocalyptic Narratives on 'Climate Refugees'", *Geoforum*, 45 (2013), 63-72.

However, the association between migrants and refugees in the UK press gradually becomes weaker, with only 9% of occurrences of *migrants* associated with *refugees* in Period II, and 5% in Period III, suggesting a gradual divergence between the two identities. It is also worthy of note that *refugees* are less strongly associated with *migrants* than *migrants* are with *refugees*. Just 6% (16) of all mentions of *refugees* occur with *migrants* in Period I, with even fewer in Period II and Period III. So basically, while in the period Cancun to Paris, discourses around migrants was quite likely to include refugees, this probability levelled out in later discourse, while refugees tended to have their own separate discourse throughout.

#### 4.1.2 US Press

Unlike in the UK press, analysis of the collocation behaviour of the lemma *migra*\* in the US subcorpus across periods shows a very high incidence of items relating to animal/wildlife migration, amounting to 40% of all instances across the three periods; typical collocates, in fact, include *assisted*, *patterns*, *routes*, *bird*/*s*, and *butterflies*, amongst many others, as the following example illustrates:

Birds are migrating earlier and earlier each year, and scientists have long suspected that climate change is responsible. A new study by researchers at the University of East Anglia in England shows that individual birds migrate like clockwork, but nesting and hatching are happening earlier as a result of warmer temperatures, and this appears to be linked to the advancing of overall migration patterns. (I\_NYT: 19/11/2013)

The focus of *The New York Times* on migration in relation to wildlife issues is clearly indicative of a higher sensitivity to environmental issues of this outlet as compared to both *The Washington Post* and the UK newspapers; however, as regards human mobility, the collocational behaviour of the most frequent word forms in the US sub-corpus – both nouns 'refugees' and 'migrants' – shows a semantic preference for quantification (*million, millions, number, thousands*), verbs and nouns related to movement (e.g., *fleeing, fled, heading, scrambling*), as well as lexical expressions tending to construe human mobility through water metaphor, such as *flow, flood, influx, waves*.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, in spite of a higher incidence of these lexical resources in Period I, its consistent use is clearly instrumental in creating emotionally charged strategies of collectivization, and at the same time, dehumanization of the individuals moving, or being forced to move. What is more, the association between migrants and refugees, suggesting mutually exclusive categories, is definitely stronger in 2015 and 2016, thus temporally covering the last part of Period I and throughout Period II, which is seen to coincide with the 'refugee crisis'. Although these meaning patterns are quite stable over time, a number of differences emerge as regards the construal of human mobility in the US press.

In the period between Cancun and Paris, which covers the largest span of time, 'migrant' is typically co-selected with 'Europe', as well as Middle Eastern countries such as 'Syria', 'Turkey', 'Jordan', 'Lebanon'. In particular 'Europe', as a participant in the clause, represents the main place of destination of migrants, thus pointing to discourses of cross-border displacement. What is more and at closer inspection, when the lemma 'migrant' occurs as Subject, it typically co-occurs with verbs such as *flee, heading, crossing, scrambling*, suggesting a type of hurried movement that involves escaping difficult life situations; however, representations of migrants commodified as Objects or 'goods' is not infrequent as the following example illustrates:

And most of the growth will come from the poor, strife-ridden regions of the world that have been sending migrants scrambling to Europe in search of safety and a better life. (I\_NYT: 16/09/2015)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> See also Russo, "Floating Signifiers", 195-201.

While highlighting some of the potential problems (including costs) the mass movement of people may be creating in countries of destination, the US press tends to identify migrants moving in order to improve their living conditions. In fact, the frequent co-occurrence of 'migrant' both as a premodifier of 'workers' (7) and as a noun modified by adjectives such as 'economic' (5) is a clear indication of the specific semantic construal of the migrant identity:

As Africa and the Middle East continue to warm and wars rage, economic migrants and war refugees are making perilous journeys to flee to Europe. (I\_NYT: 13/09/2015)

In contrast, as can be evinced from the above extract, the analysis of the lexical item 'refugees' shows that the word is typically associated with words in the semantic field of 'war'; however, words relating to the 'environment' are also present. To begin with, 'drought' is one of the most frequent premodifiers of 'refugees'. However, in contrast with representations of 'refugees' as people 'escaping war and persecution', according to the 1951 UN Convention, 'drought' refugees, or the semantically related 'environmental' refugees, as a preferred lexical choice in this period, does not point to cross-border movement but, rather, to the internal movement of people, in particular from rural to urban areas. Indeed, dry weather, desertification, water and food shortages are posited as main drivers for the violent uprisings of the Arab springs since 2011 as well as one of the consequences of the Assad regime's failure to cope with the problem. The following is a typical example:

"Half the population in Syria between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers left the land" for urban areas during the last decade, said Aita. And with Assad doing nothing to help the drought refugees, a lot of very simple farmers and their kids got politicized. (I\_NYT: 19/03/2013)

Although the link between human mobility due to environmental problems, such as droughts, water/food shortages, and conflict is already present, it becomes more frequent in the period witnessing the emergence of the 2015 refugee crisis:

"Vulnerability is increasing," Mr. Zamudio added. Extreme events will occur "more often and stronger" and "you will have more people affected by climate change," he said. The council report exposes another dimension of pressure on humanitarian agencies. They are already struggling to cope with about 60 million people driven from their homes by conflict or persecution at a time when Western countries are showing a growing hostility to immigrants. (I\_NYT: 21/05/2015)

Expressions of fears and concern about the likelihood of the situation to aggravate, due to climatic events, are indeed very frequent in this period; moreover, the use of intensifiers such as 'increasing' and 'growing' tends to construe an atmosphere of doom. Interestingly, since a corpus-discourse analytical approach allows the researcher to triangulate between concordances, texts and data, corpus evidence shows that 'security' appears as a strong collocate of 'climate' in Period I, in contrast to the other two (79% of instances of 'security' are co-selected with 'climate'), hinting that discourses of 'securitization' tend to prevail. Climate change is, in fact, represented as a security 'threat' and, more specifically, as a 'national' one: the adjective 'national' emerges as the strongest modifier of 'security' (14), particularly during President Obama's last mandate:

The accelerating rate of climate change poses a severe risk to national security and acts as a catalyst for global political conflict, a report published Tuesday by a leading government-funded military research organization concluded. (I\_NYT: 14/05/2014)

It must be mentioned that, in contrast to later periods, instances of 'climate refugee' appear only sporadically in this period. However, those instances are closely related to a restricted number of geographical areas, in particular in South Asia and, more specifically, to those people/communities living in vulnerable areas and deeply affected by extreme weather conditions (e.g., Bangladesh or the Philippines), which, despite not contributing to gas emissions, are paying the costs of developed countries.

#### 4.2. Discourses of Adaptation and Resilience

#### 4.2.1 UK Press: Good, Dad or the 'new normal'?

There are a number of articles in Period I in the UK press in which migration is positively evaluated. For example, it is highlighted as a solution, perhaps as a result of such framing in the influential Foresight Report (2011), and in contrast to "most governments and international agencies" who, unfortunately "tend to see migration as a problem that needs to be controlled instead of a key part of the solution" (I\_GUA: 04/02/2011). Migration in Period I is also reported as a "good way of dealing with the imminent effects of climate change", or "no 'crisis': it's the new normal as the climate changes", "the beginning of a new paradigm", and "a valuable adaptive response", as in the following:

"Migration can be a good option - it is a way of adapting to climate change", said Neil Adger, professor of environmental economics at the University of East Anglia. (I\_GUA: 20/10/2011)

The narrative of migration as adaptation develops out of seeing migration as resilience,<sup>30</sup> whereby the onus is placed on the individual to find a coping mechanism, shifting responsibility away from those countries producing most of the causes of climate change onto the individuals in the global South.<sup>31</sup> In the UK sub-corpus, word forms of *adapt*\* are frequent in Period I (0.05) and even more so in Period III (0.07), these later articles often featuring a critical note to highlight the problems involved with adaptation, such as costs.

Interestingly, though in a few cases only, the people involved are not just those in remote countries but also in the UK:

because migration might be a form of adaptation many Britons may also have to consider. According to the Environment Agency, 7,000 British properties may be lost to rising sea levels over the next century. These people too will need to be relocated. (I\_GUA: 18/08/2015)

As in this example, adaptation often involves 'relocation' or resettlement' and these lemmas appear with particular frequency in Period II (*relocat*\* 0.07 and *resettl*\* 0.05). While *resettl*\* is particularly connected to Australia's relations with the Pacific Islanders, as well as internal movements within the US (Louisiana), *relocat*\* often refers to the situation in Alaska. Though most migration after disasters due to climate change disasters takes place internally,<sup>32</sup> the UK media focuses on internal migration much less often (only 10%, 3% and 15% of mentions of *migration* in each period) than cross-border or otherwise unspecified migration, throughout the periods considered.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Richard Black et al., "Climate Change: Migration as Adaptation", *Nature*, 478 (2011), 447–449; Bettini, "Where Next? Climate Change, Migration, and the (Bio)politics of Adaptation", *Global Policy*, 8.1 (2017), 33–39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Romain Felli and Noel Castree, "Commentary: Neoliberalising Adaptation to Climate Change: Foresight or Foreclosure?", *Environment and Planning A*, 44 (2012), 1-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Burrows and Kinney, "Exploring the Climate Change", 443.

The words co-occurring with *migration* and their connotations in the UK sub-corpus show a more positive focus in Period I, with migration being 'not simply a problem', 'a good way', and even becoming 'normalised':

Thanks to global climate change, mass migration could be the new normal. (I\_GUA: 18/08/2015)

However, *migration* is increasingly mentioned over time in association with negative words and phrases including frequent co-occurrences of 'massive forced migration', 'the last option', 'mass forced', 'unprecedented migration' in Period III, as in the following example:

and the forced migration of tens of millions of people across the region, overwhelming security forces and government. (III\_GUA: 10/08/2017)

The normalisation of migration, whereby what seemed to be a crisis or a catastrophe eventually gets to be "perceived as part of the normal run of things",<sup>33</sup> is no longer presented as a remote hypothesis but as a certainty, and once more in connection with security issues. References to security in the UK press tend to be more general, as exemplified in the following extract in *The Guardian* in Period III attributed to external sources:

Climate change is set to cause a refugee crisis of "unimaginable scale", according to senior military figures, who warn that global warming is the greatest security threat of the 21st century and that mass migration will become the "new normal". (III\_GUA: 01/12/2016)

Such a pessimistic narrative begins much earlier in the *Daily Telegraph*, however, with a typical excerpt from Period I being:

The impact of climate change and degradation of land and oceans will play an increasingly important role in migration as its impact on people's livelihoods grows ever greater. (I\_DTELE: 20/10/2011)

Though mainly in a single article presenting the catastrophic consequences of climate change, doomladen language accompanies most of the occurrences of migration here, all suggesting it is a problem due to the large numbers, on a biblical scale, a crisis in terms of its scale and severity, and something to be dealt with. Such phrases contribute to creating a discourse of migration as a threat.<sup>34</sup> The creation of anxiety and the feeling of impending catastrophe in this example (e.g. repetition of 'warn', 'impact', repeated use of the modal 'will') helps to form "apocalyptic narratives [which] reinforce the representation of migration as a threatening dysfunction".<sup>35</sup> Migration represented in this way is something to be guarded against and from here it is easy to make connections with security issues.<sup>36</sup> This trend, as some scholars argue,<sup>37</sup> tends to occur within the "institutional framework of neoliberal capitalism", planned to control the uncertainties and unsteadiness associated with climate change. The narrative of the *Daily Telegraph* continues to report the problems caused by migrants in terms of 'pouring over the borders', 'sleeping rough', appearing in large numbers, and being 'bussed to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010), 378.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Bettini, "Where Next?", 33–39; Nigel Clark and Giovanni Bettini, "Floods' of Migrants, Flows of Care: Between Climate Displacement and Global Care Chains", *The Sociological Review Monographs*, Special Issue: "Care and Policy Practices", Natalie Gill et al., eds., 65.2 (2017), 36-54; Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy?", 273–306.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Bettini, "(In)convenient Convergences", 130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Bettini, "Where Next?", 33–39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Daniel Faber and Christina Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm: Framing the Climate Refugee Crisis in the Context of Neoliberal Capitalism", *Capitalism Nature* Socialism, 28.3 (2017), 1-17.

temporary accommodation'. Such discourse is typical of that identified by Baker et al. as regards migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and is not unsurprising for this conservative newspaper.<sup>38</sup> As we said above, there are very few articles about climate change in the *Daily Telegraph* but it is telling that most have this negative slant. Instead, such discourse is not unexpectedly less prominent in *The Guardian*, though as we have seen in the latest period *The Guardian* also presents a number of examples of this view.

#### 4.2.2 US Press: America's Displaced

In the period after the Paris negotiations and before Marrakech, a significant shift is observed in the US sub-corpus. First of all, the premodifier 'ecological', unlike in the UK sub-corpus where the word never co-occurs with 'migrant', emerges as the top collocate of 'migrants' in the immediate co-text to the left of the word, although its mention is exclusively found in relation to China:

China calls them "ecological migrants": 329,000 people whom the government had relocated from lands distressed by climate change, industrialization, poor policies and human activity to 161 hastily built villages. (II\_NYT: 25/10/2016)

Interestingly, typical collocates of 'ecological' in the sub-corpus have negative associations, such as 'disasters', 'crisis', 'catastrophe' and, 'panic', where climate (change) is construed as being responsible:

Climate change threatens to provoke a new ecological panic. So far, poor people in Africa and the Middle East have borne the brunt of the suffering. (I\_NYT: 13/09/2015)

While a number of shared collocates of 'migrants', such as 'refugees', 'asylum' 'seekers' as well as 'Europe', still point to discourses of the European refugees' crisis, 'climate' emerges as the most frequent pre-modifier of 'refugees' in this period. As a first observation, though, the quasi-totality of instances relates to states within the US, such as Louisiana, Virginia, Alaska. This seems to suggest a clear shift from representations of human displacement caused by environmental problems in Africa and the Middle East, either internally or towards Europe as discussed in period pre-Paris, to representations of climate-induced displacement within the US national border. In fact, in contrast to studies suggesting a Global South versus Global North dichotomization,<sup>39</sup> our corpus evidence shows that patterns of movement relate pre-eminently to internal movement within the territories of the US. Although the figure of the 'climate refugee' began to materialize at the end of 2014, a typical example being the following where the 'Pacific North West' is personified and construed as a 'potential climate refugee':

Clifford E. Mass, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Washington, writes a popular weather blog in which he predicts that the Pacific Northwest will be "a potential climate refugee" as global warming progresses. A Seattle resident, he foresees that "climate change migrants" will start heading to his city and to Portland, Ore., and surrounding areas. (I\_NYT: 23/09/2014)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy?", 273–306; see also Elizabeth Thomson and Peter R. R. White, eds., *Communicating Conflict: Multilingual Case Studies of the News Media* (London: Continuum, 2008).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Bettini et al., "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? The Fading Contours of (In)justice in Competing Discourses on Climate Migration", *The Geographical Journal*, 183.4 (2016), 348-358.

It is undoubtedly in the following years and, in particular, in 2016, that discourses began to revolve around helping communities affected by extreme weather or rising seas as a consequence of climate change, to adapt to impacts of climate change:

Shishmaref is not alone in facing a move because of the effects of climate change. In January, the federal government allocated \$48 million to relocate Isle de Jean Charles, La., an island that is sinking into the sea. The effort earned the residents the title of the United States' first "climate refugees." (II\_NYT: 20/08/2016)

As Felli fittingly observes, languaging climate migration as adaptation "radically transforms the location of social agency and, consequently, the responsibility for climate change consequences."<sup>40</sup> Once depicted as (potential) helpless victims of climate change-induced (forced) migration and, therefore, reliant on funding for adaptation (such as the 'resilience grants' mentioned above), they are now represented as "entrepreneurial migrants". Lexical items such as 'relocation' and 'resettlement' are typically co-selected with 'refugee' in this period. Quantitative data, in fact, suggest that both lemmas *relocat*\* and *resettl*\* follow a similar trend with a dramatic increase from Period I to Period II, the former from 0.06 to 0.04 and the latter from 0.02 to 0.45, and subsequent dramatic decrease reaching the initial levels in Period III. Of course, meanings of 'relocation' and 'resettlement' within this context are different from the legal definitions given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Here meaning patterns hint at discourses of human mobility as an opportunity for vulnerable communities to cope with and adapt to the potentially disruptive impacts of climate change:

That earth is now dying, drowning in salt and sinking into the sea, and she [Mrs Bourg] is ready to leave. With a first-of-its-kind "climate resilience" grant to resettle the island's native residents, Washington is ready to help. (II\_NYT: 2/05/2016)

In spite of opposing voices within the communities themselves:

When Schulte's research on Tangier came out, some of the islanders came up with the idea of distributing T-shirts that read "I refuse to become a climate-change refugee." [...] "I don't know anything about climate change. But if calling me a climate-change refugee gets me a sea wall, then go ahead, call me a climate-change refugee." (II\_NYT: 6/07/2016)

This should be worthy of note. In fact, there appears to be a constant tension between two diametrically opposed dimensions of adaptation. While it can help build resilience, as in the extract above, it can also undermine it, bringing new strain, as the following extract illustrates:

A rapid deterioration of Antarctica might, in the worst case, cause the sea to rise so fast that tens of millions of coastal refugees would have to flee inland, potentially straining societies to the breaking point. (III\_NYT: 20/5/2017)

While the ability of vulnerable communities to withstand climate change may be regarded as one key determinant of migration, understanding the ways media represent the issue is indeed crucial.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Romain Felli, "Managing Climate Insecurity by Ensuring Continuous Capital Accumulation: 'Climate Refugees' and 'Climate Migrants'", *New Political Economy*, 18.3 (2013), 337–363, 350.

#### 5. Summary and Conclusions

Though we have by no means explored all the nuances and associations emerging from the news articles in our corpus, we have uncovered a few features worthy of note which shall be summarised and compared here.

Differences were found between the association between migrants and refugees on the one hand, and refugees and migrants on the other in the UK and the US press. While in the US sub-corpus the association between the two became stronger in time, suggesting mutually exclusive categories, the same cannot be said for the UK press, which might be due to a growing tendency to consider the terms almost interchangeable, or that migrants were gradually taking on a 'refugee' identity. What is more, the word 'refugee' often co-occurred with words in the semantic field of war and conflict in the US press, while this was not so in the UK press. The US press in particular focuses in labelling migrants in terms of their reasons for moving, and thus 'economic migrant' and 'migrant worker' are frequently found. While this is also true in the UK press, it applies only to Period I and to a much smaller degree.

In line also with Russo's findings,<sup>41</sup> despite being avoided in official literature, the label 'climate refugees' was found to be frequent in both the UK and the US press, particularly in the later period. This could perhaps be due to the fact that newsworthy stories were more specifically about climate change in the later period, while in earlier periods other news stories about different types of refugees and migrants competed for attention.

Both refugees and migrants tend to co-occur with verbs of movement where they are the grammatical Subject in both the US and the UK sub-corpora. In addition, and consistent with critical discourse studies on migration in general, they are also associated with large numbers. However, a closer look from a diachronic perspective suggests that in the UK press the association with large numbers weakens over time in the case of refugees. Large numbers of migrants and the associated representations conjure up negative associations, particularly in the conservative UK press. Similarly, doom-laden prose is present in the US press in Period I, giving rise to a securitisation discourse which instead only appears in the left-wing *The Guardian* in Period III and then only in attributed discourse. On the topic of security, it is noteworthy that the focus is on national security in the US press, while the UK press refers to security more generally due to few direct climate threats at present in the country, unlike the US. As regards areas affected by migration, the US sub-corpus has a particular emphasis on internal movement, especially from rural to urban areas while the UK sub-corpus has little specific focus on internal migration.

Discourses of the issue of migration as adaptation tend to be fairly positive in Period I in the UK press, particularly in *The Guardian*, though tensions emerge in the later period. This is also true of the US press, since while adaptation can foster resilience, it can also cause problems. Reference to resettlement and relocation is frequent in both the US and the UK press in Period II, as there begins to be more focus on helping communities to adapt to the effects of climate change that may also have strong implications for policy-making. Finally, there is the possibility that discourses in the UK press reserved in the past for refugees might be now shifting to migrants, while there has been increasing media interest in the issue of refugees, for example, the refugee crisis, rather than the people themselves.

To conclude, though the size of the corpus and the narrow time-scale involved perhaps prevent major shifts emerging in the discourse, some shared elements have been traced. We might also add that our findings support in part Nash's claim that no consistent discourse on climate change and migration has emerged.<sup>42</sup> The security discourse is present in both, the theme of migration as adaptation is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Russo, "Floating Signifiers", 195-201.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Nash, "From Cancun to Paris", 54.

present, though with nuances shared by both US and the UK press. The overall representation of climate migrants and refugees has many similarities across the board, with differences between the UK and US press also being attributable to differences in national relevance given the proximity to effects of climate change. It will be left for further research to explore these elements in more detail and from more extensive sources.

Massimiliano Demata

## Representations of Climate Change Refugees in *The Guardian* and in *The New York Times*

**Abstract:** This article analyses the discursive strategies used by the online editions of two leading newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, when addressing the issue of climate change refugees from 2005 to 2018. Drawing upon the critical framework provided by the Discourse-Historical Approach, the article shows that certain key lexico-grammatical features in discourse are used by the two newspapers as instruments to contain climate change refugees as a socially subordinate group depending on the help coming from host countries, which have the power to institutionally control the refugees' identity and legal status.

Keywords: climate change, discourse analysis, The Guardian, The New York Times, refugees

#### 1. Introduction

The growing attention paid by mass media to climate change is arguably boosting public awareness of the related phenomenon of climate-induced migrants, more commonly known as climate change refugees or, in its shorter version, climate refugees, that is, those communities who are forced to escape from their homes in the face of dangers coming from changed environmental conditions.<sup>1</sup> While the presence of climate refugees is still less pervasive in media than that of other types of migrants or refugees, the attention of news outlets on this issue is rising. Indeed, while climate change affects the livelihood and in many cases, even the territorial integrity mainly of developing countries, news stories on climate refugees from the 'developed' world are also beginning to appear, as the accounts of displaced communities in Alaska and Louisiana testify.<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge about and the evaluation of climate change refugees (henceforth CCR) within the public sphere is largely determined by how they are represented in news media. This is not surprising, given the power exercised by the news media in society: by its own definition, media mediate between the real world and the public, and it does so by constructing events and people through language and images and by making them available to the public. Media, and especially news media, also mediate between power holders and the population, as they both reflect and reproduce power relations within society and are themselves a locus of social power: they continually negotiate the inclusion, marginalisation or exclusion of social subjects, and they do so through choices in discourse. As argued by Fairclough, media discourses have a "cumulative" effect because of "the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader and so forth".<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the language of the news is instrumental in constructing news values: news items reflect

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The naming of the people affected by climate change has been debated extensively and various denominations have been used, including "environmental refugee", "forced environmental migrant", "environmentally motivated migrant", and "eco-refugees". See Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse* (Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> On the increasing media attention on climate refugees see Victoria Herrmann, "America's First Climate Change Refugees: Victimization, Distancing, and Disempowerment in Journalistic Storytelling", *Energy Research and Social Science*, 31 (December 2017), 205-214; Elida Høeg and Christopher D. Tulloch, "Sinking Strangers: Media Representations of Climate Refugees on the BBC and Al Jazeera", *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, (December 2018), 1-24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Norman Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis (London: Longman, 1995), 54.

"the (imagined) preferences of the expected audience"<sup>4</sup> but at the same time the semiotic resources used in them to construct newsworthiness and news values also influence social behaviour.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in news, language reflects certain values – it "fits into these existing frameworks" – but is also constitutive of them, as it can foreground them and reinforce their validity in society.<sup>6</sup>

The article analyses the discursive strategies employed to represent climate refugees in a corpus of articles, including news and scientific articles, interviews, and transcriptions or reports of speeches, published in the webpages of *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* between 2005 and 2018. These two online newspapers constitute a very interesting case study in the way news media address climate change: *The Guardian* is a high-quality, left-of-centre British newspaper which has often discussed the dramatic effects of anthropogenic climate change, while *The New York Times* may be seen as its counterpart in the USA, as it caters to a largely liberal audience with a similar stance on climate change.

The article focuses specifically on climate change refugees because their representation as social actors in news discourse is a key factor in the way climate change is understood and evaluated in public opinion. Accordingly, it will answer two interrelated questions: 1) How are climate change refugees presented as social actors in the online versions of these two leading newspapers? 2) How does the representation of climate change refugees contribute to shaping the discourse on climate change? In order to answer these questions, it will firstly assess the role of The Guardian and The New York Times in the contemporary scenario of digital news. This analysis will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical and methodological framework on which it is based, that is, a combination of the methods of the Discourse-Historical Approach and Corpus Linguistics.<sup>7</sup> The final part of the article will be devoted to the analysis of the corpora of the two online newspapers, and it will focus in particular on the identification of two discursive strategies used by the two newspapers in their discussion of climate change refugees. This paper is ultimately an attempt to understand the textual mechanisms which constitute what may be called the "discursive texture" of the discourse of climate change refugees. Based on the fundamental premise that texts are strictly related to their production and reception and are part of the wider social and cultural context,<sup>8</sup> the analysis of the representation of climate change refugees in the corpus under exam will offer useful indications on how the social power (or lack thereof) of the participants in discourse is negotiated in news discourse and society.

#### 2. The Guardian and The New York Times

The choice to analyse the representation of CCR in the online articles of *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* derives from the high status of the two newspapers in the public sphere. According to a recent survey, the online version of *The Guardian* is the UK's most trusted online newspaper and the most read quality news brand.<sup>9</sup> This may also be due to the fact that, among the traditional print newspapers, *The Guardian* has been the fastest to adapt to a media scenario dominated by a highly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> John. E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple, *News Discourse* (London: Continuum, 2012). <sup>6</sup> Martin Conboy, *The Language of the News* (London: Routledge, 2007), 30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2001); Reisigl and Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)", in Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, Third Edition (London: Sage, 2016), 23-61; John Sinclair, *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1991); Sinclair "The Search for Units of Meaning", *Textus*, 9 (1996), 75-106; Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*; Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Jim Waterson, "Guardian Most Trusted Newspaper in Britain, Says Industry Report", *The Guardian* (17/12/2018) https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/dec/17/guardian-most-trusted-newspaper-in-britain-says-industry-report.

competitive news market, one in which the internet has disrupted existing news business models and traditional newspapers have been forced to develop an "integrated print and web newsroom" to face the challenge of news on the internet, and particularly of social media.<sup>10</sup> In the context of a "hybrid media system", The Guardian is a broadsheet into a leading global provider of digital news in the English language.<sup>11</sup> First launched in an indisputable success story, as it "has successfully transformed itself from liberal British 1999 as theguardian.co.uk, the online version of The Guardian was rebranded in 2013 as theguardian.com, to reflect the increasingly global outlook of its readers and advertisers. Unlike other print newspapers which have gone online, such as the New York Times, the Washington Post or the Independent, which offer limited access to contents without a subscription fee, the contents of *The Guardian* are all entirely free. Its open-access contents, its presence on multiple platforms (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), its participatory and interactive relationship with the audience, and its liberalleaning, progressive political values have transformed The Guardian into a major global news player, whereby a "triumph of old-school reporting has been accompanied by spectacular success in new media".<sup>12</sup> Given the political orientation of its readership, the online Guardian has often focussed on the topic of climate change in its "Environment" section, and it has a "Green Light" email system, through which readers can receive daily updates by email on "the most important environment stories, debate and analysis". From February to May 2017, through the "content funding" of the Skoll Foundation, it also ran a series of pieces on the effects of climate change in the USA and on possible solutions based on clean energy.

The transition of *The New York Times* from printed to digital news has not been as smooth as that of *The Guardian*. In May 2014, a leaked internal report (the so-called "Innovation" report) highlighted the difficulties that *The New York Times* was experiencing in competing with other digital news outlets. Its newsroom strategy has long been affected by a backwards-looking ethos, whereby the business mode of the printed paper has found it difficult to adapt to digital news. Still, since the publication of the report, *The New York Times* has been very successful in the digital news field, launching a "digital first" strategy in 2015 and managing to develop a very effective digital news framework.<sup>13</sup> Just like the *Guardian*, *The New York Times* also tried to develop a more international outlook, looking to expand its readership to non-native English-speaking countries. *The New York Times* has also paid increasing attention to environmental issues: just like *The Guardian*'s "Green Light", it has an email newsletter on environmental news directed to its readers, called "Climate Fwd:"

#### 3. Theoretical Framework

The key theoretical basis of this article is that news discourse may be analysed to understand the currency of dominant values in society. The study of the relationship between language and social structure as well as the production and reproduction of discourse in society is the focus of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). One of the crucial elements of this focus is the analysis of the representation of social groups, and especially marginal out-groups. In this article, the discourse of CCR has been assessed by following a key principle of CDA: the dialogical relationship between ideologies, discourses and texts.<sup>14</sup> This principle will be traced starting from the micro-level of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Andrew Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2017), 204.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Lucy Küng, Innovators in Digital News (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Tim De Lisle, "Can the Guardian Survive?", Intelligent Life (July/August 2012).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Küng, Innovators in Digital News, 32-40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See Fairclough *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*; Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*; Majid KhosraviNik "Actor Descriptions, Action Attributions, and Argumentation: Towards a Systematization of CDA Analytical Categories in the Representation of Social Groups", *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7.1 (2010), 55-72; Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*; Reisigl and Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach".

language of the texts on CCR published in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* and through the analysis of those discursive strategies which have been employed in the representation of CCR and have contextualised the collective identity of CCR within a certain ideological framework.

The analysis of how individuals and their actions are organized lexically and grammatically within clauses provides useful indications about the belief system constituting news discourse. Indeed, the different roles attributed to distinct domains of existence depend on the 'scripts' available in discourse.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, the analysis of the representation of CCR as social actors in this article will be undertaken by looking at how CCR are inscribed in discourse according to the discursive strategies outlined by Reisigl and Wodak, and KhosraviNik.<sup>16</sup> Discursive strategies are "systematic ways of using language" and are used to achieve certain social aims.<sup>17</sup> In their discussion of racist discourse, Reisigl and Wodak identify five discursive strategies: nomination (the linguistic identity of the persons involved, or their "discursive construction"), predication (the qualities and characteristics attributed to them, that is, "the discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions (positively and negatively)", argumentation (the argumentative schemes used to discriminate against the excluded persons), perspectivisation (the perspective from which such attributions and nominations are expressed) and *intensification* or *mitigation* (that is, of the judgements expressed on them).<sup>18</sup> Nomination and predication cannot be entirely separated as the lexico-grammatical categories used to define discursive construction and discursive qualification of social actors and events often overlap.

Following Reisigl and Wodak, KhosraviNik proposes a text analysis framework in which the role of social actors in discourse can be analysed according to three categories: 1) Actor description analysis, i.e. what kind of social actors are present (or not present) in the text, and the referential strategies used in addressing them (e.g., naming, pronouns, aggregation, etc.); 2) Actor attribution analysis, i.e., the kind of actions attributed to the actors and how they are attributed to them, for example through transitivity or other processes such as hedging or hyperbole. Through this analysis it will be possible to delve into the contextual significance and effects of the actions; 3) Argumentation analysis, that is, the arguments proposed in the text for or against social actors related to the actors present in the text and how these arguments are "*perspectivized* to cater for certain ideological manipulation".<sup>19</sup> This three-level analysis to a large extent overlaps with Reisigl and Wodak's framework (actor description analysis, actor attribution analysis and argumentation analysis correspond to nomination, predication and perspectivisation respectively).

The analysis of the discursive strategies in the texts on CCR published in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* will be undertaken by evaluating the use of certain discursive devices, including the system of transitivity and metaphors. Transitivity, or process type, is one of the key principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics as theorised by M. A. K. Halliday: it is the set of grammatical choice implied in the clause as representation. Transitivity is that aspect of the structure of language which "provides the lexicogrammatical resources for construing a quantum of change in the flow of events as a figure – as a configuration of elements centred on a process"<sup>20</sup> or "who is doing what to whom when where why and how".<sup>21</sup> The processes which may enter into that structure may be of various kinds, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Veronika Koller, "How to Analyze Collective Identity in Discourse-Textual and Contextual Parameters", *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 5.2 (2012), 23-24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*; Reisigl and Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach"; KhosraviNik, "Actor Descriptions".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach", 33.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> KhosraviNik, "Actor Descriptions", 65-66 [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> M. A. K. Halliday and Cristian M. I. M. Matthiessen, *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Fourth Edition (London: Routledge, 2014), 213.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Suzanne Eggins, An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics (London: Continuum, 1994), 77.

each of them represents a certain option available to speakers. Each process type (material, mental, verbal, existential, relational, behavioural) appearing in a clause represents its transitivity and describes the grammar of the clause. Furthermore, different process types also imply different participant roles as well as different choices available in terms of the circumstances (e.g., time or place adverbials) connected to the process. Through their choices between different process types, speakers may decide to highlight, background or suppress altogether certain aspects of their representation of reality when they codify them in clauses. Different process types ascribed to social actors are a key factor in determining the kind of collective identity ascribed to social groups. Not surprisingly, the choices at the basis of transitivity are considered particularly crucial in news discourse, especially when dealing with contentious social issues.<sup>22</sup> Metaphors are similarly important in the definition of CCR as social actors. They are powerful instruments to define groups in terms of "sameness and homogeneity" and they often do so through "naturalisation", that is, by ascribing biological, meteorological or geological qualities to people, thus de-individualising them.<sup>23</sup> Metaphors of this kind are used very often in discursive contexts in which an enemy or "other" is identified, for example in the case of migrants, as they serve the function of normalizing their delegitimisation in discourse.

The perspective offered by the Discourse-Historical Approach will be implemented through some of the instruments offered by Corpus Linguistics (henceforth CL), which can offer strong evidence of the key discursive features inscribed in texts.<sup>24</sup> By focusing on the patterns of language in a corpus of texts chosen on the basis of topic relevance, it will be possible to uncover discourse structures and to interpret them. In particular, as argued by Baker, recurrent co-occurrences of words may be seen as "evidence for an underlying hegemonic discourse".<sup>25</sup> A key aspect of CL which will be employed in this section is concordance analysis, that is, the analysis of the immediate context in which the keyword under examination occurs. As the cumulative co-occurrence of words is not accidental, concordance analysis may uncover the semantic and discursive patterns determined by the writer's choice.

#### 4. Methodology

The analysis focuses on two corpora compiled to represent CCR in news discourse. The Guardian (www.theguardian.com) corpus is constituted by 60 articles and consists of 59521 words and 67158 tokens, while The New York Times (www.nytimes.com) corpus includes 46 articles, with 55628 words and 61627 tokens. The texts for both corpora were obtained by collecting the 40 most relevant hits of two searches, "climate change refugee" and "climate refugee", sorted by "Relevance" (as opposed to "Date"), in The Guardian and New York Times websites. Each sample of texts was then checked in order to remove duplicates or other articles which did not address the topic of CCR. The typology of the articles is quite disparate, as the corpora included mainly news articles or articles appearing in the Environment sections of both newspapers (an area of the "Environment" section of The Guardian website is specifically dedicated to climate change), but also interviews, transcriptions or reports of speeches and, in one case in the New York Times, a letter to the editor. While the principle behind the choice of texts may not lead to an exhaustive, all-encompassing view on CCR of the two newspapers, the sample of texts is nevertheless quite representative. Interestingly, The Guardian uses climate change refugee\* 24 times, and climate refugee\* 79 times, while The New York Times uses climate change refugee\* only 3 times, as opposed to 37 times in which climate refugee\* is used. In other words, *The New York Times* has mainly used a definition in which the controversial nature of "climate

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> See Roger Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991), 70-76; Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 54-62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, Discourse and Discrimination, 56.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> See Sinclair, Corpus, Concordance, Collocation; Sinclair "The Search for Units of Meaning"; Baker, Using Corpora.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Baker, Using Corpora, 16.

change" is somehow hidden, as are, by implication, its causes. The chronological distribution of the articles included in the two corpora (Table 1) seems to indicate a growing trend in media attention starting in 2015.

	2005	2006	2007		2008		2009		201	0	2	.011
Guardian	2		1		2		3		-			-
NYTimes			2		2		4		2		3	
	2012	2013	2014	201	5	2016		2017		2018		Total
Guardian		6	4	13		6		12		11		60
NYTimes		2	1	3		11		11		5		46

Table 1. Chronological	distribution	of the	articles in	the corpora
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The two corpora were analysed in order to identify the discursive strategies used in the representation of CCR. This was done by looking at the clauses in which the lemma *refugee*\*, alone or as part of the extended phrase "climate (change) refugee", appears. The function of *refugee*\* in discourse in the texts of the corpus was identified by the following two methods:

1) The Word Sketch feature of the Sketch Engine software identified *refugee*\* as a participant in the clauses where it appears.<sup>26</sup> Word Sketch made the search for those linguistic elements constituting nomination and predication very quick. All results were then double-checked as Sketch Engine does not always precisely identify the grammatical functions of words (e.g., *comes* is erroneously identified as the subject of *refugee* in the sentence "So the prospect of becoming a refugee comes with a lot of baggage");

2) Further indications on the discursive strategy used in the two corpora were obtained through the Wordsmith Tools 7.0 software by analysing the concordances of the phrases *climate refugee*\* and *climate change refugee*\*.<sup>27</sup>

#### 5. Discursive Strategies and Climate Change Refugees

The analysis of the corpus from *The Guardian* website done through Sketch Engine highlights the fact that CCR are actors in material processes (or processes "of doing") in a limited number of cases. The only material action they actually perform as subject is *flee*, indicating movement toward safety:

- (1) The two governments would prefer a slow outward flow resulting from voluntary migration and do not wish their peoples to be treated as 'refugees' *fleeing* a hopeless economic and environmental situation.<sup>28</sup>
- (2) The problem is that other refugees fleeing war qualify for that status, while you don't.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Adam Kilgarriff et al., "The Sketch Engine", in Geoffrey Williams and Sandra Vessier, eds., *Proceedings of the Eleventh EURALEX International Congress, EURALEX 2004* (Lorient: Université de Bretagne Sud, 2004), 105-116, http://www.sketchengine.eu.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Mike Scott, WordSmith Tools version 7 (Stroud: Lexical Analysis Software, 2016), https://lexically.net/wordsmith/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ben Doherty and Eleanor Ainge Roy, "World Bank: Let Climate-threatened Pacific Islanders Migrate to Australia or NZ", *The Guardian* (8/05/2017), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/08/australia-and-nz-should-allow-open-migration-for-pacific-islanders-threatened-by-climate-says-report, [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Oliver Milman et al., "The Unseen Driver Behind the Migrant Caravan: Climate Change", *The Guardian* (30/10/2018), [emphasis mine].

Refugees are also subjects of *need*, a mental process which refers to their precarious status:

(3) This new category of refugee needs to find a place in international agreements.<sup>30</sup>

Refugees are frequently mentioned in clauses in which they are the affected participants of actions. This happens in processes where their legal status is defined (or not defined) by national or international law, as in *protect* and *recognise*:

- (4) The refugee convention, written in the aftermath of the massive displacement caused by the second world war, only recognises refugees displaced from their home countries, and suffering a wellfounded fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.<sup>31</sup>
- (5) The study published on Thursday calls on governments to agree a new legal framework to protect climate refugees.<sup>32</sup>
- (6) By taking strong ambitious steps now to phase out greenhouse gas emissions and building an international legal mechanism.33

Refugees are characterised in discourse as entities subjected to being named by other people or institutions:

(7) We are called climate refugees but I hate that term, said Chantal Comardelle, who grew up in the Isle de Jean Charles community.34

or by circumstances determined by the changed environment:

- (8) With no ice to protect their coastal villages from storm-tossed waves, Native American communities in Alaska are also becoming climate refugees.<sup>35</sup>
- (9) By 2050, the World Bank says more than 140 million will become climate refugees.<sup>36</sup>

In the New York Times, refugees are also characterised by their being actors almost exclusively of material actions denoting movement, such as *flee* and *stream*:

- (10) Thousands of climate refugees have already fled Kutubdia and formed their own neighborhood in the mainland Bangladeshi city of Cox's Bazaar.37
- (11) Their parents are *climate refugees who fled their village* to try to find a way to survive.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> David Adam, "50m Environmental Refugees by End of Decade, UN warns", *The Guardian* (12/10/2005), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Ben Doherty, "Disaster Alley': Australia Could Be Set to Receive New Wave of Climate Refugees", The Guardian (4/04/2017), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Matthew Taylor, "Climate Change 'Will Create World's Biggest Refugee Crisis'", The Guardian (2/11/2017), [emphasis mine].

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Milman, "We're Moving to Higher Ground': America's Era of Climate Mass Migration Is Here", The Guardian (24/09/2018), [emphasis mine].

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Vicki Arroyo, "The Coming Refugee Crisis: When Home Leaves Us", *The Guardian* (8/05/2016), [emphasis mine].
<sup>36</sup> Robin McKie, "Portrait of a Planet on the Verge of Climate Catastrophe", *The Guardian* (2/12/2018), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Nicholas Kristof, "Swallowed by the Sea", The New York Times (19/01/2018), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Nicholas Kristof, "As Donald Trump Denies Climate Change, These Kids Die of It", The New York Times (6/01/2017), [emphasis mine].

- (12) An exercise last December at the National Defense University, an educational institute that is overseen by the military, explored the potential impact of a destructive flood in Bangladesh that sent *hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming into neighboring India*.<sup>39</sup>
- (13) You don't want to wait until people have lost their homes, until they flee and become refugees.<sup>40</sup>

Refugees are again also referred to in discourse as those subjects who are the recipients of help from other nations through material processes such as *accommodate*, *relocate* and *support*:

- (14) Mass migration also could put immense strain on regions like northern Europe or North America *if they seek to accommodate the refugees or to rebuff them.*<sup>41</sup>
- (15) Bangladesh's government has said it is preparing *to relocate the most vulnerable refugees* to an island in the Bay of Bengal, itself vulnerable to the rising sea.<sup>42</sup>
- (16) It has proposed draconian budget cuts for humanitarian and development assistance, diplomacy and the United Nations – whose agencies *play a key role in supporting refugees and their host communities.*<sup>43</sup>

The examples discussed above indicate that there is no clearly discernible difference between *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* in defining the actions that refugees perform or are subjected to. In fact, it may be argued that there is a common repository of 'scripts' available in discourse which both newspapers use in their characterisation of CCR.

A close analysis of the texts from *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* and the concordances of *climate (change) refugee*\* reveal an even more comprehensive picture of the discursive strategies which have been used to describe CCR. There are four prevailing realisations of the discursive strategies used by both online newspapers, which will be described in the following sections.

#### 5.1 Humanisation and Victimisation

CCR are represented in terms of what Resigl and Wodak call social problematisation (Reisigl Wodak 52),<sup>44</sup> and specifically in terms of their *humanisation* and *victimisation*, which are often used in conjunction.<sup>45</sup> Humanisation implies the representation of CCR in discourse as social actors as individuals, reporting their names and personal stories. Their everyday lives often presented in detail, also with the help of images, which often portray women and children. Victimisation also makes the narrative of CCR in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* somehow more palpable and real, as information on the dramatic conditions they experience as refugees escaping from climate-induced catastrophes and their day-by-day activities are described with very familiar and often intimate overtones, often by quoting the accounts of CCR themselves. The two newspapers present such stories

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> John M. Broder, "Climate Change Seen as Threat to U.S. Security", The New York Times (8/08/2009), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Coral Davenport and Campbell Robertson, "Resettling the First American 'Climate Refugees'", *The New York Times* (2/05/2016), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> James Kanter, "Human Rights, Refugees and Climate Change", *The New York Times* (12/02/2008), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Somini Sengupta, "Biggest Threat to Humanity? Climate Change, U.N. Chief Says", *The New York Times* (29/03/2018), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Antony J. Blinken, "What We Lose by Barring Refugees", The New York Times (5/06/2017), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Majid KhosraviNik, "The Representation of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigrants in the British Press", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 9.1 (2010), 19-20.

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very often, especially in those pieces reporting directly from the areas affected by climate change. A piece appeared in *The Guardian* titled "Meet the 'Climate Refugees' Who Already Had to Leave Their Homes" is dedicated to first-hand, first-person accounts of people displaced by climate change in the USA and one of them, Stephen Lipp, writes:

(17) I grew up in New Orleans. When you're brought up there you realize you're below sea level: you see boats beyond the levee that are actually higher than you on the street.<sup>46</sup>

A tendency to humanisation and victimisation can be seen also in the newspapers' reports of victims of climate change from third-world countries. A 2017 article featured in *The New York Times* about Bangladesh gives personal details of a couple affected by floods:

(18) Shafiqul Islam, an acquaintance from the northern district of Dinajpur, told me that his father had never seen water rise so fast or so high in their village. Monira Parvin, his wife, sought refuge with their 5-year-old daughter at her parents' village in a dry area. Ms. Parvin is studying for an undergraduate degree, and her husband, who never made it to a college, proudly supports her. She represents a new generation of educated Bangladeshis, who are more aware of emergency practices such as timely flight to safety.<sup>47</sup>

### Reporting again from Bangladesh The Guardian writes:

(19) "We have lost our farmland and more than 50 people have already lost their homes to the rising sea. The drinking water is salty and there are no fish in the river. We all want to leave but where? We have no money", said Hayaun Nesa Khatong.<sup>48</sup>

### 5.2 Aggregation

An opposite tendency to humanisation in the discourse of CCR is that of *aggregation*, that is, the quantification of participants as groups through figures or indefinite quantifiers. Presenting CCR as figures has the double effect of dehumanizing them (they are seen as statistics) and communicating a sense of danger because of their massive number.<sup>49</sup> Looking at the concordances of *climate (change) refugee\**, this happens in 18 lines (out of 103) in *The Guardian* corpus, making it a very distinctive discursive feature of CCR. Refugees are quantified in *The Guardian* as "150 million" (three times), "300 million" (twice), "millions more" (twice) and as "a lot of", "large numbers", "substantial number", "crowds" and even "billions". Similarly, in *The New York Times*, refugees are (or will be) "thousands", "200 million, "700 million" and even "hundreds of millions". Therefore, CCR are realised in discourse as a collective entity characterised by their (mainly very high) numbers or as a large but quantitatively undefined group of people.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Oliver Milman, "Meet the 'Climate Refugees' Who Already Had to Leave Their Homes", *The Guardian* (24/09/2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> K. Anis Ahmed, "In Bangladesh, a Flood and an Efficient Response", *The New York Times* (1/09/2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> John Vidal, "Migration is the Only Escape from Rising Tides of Climate Change in Bangladesh", *The Guardian* (4/12/2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Oxford U.P., 2008), 37-38.

24	Join the debate: America's first climate refugees Have your say on the fate of native Alaskan communities under threat from
25	America's first climate refugees Newtok, Alaska is losing ground to the sea at a dangerous rate and for its
26	on 11 February. Our conference will discuss the need for urgent international protection for cimate refugees and migrants, and for far stronger public awareness and government leadership
27	region was acutely vulnerable, she said. "You may be on the frontlines here in Australia for climate refugees," she told the Guardian in Sydney. "The first wave will be those who have to flee
28	build a safe and secure future for our planet. Climate change will not wait. Neither can we. For climate refugees, tomorrow is too late."
29	change, we must mount a similarly forceful response and create a new legal framework for climate refugees alongside the essential action to curb our carbon emissions.
30	imperative to create a new multilateral legal mechanism - and with it a new legal definition for climate refugees - that enshrines the right to life. food, health, water, housing and other
31	don't see the slightest evidence that anyone is seriously thinking about what to do with the future climate refugee stream," said Orrin Pilkey, professor emeritus of coastal geology at Duke
32	on and literally chunks of burning trees were falling evenwhere," she said. "When we've got climate refugees it's going to put more stress not only on our infrastructure but also our natural
33	at, has just recorded its lowest recorded peak ice extent after what's been, "We will have climate refugees," Jewell said. "We have to figure out how to deal with potentially relocating
34	vary widely, from tens of thousands to one billion, there's little question that an increase in climate refugees is on the way. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in a
35	persecution, with little appetite among the richest nations to expand its definition to include "climate refugees" - amid predictions that up to 250 million people may be displaced worldwide
36	that Bangladesh will lose up to 20% of its current landmass. It is going to create a very large climate refugee population." He warns that the country will be unable to cope. "The internal
37	coastal communities around the world that will suffer similar fates. It may be that the Louisiana climate refugees will be among the luckier ones—in the sense that they are getting help to move
38	and war, but climate change is not on the list. With an estimated 150 million to 300 million climate refugees set to be displaced worldwide by 2050, a new international framework will be
39	Global warming could create 150 million 'climate refugees' by 2050 Environmental Justice Foundation report savs 10% of the global
40	at risk of forced displacement due to climate change Global warming will force up to 150 million "climate refugees" to move to other countries in the next 40 years, a new report from the
41	of drought and hurricanes in their homelands, part of a trend that will see as many as 300 million climate refugees worldwide by 2050. "People will get very grumpy and upset with very hot
42	migration. The Environmental Justice Foundation has estimated that there will be 150 million climate refugees worldwide by 2050. It's already happening - rising sea levels threaten the
43	of years of climate-related drought. Others predict the world will see hundreds of millions more climate refugees by mid-century, at a staggering human, financial and political cost. And sadly,
44	stretches of this pancake-flat country threaded with rivers. In the coming decades, millions more "climate refugees" around the world are expected to make similar journeys. In a cruel irony, many
45	and homes across the islands. 'Disaster alley': Australia could be set to receive new wave of climate refugees Read more The World Bank paper argues a structured migration program
46	resources, to absorb such a large displacement of the human population and large number of climate refugees, certainly does not exist in the country. Therefore, we are not only going to see
47	due to large-scale displacement of people, but there will be transboundary migration of climate refugees into the neighbouring countries," says Muniruzzaman. But environmental
48	countries, or by accepting them as refugees. Wealthy countries are terrified by the thought of climate refugees being given legal access. Worldwide, nearly 10m people from Africa, south
49	'Disaster alley': Australia could be set to receive new wave of climate refugees US defence expert warns people fleeing low-lying Pacific islands a precursor to
50	insecurities' that could trigger wider conflict Australia could be on the frontline of a new wave of "climate refugees" displaced by extreme weather events, droughts and rising seas, a US expert
51	away' towns The Obama administration has warned the US will need to deal with a wave of "climate refugees" as the Arctic continues to warm, joining with the Canadian government to
52	Obama administration warns of 'climate refugees' due to rapid Arctic warming US Interior Secretary Sally Jewell has painted a
53	, bringing soaring property and rental values with them. "As it gets hotter, we are getting a lot of climate refugees," said Coral Evans, Flagstaff's mayor. "We don't mind people moving to
54	, professor emeritus of coastal geology at Duke University. "It boggles the mind to see crowds of climate refugees arriving in town and looking for work and food." Pilkey's new book - Sea Level
55	Interview Lord Stern: global warming may create billions of climate refugees But we must not turn debate into a 'pissing contest' between growth on one
56	security experts have told the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) study that the number of climate refugees will dwarf those that have fled the Syrian conflict, bringing huge challenges to
57	why many people do not like the term "climate refugee" and why they do not see the creation of climate-refugee status as a good solution. So what is the answer? Many civil society groups
58	people affected by climate change. But many Pacific islanders explicitly reject the idea of "climate refugee" status. On the face of it, that seems like a strange decision. Kiribati's president
59	accompanies those strategies. There is a strong case for Britain to take a substantial number of climate refugees: as the first country to industrialise, we need to take historical responsibility for
60	. Just as the overarching threat of climate change is one of global responsibility, so is the fate of climate refugees. In this context, there is a clear and compelling imperative to create a new

#### Fig. 1. Some concordances of climate refugee\* in The Guardian corpus



Fig. 2. Combined concordances of climate change refugee\* and climate refugee\* in The New York Times corpus

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### 5.3 Metaphors

The actions of CCR are also represented through certain metaphorical expressions, as in "a new wave of climate migrants", "a wave of migrants", "the future climate refugee stream", "a flow of climate migrants" and, as shown in example (12), "hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming into neighbouring India". CCR are seen as a liquid, a metaphor that is also used in the representation of migrants very often: they are seen as part of a movement scenario, a mass movement that is typical of how media and politicians portray migrants in general as participants in discourse.<sup>50</sup> The two corpora include such movement metaphors as:

- (20) We are in the midst of *the largest wave of human displacement since World War II*. Around the world, 65 million people including 21 million refugees are on the move, forced from home by war, violence, economic deprivation and climate change.<sup>51</sup>
- (21) Land is becoming scarce as waves of migrants pour in from nearby Bangladesh.<sup>52</sup>
- (22) Longer term, if emissions rise unchecked, scientists fear climate effects so severe that they might destabilize governments, *produce waves of refugees*, precipitate the sixth mass extinction of plants and animals in the Earth's history, and melt the polar ice caps, causing the seas to rise high enough to flood most of the world's coastal cities.<sup>53</sup>

The wave metaphor implies the association of migrants with natural disasters and is a negative predicational qualification in that it leads to the dehumanization of CCR, who now implicitly require control. The use of metaphors induces the *intensification* of certain qualities attributed to CCR in their representation in discourse.

### 5.4 Politicisation

CCR are constantly characterised as being in need of legal recognition of their status. The frequent use of "first climate (change) refugee(s)" highlights CCR as an unprecedented phenomenon, which host countries have the power to manage:

(23) An i-Kiribati man, Ioane Teitiota, failed to have his claim [to be recognised as climate refugee] accepted by New Zealand courts as the world's first climate change refugee and he was deported last month.<sup>54</sup>

Both newspapers highlight the power disparity between wealthy countries and those countries affected by climate change, a disparity which is wielded by the wealthy countries in their reluctance or failure to put in place those legal mechanisms granting rights to CCR.

(24) Wealthy countries are terrified by the thought of climate refugees being given legal access.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Andreas Musolff, *Political Metaphor Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Antony J. Blinken, "What we Lose by Barring Refugees", *The New York Times* (5/06/2017), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Brian Orland, "Climate Change and Population Growth Meet Along the Brahmaputra River", *The New York Times* (22/01/2013), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Justin Gillis, "Climate Change is Complex: We've Got Answers to Your Questions", *The New York Times* (10/09/2017), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Ben Doherty, "Labor Champions Plan to Resettle Pacific Climate Change Migrants", *The Guardian* (10/11/2015), [emphasis mine].

(25) The initiative has held consultations in four particularly vulnerable regions – Central America, the Horn of Africa, Southeast Asia and the islands of the South Pacific – and *plans to recommend a "protection agenda"* that may include standards of treatment.<sup>56</sup>

The above are all examples of politicisation in discourse, and more specifically of the "ascription of being or not being in need of political support":<sup>57</sup> through politicisation, issues which may be treated as outside the political realm can become part of the public debate through politics and media, and in this sense may become the locus for the exercise of power relations as politicisation implies "the weakening of individual agency in social reality and makes both individuals and groups strongly reliant on political action".<sup>58</sup> In the case of CCR, the acknowledgement (or lack thereof) of their status as refugees is wholly dependent on the political will of the host countries. Legal discourse becomes, in the media narrative of CCR, an instrument of power. This situation is often codified in discourse with verbs in which CCR are the stated or implicit goals of material actions:

- (26) By taking strong ambitious steps now to phase out greenhouse gas emissions and building *an international legal mechanism to protect climate refugees* we will protect the poorest and most vulnerable in our global society.<sup>59</sup>
- (27) Another novel response gaining attention lately is *the idea of applying international refugee law* largely drafted after World War II to protect people fleeing political, religious or racial persecution *to those forced from their homes because of climate change*.<sup>60</sup>

### 6. Conclusions

The analysis of the discursive strategies used by *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* in the representation of CCR has revealed a power imbalance between CCR and host countries: host countries provide CCR with shelter and legal recognition, while at the same time the characterisation of CCR in terms of figures or metaphors of natural disasters communicates the idea of a dangerous phenomenon which should be controlled. The only actions performed by CCR imply their escaping from the areas affected by environmental disaster (e.g. *flee*) and indeed define their identity, or, as in the case of *need*, their being affected by a precarious status. The high frequency of occurrences of *refugee\** with verbs related to the refugees' uncertain legal status and the material aid they need to receive from safer countries indicate that CCR are "contained" in discourse as victims and placed in a marginal and subordinate condition: they depend on the benevolent help of outside agents (i.e., almost always the West) to have their status recognised and their livelihood restored to a minimum of decency.

The discourses evoked by the representation of CCR in *The Guardian* used in this corpus localise the discourse of CCR within a narrow social profile: CCR appear at the crossroads of the discourse of science (their precarious livelihood is a consequence of climate change) and that of law (their legal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> John Vidal, "Migration is the Only Escape from Rising Tides of Climate Change in Bangladesh", *The Guardian* (4/12/2009), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Sewell Chan, "Paris Accord Considers Climate Change as a Factor in Mass Migration", *The New York Times* (12/12/2015), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Michał Krzyżanowski et al., "The Mediatization and the Politicization of the 'Refugee Crisis' in Europe", *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 16.1-2 (2018), 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Matthew Taylor, "Climate Change 'Will Create World's Biggest Refugee Crisis", *The Guardian* (2/11/2017), [emphasis mine].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Mike Ives, "A Remote Pacific Nation, Threatened by Rising Seas", The New York Times (2/07/2016), [emphasis mine].

status is managed by the host countries), but they are always 'defined' by these discourses and never appear as active protagonists defining themselves. What is largely absent in the corpus of articles on CCR is the attribution of responsibility for the human causes of climate change and, as a consequence, of CCR. The human cost borne by climate change is clearly spelt out in the representation of CCR, and Western, developed countries (such as the USA or Australia) are indicated as the destinations of refugees and as the benevolent helpers who take care of the livelihood of CCR. However, the fact that the industrialized nations themselves are largely responsible for climate change is largely ignored in the texts. The emphasis on the refugees' status as victims is linked to their need for shelter and help and the recognition of their legal status from developed countries, which have the power to institutionally control the refugees' status and even identity. The simplification of the discourse of CCR is instrumental (often implicitly) to the portrayal of Western governments as having the power of wielding and bestowing legal authority to CCR and represents CCR in discourse as a marginal and hegemonised group.

Mirko Casagranda

# Migrants or Refugees? The Discursive Representation of Climate-induced Migration on *BBC News Online*

**Abstract:** The denomination 'climate' or 'environmental refugee' has been extremely popular in news discourse even though the UN Refugee Convention has not extended the refugee status to people living in deteriorating environmental conditions. As such, the term has been misused and has led to a terminological confusion that strengthens the humanitarian frame through which climate-induced migration is often construed. By adopting a historical-discourse approach, the paper analyses the referential strategies employed in a corpus of 42 articles published between 1999 and 2017 on *BBC News Online* and demonstrates that, by preferring 'refugee' to 'migrant', the Corporation frames social actors from a humanitarian perspective that backgrounds migrants and represents climate-induced migration as an economic opportunity.

Keywords: climate-induced migration, migrants, refugees, CDA, BBC News Online

### 1. Introduction

On 20 August 2015, *Al Jazeera* announced on its website that from that moment the network would stop using the term 'migrant' when talking about the crisis in the Mediterranean and employ the word 'refugee' instead.<sup>1</sup> According to the author of the article, Barry Malone, "[t]he word migrant has become a largely inaccurate umbrella term" and it is "no longer fit for purpose when it comes to describing the horror unfolding in the Mediterranean".<sup>2</sup> In his view, it is an example of reductive terminology that "has evolved from its dictionary definitions into a tool that dehumanises and distances, a blunt pejorative [that] strips suffering people of voice" and reduces them to mere numbers.

By focusing on the denotative and connotative power of words, *Al Jazeera* exposed the epistemological gap and the ontological tension existing between terms and referents, and stirred a response from other media, which were faced with the ethical challenge to (re)define their position on how migration should be addressed in their news coverage. The following day, during a radio broadcasting that was filmed and posted on *BBC News Online*, Jonathan Munro, the Corporation's Head of Newsgathering, commented on the issue as follows:

I don't think there's anything wrong actually with using the word 'migrant' and the word 'refugee'. The vast majority of people that we're seeing coming through those borders whether on land or by sea are both migrants and refugees. The issue, and Barry touched upon it, is more about the dehumanisation of people and the way we cover it, which isn't just a language issue. When you've seen 40,000 people coming through over a period, a relatively short period of a number of weeks, what we're hearing on our radios and seeing on our screens are images and sounds that portray the volume of people; and the way to dehumanise them is just to do that; and the way to keep them as human beings – and this is a much more important point it seems to me than the vocabulary – is to talk to them, to hear their stories as individuals,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Barry Malone, "Why Al Jazeera Will Not Say Mediterranean 'Migrants'", Al Jazeera (20 August 2015), https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/editors-blog/2015/08/al-jazeera-mediterranean-migrants-150820082226309.html.
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

as human beings as opposed to as part of a trend.... It's that humanity, which is actually more important than a sort of, you know, vocabulary boundaries that some broadcasters much used to put in place. We're not in the game of saying certain words aren't appropriate as long as they're accurate and they reflect the story. The more important thing for us is to keep the human beings at the heart of it.<sup>3</sup>

By stressing the importance of humanity – especially its emotional side – in reporting stories of migrants across the Mediterranean, Munro dismisses the power of language and seems to underestimate how the labels used to address and refer to people shape their identity and tell something about what reporters think about them. By saying that it does not matter whether they are called migrants or refugees, Munro implies that the terms can be interchangeably used in news reporting. In other words, he seems to forget that the nomination strategies adopted in news discourse contribute to the dehumanisation of people.

Even though the debate ensuing from *Al Jazeera*'s statement is about migration in general, its terminological implications can be extended to climate-induced migration and considered as the starting point of an analysis of the discursive strategies employed on *BBC News Online* to discursively construe the people that are displaced due to climate change. In order to do so, this paper mainly adopts a discourse-historical approach with the aim of assessing the linguistic realisations of the representations of social actors as refugees or migrants in a corpus of 42 news articles from the years 1999-2017.

### 2. Setting the Context: Terminology and Climate-induced Migration

Back in the 1960s, Murray Edelman was one of the first scholars to acknowledge the power of political terms, which he labelled as 'condensation symbols'.<sup>4</sup> The lexicon about migration employed in the news media mostly comes from legal and political discourse and often reflects – and magnifies – the ideological stances of policy circles. As recent studies have found, the choice between 'migrant' and 'refugee' in the debate on climate-induced migration is based on terminological confusion.<sup>5</sup> It seems that there is a parallelism between the fact that climate change is a contested science – with often biased representations in the media – and the blurred terminology used to refer to displaced people.

According to the 2010 Introductory Note to the "Convention and Protocol Regarding the Status of Refugees", "[a] refugee ... is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their own country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion".<sup>6</sup> Even though climate change and deteriorating environmental conditions may force people out of a country, from a legal point of view they cannot be considered refugees as environmental persecution is difficult to prove and "it would be impossible to demonstrate a direct causal relationship between the carbon emissions of one state and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Transcription of an excerpt from a filmed radio broadcasting featuring the *BBC*'s Head of Newsgathering, Jonathan Munro, published on 21 August 2015 with the title "Why the BBC Uses the Word 'Migrant'", https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p030bn5m.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985 [1964]), 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See Carol Farbotko, "Representation and Misrepresentation of Climate Migrants", in Benoît Mayer and François Crépeau, eds., *Research Handbook on Climate Change, Migration and the Law* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2017), 67-81; Katherine E. Russo, "Climate-induced Migration: The Evaluation of Terms in a European Commission Institutional Genre Network", in Jana Altmanova et al., eds., *Terminology* and *Discourse/Terminologie et Discours* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018), 363-390.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> UNHCR, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees" (Geneva: UNHCR Communications and Public Information Service, 2010), 3, http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10. Whereas the "Convention" dates back to 1951, the "Protocol" entered into force in 1967.

the specific damage threatened to another because of rising sea levels".<sup>7</sup> Despite the lack of legal protection for climate displaced people who decide to appeal to the refugee designation,<sup>8</sup> the media and several international organisations have persisted in using the term 'refugee'. This may be due to the fact that "the system of migration governance ... is much less institutionalised and has fewer internationally accepted norms and frameworks", which may account for the popular resonance of the term 'climate change refugee'.<sup>9</sup>

The two terminological choices, i.e. 'migrant' and 'refugee', stand for a larger debate on two competing discourses that construe climate policies and the role of migration in two different - and sometimes opposite - ways, which are synthesised by Felli as follows:

Whereas climate refugees were depicted as (potential) helpless victims of climate change-induced *forced* migration, the language of climate migration as adaptation radically transforms the location of social agency and, consequently, the responsibility for climate change consequences. Rather than understanding 'climate refugees' as victims of climate change produced by industrialised countries and, thus, as in need of justice (which could take the form of funding for adaptation), these individuals are turned, through a 'positive story', into entrepreneurial migrants who not only can lift themselves out of poverty but may also contribute to the 'resilience' of their 'vulnerable' communities. Climate migration is no longer a 'forced' process but becomes a *strategy* of adaptation to climate change, albeit a strategy that requires constant monitoring and management.<sup>10</sup>

Felli postulates a shift in discursive practices and nomination strategies: 'refugees' are seen as a failure of both mitigation and adaptation to climate change, whereas migration is presented as a successful strategy of adaptation. According to the scholar, this is in line with the nature of neoliberal capitalism which fosters a representation of the individual as an entrepreneurial subject who is willing to improve his/her condition by entering the mechanism of capitalist production.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, adaptation itself evolves from a collective transformation of the environment (mainly based on mitigation) to individual resilience.<sup>12</sup>

Recent studies have found that when the term 'refugee' is used, the image that has been construed is that of innocent people from the poor south of the world suffering from the consequences of greenhouse gasses and climate change they have not caused.<sup>13</sup> Even the UN has depicted refugees as helpless victims of climate change who are in need of foreign assistance.<sup>14</sup> Such vulnerability narrations generate a humanitarian imperative that is nevertheless unable to prevent them from being

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Simon Behrman and Avidan Kent, "Overcoming the Legal Impasse? Setting the Scene", in Simon Behrman and Avidan Kent, eds., *Climate Refugees: Beyond the Legal Impasse*? (London: Routledge, 2018), 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Maxine Burkett, "Justice and Climate Migration: The Importance of Nomenclature in the Discourse on Twenty-first Century Mobility", in Behrman and Kent, eds., *Climate Refugees*, 74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Ferris, "Governance and Climate Change-induced Mobility: International and Regional Frameworks", in Dimitra Manou et al., eds., *Climate Change, Migrations and Human Rights: Law and Policy Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2017), 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Romain Felli, "Managing Climate Insecurity by Ensuring Continuous Capital Accumulation: 'Climate Refugees' and 'Climate Migrants'", *New Political Economy*, 18.3 (2013), 350.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See also Giovanni Bettini, "Climate Migration as an Adaptation Strategy: De-securitizing Climate-induced Migration or Making the Unruly Governable?", *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.2 (2014), 180-195.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> For further details on the debate on the types of climate change adaptation see Jonathan Verschuuren, ed., *Research Handbook* on *Climate Change Adaptation Law* (Cheltenham: Edward Edgar, 2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See, among others, Felli "Managing Climate Insecurity"; Russo, "Floating Signifiers, Transnational Affect Flows: Climateinduced Migrants in Australian News Discourse", in Andrew Baldwin and Bettini, eds., *Life Adrift: Climate Change, Migration, Critique* (New York: Rowland and Littlefield, 2017), 195-210.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See Karen McNamara, "Conceptualising Discourses on Environmental Refugees at the United Nations", *Population and Environment*, 29.1 (2007), 12-24.

transformed into a threat or seen as perpetrators of the environmental degradation they have not contributed to create:

These narratives suggest that people in the South are not able to preserve their environment or adapt to changes. Once the environment is degraded, they will move to another place and continue the process.... This reinforces the idea that migration should be avoided and sustainable development promoted to keep people in their original locations. Rather than victims, migrants are seen as perpetrators.<sup>15</sup>

The discourse on climate migrants, on the contrary, construes migration as a voluntary adaptation strategy supported by migration management and migrants as active agents rather than victims. Felli claims that migrants are defined as 'adaptable subjects', which means that the burden of adaptation is theirs. As such, adaptation equals local coping mechanisms, which also means that international institutions like the United Nations are relieved of their (moral) duty to develop international mechanisms to protect them. Like a serpent swallowing its own tail, the failure to redefine the term 'refugee' within the UN Refugee Convention is thus justified: being unable to extend it, the UN is also incapable of providing effective solutions to the 'refugee' crisis and is thus 'forced' to leave the burden of adaptation to the people who are directly affected by climate change.

It was only after 2007, when it was finally redefined as an adaptation strategy at the 94<sup>th</sup> session of the IOM Council, that the concept of 'climate migration' was disseminated through reports, press releases and conferences. The IOM has promoted this terminology since then, even though the UNHCR has framed the issue in humanitarian terms, which has resulted – again – in depicting migration as a failure (and not as a form) of adaptation. Also 2010 proved to be a watershed year when the Cancun Adaptation Framework was adopted and the notion of "climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation" introduced. As a consequence, the term 'climate refugee' was replaced in official documents and avoided in all UNCCC subsequent meetings.

According to Felli, the term 'climate migration' is being increasingly used in the English-speaking press and is growing much faster than 'climate refugee'. Such trend was confirmed also in the 2015 report "Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU" commissioned by the UNHCR, where the data analysed by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies show that, unlike in Germany and Sweden, in the UK (and in Italy) 'migrant' is used more often than 'refugee'. This, however, is only apparently neutral since:

coverage in the United Kingdom was the most negative. Despite the presence of newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *Daily Mirror*, both of which were sympathetic to refugees, the right-wing press in the United Kingdom expressed a hostility towards refugees and migrants which was unique. Whilst newspapers in all countries featured anti-refugee and anti-migrant perspectives, what distinguished the right of centre press in the UK was the degree to which that section of the press campaigned aggressively against refugees and migrants. This could be seen in the preponderance of negative frames and the editorialising in favour of Fortress Europe approaches.<sup>16</sup>

As for responsibility assignation, Felli pinpoints that the term 'refugee' is often associated with the concept of reparative justice, which, as we have already seen, construes migrants as southern victims of climate change "whose voices are least likely to be heard in international debates and negotiations

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Maria Julia Trombetta, "Linking Climate-induced Migration and Security Within the EU: Insights from the Securitization Debate", *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.2 (2014), 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> UNHCR, "Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries" (Geneva: UNHCR Communications and Public Information Service, 2015), 10, https://www.unhcr.org/56bb369c9.pdf.

around the impacts of climate change".<sup>17</sup> Hence, the victimisation of migrants is a form of discursive dysphemism that reinforces the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' and requires humanitarian concepts to represent 'poor' people in need of salvation.<sup>18</sup> Even though such narratives activate empathy, altruism and generosity, 'refugees' are often represented as a burden rather than as vulnerable human beings coping with a potentially catastrophic situation.<sup>19</sup> As a consequence, they are often turned into de-politicised and de-individualised subjects that "disappear into the image of massive movements".<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, in neoliberal capitalist discourse the term 'migrant' is preferred in order to refer to strategic individuals with an entrepreneurial ethos who refuse being pathologised and victimised. From this perspective, "[m]igration is signified as a positive response to climate stress and the vulnerable are not represented (only) as passive victims in need of international protection, but also as 'agents of adaptations'".<sup>21</sup> Rather than a problem to be solved, migration becomes an adaptation strategy strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations. Such nomenclature has been fostered by the IOM as well as a way to counterbalance the legal conundrum of the term 'refugee'.

The creation of entrepreneurial migrants, however, is at odds with the humanitarian frame that has been favoured in media discourse, and, just like the term 'refugee', leads to the de-politicisation of climate change since migrants are relegated to a non-political existence where single states are subordinated elements of a larger mechanism within a global apparatus of governance. Hence, according to Felli, instead of victims of climate change, migrants are turned into wage labourers. Such utilitarian vision depicts migrants as economically beneficial to the west, even though the option of free international movement is never tabled. Whereas taking in climate 'refugees' is discursively construed as a form of compensation for the production of climate change, climate migration stands for an alternative narration that naturalises migratory movements.

Both 'refugee' and 'migrant' as 'condensation symbols' have been increasingly framed within the debate on security.<sup>22</sup> As Felli points out, however, refugee discourse is related to international security, while migration discourse is associated with human security, i.e. the "security of the population involved and that of the receiving communities in the South".<sup>23</sup> Here, the term 'refugee' would be redundant because migration usually takes place within national borders. It is especially because of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Tanja Dreher and Michelle Voyer, "Climate Refugees or Migrants? Contesting Media Frames on Climate Justice in the Pacific", *Environmental Communication*, 9.1 (2015), 58-59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> María Martínez Lirola, "Discursive Legitimation of Criminalization and Victimization of Sub-Saharan Immigrants in Spanish *El País* and *ABC* Newspapers", in Jan Chovanec and Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska, eds., *Representing the Other in European Media Discourses* (Berlin: John Benjamins, 2017), 135-154; Ruth Wodak, "'Us' and 'Them': Inclusion and Exclusion – Discrimination via Discourse", in Gerard Delanty et al., eds., *Identity, Belonging and Migration* (Liverpool: Liverpool U.P., 2008), 54-77; for a discursive analysis of the victimisation of migrants see, among others, Laura Ma Augustín, "Forget Victimization: Granting Agency to Migrants", *Development*, 46.3 (2003), 30-36; Karina Horsti, "De-ethnicized Victimis: Mediatized Advocacy for Asylum Seekers", *Journalism*, 14.1 (2013), 78-95; William F. McDonald, *The Criminal Victimization of Immigrants* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> For the vulnerability of climate-induced migration see, among others, Kate Manzo, "Imagining Vulnerability: The Iconography of Climate Change", *Area*, 42.1 (2010), 96-107; Hajer Maarten and Wytske Versteeg, "Voices of Vulnerability: The Reconfiguration of Policy Discourses", in John S. Dryzek et al, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2011), 82-95; Michael Brzoska and Christiane Fröhlich, "Climate Change, Migration and Violent Conflict: Vulnerabilities, Pathways and Adaptation Strategies", *Migration and Development*, 5.2 (2016), 190-210.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Bettini, "Climate Barbarians at the Gate? A Critique of Apocalyptic Narratives on 'Climate Refugees'", *Geoforum*, 45 (2013), 70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Bettini, "Where Next? Climate Change, Migration, and the (Bio)politics of Adaptation", *Global Policy*, 8.S1 (2017), 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> As for the debate on security, climate change and migration see, among others, Simon Dalby, "Climate Change: New Dimensions of Environmental Security", *The RUSI Journal*, 158.3 (2013), 34-43; Timothy Doyle and Sanjay Chaturvedi, "Climate Refugees and Security: Conceptualizations, Categories, and Contestations", in John S. Dryzek et al., eds., *Oxford Handbook of Climate Change*, 278-291; Rita Floyd, "The Environmental Security Debate and its Significance for Climate Change", *The International Specitator*, 43.3 (2008), 51-65; Maria Julia Trombetta, "Environmental Security and Climate Change: Analysing the Discourse", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 21.4 (2008), 585-602.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Trombetta, "Linking Climate-induced Migration", 134.

debate on securitising climate-induced migration and the need for exceptional measures it entails that the connotations of the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' have changed over time. Over the last decades, as a matter of fact, 'migrant' has been perceived as negative and unsettling, while 'refugee', albeit more and more 'suspicious', has been deemed more neutral.<sup>24</sup> However, since it leads to victimisation, "there should be no space for the concept of 'climate refugees' [which] is a flawed and noxious concept that, regardless of all the headlines it can gain, can hardly provide any contribution to progressive agendas on climate and migration and in support of those vulnerable to climate change".<sup>25</sup>

This is particularly important for news discourse because journalistic routines "always carry norms as to how the spectator should relate to the sufferer and what we should do about the suffering".<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the way social actors are named or misnamed influences the way people react to climate journalism and share common knowledge on climate change and climate-induced migration.<sup>27</sup> Because of its ethical duty, climate communication "must be more than simply informative; it must also strive to enhance the personal and collective agency of people and communities to act in the face of crisis".<sup>28</sup> In other words, it should strive to promote alternative news discourses and find alternative ways of naming and framing social actors.

### 3. Theoretical Background and Method

As Reisigl and Wodak theorise in their discourse-historical approach, the strategies that are adopted to create ingroup and outgroup identities in news discourse may be identified by means of a three-level methodology that takes into account the context in which the topic is presented, the discursive strategies used to represent migrants as social actors, and their linguistic means (types) and context-dependent linguistic realisations (tokens).<sup>29</sup> Through the interdisciplinary and multi-methodical combination of historical, political, sociological and/or psychological dimensions, the approach "analyses the historical dimension of discursive actions by exploring the ways in which particular genres of discourse are subject to diachronic change",<sup>30</sup> and "allows a multi-dimensional deconstruction of the way certain *topoi* and arguments are recontextualised and reformulated".<sup>31</sup> It is thus particularly suited to the investigation of the complex historical and socio-economic features of the climate-migration nexus.

In order to evaluate the positive self-presentation or negative othering of social actors, Reisigl and Wodak outline five main strategies, i.e. referential, predicational, argumentation, perspectivation and intensifying/mitigation strategies. Since the case study under investigation deals with the names and labels used to identify climate-induced migrants in the *BBC News Online* corpus, the focus will be mainly on referential (or nomination) strategies, which Reisigl and Wodak adapt from van Leeuwen's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Ronald Kaye, "Blaming the Victim: An Analysis of Press Representation of Refugees and Asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom in the 1990s", in Russel King and Nancy Wood, eds., *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2001), 659-681.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Bettini, "Where Next?", 36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: Sage, 2006), 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> See Carol Farbotko, "Representation and Misrepresentation of Climate Migrants", in Mayer and Crépeau, eds., *Research Handbook on Climate Change*, 67-81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Shane Gunster, "Engaging Climate Communication: Audiences, Frames, Values and Norms", in Robert A. Hackett et al., *Journalism and Climate Crisis: Public Engagement, Media Alternatives* (London: Routledge, 2017), 53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Theo van Leeuwen and Wodak, "Legitimizing Immigration Control: A Discourse-Historical Analysis", *Discourse Studies*, 1.1 (1999), 91.

system network of representation of social actors.<sup>32</sup> Among them, the most relevant here are the 'exclusion' or 'inclusion' of social actors, 'categorisation', 'specification'/'genericisation', and 'impersonalisation'. Exclusion can be total (suppression) or less radical (backgrounding and passivation), while categorisation regards "the representation of social actors by functionalising, identifying or appraising them".<sup>33</sup> Through specification social actors are referred to as concrete individuals, whereas the opposite occurs with genericisation, which can be further divided into collectivisation (the individual is part of a generic group, e.g. family, tribe, etc.) and aggregation (the individual is quantified, becomes a number). With impersonalisation, on the other hand, reference to social actors is made by means of abstract nouns and can be further divided into abstraction and objectivation.<sup>34</sup>

In order to assess to what extent the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' are employed on *BBC News Online* in relation to climate change, the corpus has been firstly analysed using the *AntConc* concordance tool.<sup>35</sup> Besides the rank and frequency of some keywords related to climate-induced migration, the following terms were considered in the analysis: 'climate refugee', 'climate change refugee', 'environmental refugee', 'climate migrant', 'climate change migrant' and 'environmental migrant'. The findings of this corpus-assisted study were used to integrate and support the subsequent qualitative analysis of the articles.

### 4. The Corpus

Today online news is becoming a more and more significant part of the overall media coverage,<sup>36</sup> while the imperative of interactivity and the different responses from online readers have led to new forms of knowledge, social roles, identities and interpersonal relations.<sup>37</sup> The international edition of *BBC News Online* is one of the most popular news websites globally and is best known for its cultural authority. The introduction of an online version in the second half of the 1990s forced the *BBC* to modify its forms, practices and epistemologies since traditional broadcast scripts were not suitable anymore and everything had to be written specifically for the web. Online coverage is often criticised for being derivative and for dumbing down online audiences without providing them with a sophisticated range of information. This is not the case of *BBC News Online*:

The BBC, then as now, is one of the largest news gathering organisations in the world. Where rival sites – both television and newspaper-based – typically relied on copy from the wire service to provide braking news, BBC News Online could draw on the expertise of over 2,000 members of staff and 250 correspondents across the globe. The online news team was composed of some forty journalists in addition

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Van Leeuwen, "The Representation of Social Actors", in Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard, eds., *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 32-70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 47.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Besides nomination, also other strategies such as framing will be analysed whenever required.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Even though the use of a concordance tool is one of the distinguishing features of Corpus Linguistics, what has been done in this paper is nothing but a corpus-assisted discourse study at its simplest level. As a matter of fact, the methodological integration of Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis is beyond the scope of this case study. For further details on such integrated method see, among others, Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> See in particular Stuart Allan, *Online News: Journalism and the Internet* (Maidenhead: Open U.P., 2006); Steve Schifferes and Stephen Coulter, "Downloading Disaster: BBC News Online Coverage of the Global Financial Crisis", *Journalism*, 14.2 (2013), 228-252.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> See Scott L. Althaus and David Tewksbury, "Agenda Setting and the 'New' News: Patterns of Issue Importance Among Readers of the Paper and Online Versions of *The New York Times*", *Communication Research*, 29.2 (2002), 180-207; van Leeuwen and Wodak, "Legitimizing Immigration Control", 92.

to technical staff and graphic designers preparing news stories on the basis of reports provided by these correspondents.<sup>38</sup>

Thanks to its online version, the *BBC* has successfully managed to transfer its public service ethos to the 2.0 era and to develop an ecology of online news reporting, which, despite its efforts to represent a broad range of opinions, has not been successful in achieving impartiality yet.<sup>39</sup>

The corpus was created by searching the international version of *BBC News Online* using the query terms 'environmental refugee\*', 'climate refugee\*', 'climate change refugee\*', 'environmental migrant\*', 'climate migrant\*', and 'climate change migrant\*'. It was further narrowed down by excluding the articles not dealing with climate change and/or climate-induced migration, which resulted in 42 articles published between 1999 (two years after the BBC went online) and 2017. The corpus consists of 4,368 word types and 28,039 word tokens. Most articles are reports (32), together with 4 feature stories, 5 op-eds, and 1 editorial. They are evenly distributed over the years, even though 2008 and 2009 represent together more than 25% of the corpus:



Fig. 1. Distribution of articles per year

As for the distribution of the articles according to their topic, more than a third (16) are devoted to climate change and its consequences, while only 8 deal specifically with migration and refugees/migrants. The remaining articles are about reports and international meetings (5), politics and national policies (7), and other topics (6) such as health and economic issues. Hence, the terms 'climate/environmental refugees/migrants' are mostly employed in articles that do not directly deal with climate-induced migration but are simply mentioned along with other consequences of climate change. Moreover, the articles mainly appear in two types of section, i.e. science (21) – which over the years was renamed as Science and Technology (4 articles), Science and Nature (8) and Science and the Environment (9) – and geographical areas (18), such as South Asia (5), World (3) Africa (2), etc. The remaining three articles were published in other sections.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen, "Journalism, Public Service and BBC News Online" in Graham Meikle and Guy Redden, eds., *News Online: Transformation and Continuities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 23-24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Karin Wahl-Jorgensen et al., "Rethinking Balance and Impartiality in Journalism? How the BBC Attempted and Failed to Change the Paradigm", *Journalism*, 18.7 (2017), 781-800.

## 5. Analysis

The analysis of the corpus mainly draws on the discourse-historical approach and focuses in particular on the strategies listed in Reisigl and Wodak's *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism.*<sup>40</sup> In order to precisely assess how and where the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' appear in the corpus, the qualitative analysis has been firstly integrated with a quantitative study carried out using the *AntConc* concordance tool. The occurrences of the selected keywords are listed in Table 1.

Keyword	Occurrences	Percentage
refugee*	127	0.45%
climate refugee*	21	0.07%
climate change refugee*	7	0.02%
environmental refugee*	32	0.11%
migrant*	21	0.07%
climate migrant*	4	0.01%
climate change migrant*	-	-
environmental migrant*	1	0.00%

Table 1. Occurrences of selected keywords in the BBC News Online corpus

As Table 1. shows, the term 'refugee' is employed five times more often than 'migrant', while the premodifiers 'climate', 'climate change' and 'environmental' appear less frequently and tend to be rarely – if ever – used before 'migrant'. Taking into account the distribution of the terms per year is also revealing as 'environmental refugee' is used throughout the corpus even though it tends to be replaced by 'climate (change) refugee' after 2013. Quite interestingly, when 'climate refugee' is consistently used, i.e. in 2006, 2009, and 2011, 'environmental refugee' is never employed. The years 2013 and 2015 are the only ones in which the three labels are used interchangeably. Moreover, the corpus shows a predominance of 'environmental refugee' only between 1999 and 2006, when the *Stern Review* was published and 'climate refugee' was consistently used for the first time.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, 'climate migrant' first appears in 2008, while 'environmental migrant' is used only once in 2010. As the following graph in Fig. 2. shows, the years after 2007 present much more varied lexical choices as all terms – with the exception of 'environmental migrant' – are used.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 45-56.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> *The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* is a report the Government of the United Kingdom led by Prime Minister Tony Blair commissioned to economist Nicholas Stern in 2006. The document discusses the effects of climate change on global economy and has influenced some of the policies adopted by western governments.



Fig. 2. Terminological variation in the corpus

Such terminological variation may be due to the fact that in 2007 climate migration was defined as an adaptation strategy at the 94<sup>th</sup> session of the IOM Council. As the term was disseminated through press releases and reports, the usage of 'migrant' in the corpus may depend also on the frequent reference that *BBC News Online* makes to documents issued by international agencies and organisations.

One of the limits of the present study is the fact that the query terms are referential terms. As a consequence, the study has not focussed on the suppression of migrants as social actor.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, it has found that they are mostly backgrounded by means of passivation, e.g. "180 million people were affected by floods";<sup>43</sup> the personification of nature, e.g. "nature worsens poverty";<sup>44</sup> and by being turned into the object of clauses, e.g. "This [desertification] exacerbates poverty and creates environmental refugees".<sup>45</sup> There are very few examples in which migrants are foregrounded, namely a 2004 report about an Alaskan village swept away by the sea, where the people of Shishmaref are "the first refugees of global warming";<sup>46</sup> a 2006 feature story about the consequences of rising sea levels in Bangladesh;<sup>47</sup> a 2015 report about Ioane Teitiota, a Kiribati man who has been labelled as "the first climate change refugee".<sup>48</sup>

Even though all articles are about climate change, the environment is usually backgrounded.<sup>49</sup> Foregrounded social actors, on the other hand, usually include politicians, scientists, NGO representatives, together with their statements, reports or legal documents. Indeed, one of the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> In order to assess whether climate-induced migrants as social actors are suppressed, other query terms should have been selected.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Alex Kirby, "The Misery of 98", *BBC News Online*, 24 June 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/375999.stm.
 <sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Anon., "World's Dry Regions Set to Expand", BBC News Online (17 June 2005), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/4102780.stm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> David Willis, "Sea Engulfing Alaskan Village", BBC News Online (30 July 2004), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3940399.stm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Roger Harrabin, "Climate Fears for Bangladesh's Future", *BBC News Online* (14 September 2006), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/5344002.stm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Tim McDonald, "The Man Who Would Be the First Climate Change Refugee", *BBC News Online* (5 November 2015), https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34674374.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Indeed, the *AntConc* concordance tool shows that 'climate' and 'change' are among the most frequent words in the corpus, ranking 10 and 19 respectively.

consequences of this foregrounding strategy, which is very common in the corpus and relies on hedging to construct an impression of impartiality, is the fact that there is often a shift in focus from the topic presented at the beginning of the article to its social actors. In so doing, it seems that the real topic is what authoritative people or documents say rather than climate change or climate-induced migration. Moreover, the text mainly consists of intertextual references that prevent reporters from expressing an opinion.

As for nomination strategies, climate refugees/migrants are often only mentioned as one of the consequences of climate change. Labelling social actors as environmental/climate refugees or migrants is both a form of actionalisation and genericisation. The latter takes the form of collectivisation through deictics and collectives, e.g. "those people"<sup>50</sup> and "many Bangladeshi families escaping floods and droughts",<sup>51</sup> or aggregation, when quantifiers – especially exaggerating numbers – are used to specify the number of people involved, e.g. "300m people",<sup>52</sup> "enormous number of migrants"<sup>53</sup> and "hundreds of millions of people in low-lying areas".<sup>54</sup> Indeed, as previous studies on the discursive representations of migration point out,<sup>55</sup> the media – and *BBC News Online* is no exception – often rely on figures to "give the impression of objective research and scientific credibility", even though what they often aim at is sensationalism.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, neither somatisation nor explicit dissimilation is found, which means that *BBC News Online* is never overtly racist. In the whole corpus, however, other nomination strategies and frames are employed to create a dichotomy between us (western countries) and them (people in need from countries deteriorated by climate change), thus conveying implicit discrimination against migrants as others. Among them, de-possessivisation is quite common, especially with 'poor', e.g. "the poorest of the poor", <sup>57</sup> and "the world's poorest".<sup>58</sup>

Referential strategies on *BBC News Online* vary also according to the type of article. As a matter of fact, reports tend to focus on climate change in general and mention migrants or refugees merely as part of the problem. On the other hand, op-eds and feature articles deal with individual stories and present other forms of nomination like, for instance, professionalisation: "a banker with a global fan club", "the headmistress and her team", "architect-turned-boat-builder".<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, problematisation is never used in nomination, but is context-dependent since climate-induced migrants are often mentioned as part of the problems caused by climate change.

Predicational strategies are seldom used, mostly because 'refugees' and 'migrants' are simply mentioned as such when talking about climate change. When a predicate is included, we find that migrants are 'vulnerable', 'angry', or 'resilient', 'talented' and 'happy' like in the case of a feature story about Bangladesh in which social actors are described as follows: "Dhaka beggars are gentle and friendly", "the terribly disabled man", "super-adapters", "Bangladeshi being some of the happiest

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Anon., "Copenhagen Climate Deal 'Faces Problems' – Gordon Brown", *BBC News Online* (16 December 2009), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\_news/8415424.stm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Harrabin, "Climate Fears".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Alex Kirby, "Water Shortage Threatens Harvests", *BBC News Online* (7 February 1999), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/274099.stm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Amitabha Bhattasali, "S Asia in Climate Change 'Crisis'", *BBC News Online* (25 March 2008), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\_asia/7313239.stm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> See McDonald, "The Man Who Would Be".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> See, among others, Walter Pohl and Ruth Wodak, "The Discursive Construction of 'Migrants and Migration", in Michi Messer et al., eds., *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Vienna: Springer, 2012), 205-212.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse: The Case of Climate Change and Migration* (Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018), 133.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> See Harrabin, "Climate Fears".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Pallab Ghosh, "Climate Change Migration Warning Issued Through Report", *BBC News Online* (20 October 2011), https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-15341651.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Paul Rose, "Building a Secure Future in Bangladesh", *BBC News Online* (7 July 2009), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8130130.stm.

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people in the world", "they have become masters of adaptation and innovation", "these talented, energetic and loved youngsters", "40 women ... tiny and resilient".<sup>60</sup> As the list shows, the examples are not directly linked to climate-induced migrants but to people in Bangladesh who are likely to migrate in the future. It is one of the few articles in the corpus, however, to present them as human beings with positive qualities. Not only are these future migrants gentle and talented, they are resilient and adaptable, i.e. they embody the discourse on migration as a successful strategy of adaptation.

The lack of predication strategies in the corpus is due to the fact that most articles mention future migrants, which means that they are often referred to as an indistinct mass of people with no specific qualities and that most of the time future predictions are part of what Baldwin, Methmann and Rothe call "the futurology of climate-induced migration", i.e. apocalyptic narratives set in a (more or less) distant future.<sup>61</sup> The analysis is confirmed by the result of a concordance search using the keywords 'going to', which is usually employed to make predictions based on existing evidence, and 'will', which is used to make predictions based on personal opinion or intuition: while there are 19 occurrences of the former, the latter is used 170 times. Moreover, 'refugee' and 'migrant' often collocate with the verb 'become', which refers to a shift in status or condition that is supposed to take place in the future. As for argumentation strategies, *BBC News Online* tends to avoid synecdoches, metonymies and metaphors when referring to climate-induced migration. Only once are migrants described as a wave, using a water metaphor that is typical of news discourse,<sup>62</sup> as in the following example: "the South Asian region could face a wave of migrants displaced by the impact of climate change".<sup>63</sup>

As regards frames and framing, a taxonomy has been developed building on previous studies,<sup>64</sup> and adapting them to the types of discourse on climate change.<sup>65</sup> The corpus has thus been analysed according to the following frames:

- economic/capitalist frame;
- scientific frame;
- humanitarian frame;
- radical/activism frame;
- attribution of responsibility frame;
- security /protection frame.

The findings show that two or more frames coexist in almost two-thirds of the texts and that most of them adopt a humanitarian frame. Whereas the latter is evenly distributed over the years (32 articles) and is thus almost a universal perspective from which climate-induced migration is seen in the corpus, the scientific frame is used until 2008-2009 only (12 articles). This coincides with the appearance of the term 'climate/environmental migrant' in the corpus after the redefinition of migration as an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Rose, "Building a Secure Future".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Andrew Baldwin et al., "Securitizing 'Climate Refugees': The Futurology of Climate-Induced Migration", *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.2 (2014), 121-130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> See Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 59.

<sup>63</sup> See Bhattasali, "S Asia".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> See, in particular, Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 82; Vivien Benert and Anne Beier, "Influx of Migrants versus People in Need – A Combined Analysis of Framing and Connotation in the Lampedusa News Coverage", *Global Media Journal – German Edition*, 6.1 (2016), 8-9; Arran Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> According to Bettini, there are four main discourses on climate change, namely capitalist, scientific, humanitarian and radical. For further details see Bettini, "Climate Barbarians", 64.

adaptation strategy by the IOM Council in 2007. On the other hand, the economic frame is consistently used in the period between 2006 and 2011 (16 articles). Such a short time span may be related to the publication of the Stern Review in 2006 and the shift in the international scene after the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen and the introduction of the Cancun Adaptation Framework in 2010. The remaining frames are seldom adopted, which does not mean that *BBC News Online* avoids security or responsibility issues. Such topics, on the contrary, are subtly introduced through argumentation strategies. As Bettini points out, as a matter of fact, when we speak of climate-induced migration there are conflicting discourses that require a 'discursive coalition', i.e. different points of view within the same frame.<sup>66</sup>

When the economic and humanitarian frames are combined, the argumentation strategies mainly rely on the former, i.e. costs are pointed out, the financial loss is foregrounded and economic gain as the main reason for action is fostered. However, the utilitarian stance is often mitigated by *topoi* of responsibility, humanitarianism and authority in a textual arrangement that usually follows this pattern: economic factors are first mentioned; 'poor' countries have done nothing to deteriorate the environment, but now they have to pay for what 'rich' countries have done; this causes anger; common (international) action is required and has to be taken in order to succeed in saving lives and achieve a profit.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, even though the responsibility of western countries is recognised (or at least mentioned), the overall framing of such reports omits the actors, i.e. the perpetrators, of climate change and distances readers through strategies of detachment such as nominalisation, indirect speech, distancing personal deictics and abstractive passive voice.<sup>68</sup>

### 6. Discussion

The debate on climate-induced migration and the depiction of social actors as refugees or migrants on *BBC News Online* is informed by a complex web of frames which combine several layers of discourse like humanitarianism and capitalist neoliberalism, victimisation and securitisation. This discursive conflation results in the semantic ambiguity of the two terms, which echoes the fluidity of the concept of climate-induced migration itself.<sup>69</sup> 'Migrant' and 'refugee' are turned into desemanticised and deferentialised floating signifiers,<sup>70</sup> and ultimately reinforce the economic and socio-political status quo endorsed by the *BBC*. The term 'environmental' or 'climate refugee', in particular, is an example of what Russo calls "terminological catachresis",<sup>71</sup> which is related to lexical remediation in the communication to non-expert readers and to the newsworthiness of 'climate refugees', i.e. "the framing of news stories according to shared typifications and schemata".<sup>72</sup> As the findings show, 'refugee' has been preferred to 'migrant' also in the *BBC News Online* corpus, especially until 2013, when the use of both terms significantly drops.

The lexical choices of *BBC News Online* are confusing on both terminological and discursive levels. On the one hand, 'climate/environmental refugee' is employed notwithstanding its legal inconsistencies, while 'climate/environmental migrant' is avoided (almost) tout court. This may be due to the newsworthiness of humanitarian narratives, even though "the physical evidence of climate

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Bettini, "Climate Barbarians", 65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> The *topoi* have been selected from the comprehensive list in Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 75-80. <sup>68</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> See Calum T. M. Nicholson, "Climate-induced Migration': Ways Forward in the Face of an Intrinsically Equivocal Concept", in Mayer and Crépeau, eds., *Research Handbook on Climate Change*, 49-66.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Russo, "Floating Signifiers", 205.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Russo, The Evaluation of Risk, 112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Russo, "Floating Signifiers", 205.

change ... is newsworthy, yet the wider human rights implications are rarely addressed".<sup>73</sup> However, the dismissal of 'climate/environmental migrant' by the *BBC* may come as a surprise given the importance of the concept of entrepreneurial adaptation in migration discourse. The findings seem to suggest that the growing concern over national and international security may be one of the causes of such lexical choices: *BBC News Online* never overtly poses the climate-induced migration question in terms of security issues as other types of journalism do, but from time to time draws on the semantics of fear and threat to speak of the economic, scientific and humanitarian consequences of climate change. By framing migrants as 'refugees', *BBC News Online* diminishes the idea of positive migration and cashes in on the reiteration of climate-induced migration as a problem. It is no surprise, then, that the term 'problem' is mentioned four times more often than 'solution' since framing it as a problem is more newsworthy than discussing solutions.

The distribution of the query terms is also genre-related, i.e. it depends on the proportion between reports, where migrants are often backgrounded and improperly named 'refugees', and feature stories or op-eds, where migration is positively construed and migrants are seen as adapters. Furthermore, the findings show that after 2013 there was a significant decrease in the number of articles dealing with climate/environmental refugees and migrants. If we take a look at the international context, this may be related to the shifting positions of organisations like the IOM and the UNHCR towards a positive redefinition of migration as an adaptation strategy. The *BBC*'s attitude on this shift has been quite ambiguous because it seems that climate migrants are not as newsworthy as refugees and because, by avoiding the term, *BBC News Online* has failed to create a counter-discourse in which climate-induced migration is not represented as an apocalyptic threat, but as an opportunity for the people that live in deteriorating environmental conditions. Quite on the contrary, the only frame left is that of economic potential and/or problems for western societies, which can be found also in other news coverage of environmental issues on *BBC News Online*.<sup>74</sup>

#### 7. Conclusion

The discursive ambiguity of *BBC News Online* is best exemplified by the story of Ioane Teitiota, a Kiribati man who moved to New Zealand to flee the rising seas threatening his island and was labelled by news media as the world's first climate change refugee. In 2015, however, he was denied the status of refugee and repatriated. *BBC News Online* extensively covered the story and published a video interview in which he explains in the Kiribati language why he wants to go back to New Zealand:

My name is Ioane Teitiota. I wanted to stay in New Zealand because it's a better life, and my three children were born there, and I'm looking out for their future too. It's nothing like what we had in New Zealand. Back here [Kiribati] there's nothing. Especially with climate change, the country could disappear within thirty years.... Yes, I'm the same as people who are fleeing war. Those who are afraid of dying, it's the same as me. The sea level is coming up, and I will die, like them. It will affect my life when the sea takes over my land. It will kill me and my family.<sup>75</sup>

The coverage of Teitiota's case is one of the few examples in the *BBC News Online* corpus in which migrants are foregrounded. Quite paradoxically, however, he is defined as a 'climate change refugee' in spite of the fact that the denomination is not recognised under international law yet. In so doing,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Dreher and Voyer, "Climate Refugees", 68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> See, for instance, Mirko Casagranda, "E-waste: An Ecocritical Discourse Analysis", Anglistica AION, 19.2 (2015), 103-116.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Transcription of the subtitles provided by *BBC News Online* to a video interview to Ioane Teitiota published on 6 November 2015 under the title "My Life is in Danger in Kiribati", https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-34723760/my-life-is-in-danger-in-kiribati.

*BBC News Online* construes him as a victim of climate change and activates a humanitarian frame that echoes colonial subordination and power relations. Indeed, as Baldwin and Bettini point out, "[c]olonial tropes, such as remoteness, smallness and victimhood, are partly the reason so many Pacific islanders refuse the label 'climate refugee'".<sup>76</sup>

It seems quite perverse that *BBC News Online* grants climate migrants a voice and at the same time avoids the very nomination strategy that allows migrants to reclaim a "role as active agents of change".<sup>77</sup> Indeed, such a choice is likely to reflect the neoliberal and possibly neo-colonial attitudes of western mainstream media. Going back to Ionae Teitiola and his video interview, it is no coincidence that the only words he says in English are 'climate change', clearly a culture-bound term in the Kiribati language that otherwise would know nothing about it. Climate change did not exist on/in Kiribati; as a concept – and as a life-threatening condition – it was unfortunately brought by and borrowed from the west.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Baldwin and Bettini, "Introduction: Life Adrift", in Baldwin and Bettini, eds., *Life Adrift*, 14.

<sup>77</sup> Russo, "Floating Signifiers", 196.

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## Internally Displaced Persons in Canadian News Discourse. The Case of the 2016 Alberta Fires

**Abstract:** Although the concept of environmental refugees has been circulating for more than thirty years, not much has been written about how the displacement of people caused by environmental disasters has entered into public discourses. More specifically, within the empirical investigations into the discourses on environmental displacement, the phenomenon of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) moving inside the borders of their own countries as an effect of disasters has received little critical attention with respect to how it is framed.

The present article explores the discursive constructions of IDPs in Canadian news discourse which refer to the destructive 2016 Alberta fire in Fort McMurray, the heart of the tar sands region. Thus, a corpus of news reports is analysed in a discourse-analytical perspective with the intent of identifying specific discursive strategies, frames and patterns in the representation of the social actors within newspaper narratives. The analysis shows that the representations of IDPs in the corpus under investigation are characterized by different patterns of language choice compared to those emerging from the discourses on climate refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in general, evident in previous studies. In the end, what becomes also apparent is that nomination strategies are connected to specific ideologies in discourse, on the basis of which the correlation between the tar sands and the fire is either omitted or mildly unveiled.

Keywords: internally displaced persons, tar sands, Canada, fire, news discourse

### 1. Introduction

In 2016, the entire population of Fort McMurray, a boomtown in northeast Alberta, Canada, was evacuated as a massive fire engulfed residents' homes, huge portions of the Albertan forest and parts of Highway 63, the main road leading out of the city. Fort McMurray, located in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and within the northern belt of Canada's boreal forest, is best known for being the main permanent residential, logistics and service hub for the tar sands,<sup>1</sup> around which a very profitable market has grown, making Canada the biggest source of U.S. crude oil imports and the third largest proven oil reserve after Venezuela and Saudi Arabia.<sup>2</sup> Tar sands are deposits of bitumen, a very dense and viscous form of petroleum mixed with sand and clay that occupy 21% of the province of Alberta. The extraction of oil through mining and drilling is carbon-intensive and results in massive greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, huge amounts of fresh water, pumped from the Athabasca River, is needed for the process. Since the water becomes toxic after the extractions, it cannot be given back to the river; therefore, it is retained into extremely polluted ponds which nonetheless let pollutants leak through the soil into the groundwater system. As a consequence, the whole area surrounding the tar sands working sites is highly contaminated and exposed to a number of 'accidents'. Regardless of the risks, the population of the area has increased since early 2000s due to the exploitation of the tar sands, with people migrating stably from other parts of Canada or from abroad to join the sector and others being only temporary residents in mobile workcamps during the boom period.<sup>3</sup> According to the 2015

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Oriana Palusci, "River of Hell: Athabasca Tar Sands Narratives", in Palusci, ed., *Green Canada* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), 67-85.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Michael Levi, *The Canadian Oil Sands: Energy Security vs. Climate Change* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations), 2009.
<sup>3</sup> The region grew from 56 workcamps in 2006 to 123 by 2015, hosting the so called "shadow population". For more detailed statistics, see https://www.thediscourse.ca/data/canadas-shadow-population.

Census, the shadow population in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo accounted for 4,342, whereas the permanent ranged at 78,382.<sup>4</sup>

On May 3, 2016, eighty-eight thousand people, according to official sources, were directed from Fort McMurray to evacuation centers scattered throughout the country as the fire quickly advanced in apocalypse-like scenarios, defined by PM Justin Trudeau as the largest fire evacuation in the history of Alberta. On May 4, the Alberta government declared a provincial state of emergency that remained in place until June 10. A total of 49 fires burned, covering about 582,000 hectares of land, including part of Saskatchewan.<sup>5</sup> News reports about the event were picked up worldwide, alerted by the dramatic tones of the Canadian news media. Even though the extraction of billions of barrels of bitumen in Fort McMurray is notoriously included into the list of the primary causes of global warming leading to extreme environmental disasters such as the Alberta fire, dry weather conditions and winds of up to 70km/h were reported to be the main causes of the catastrophe. The relationship between the Alberta tar sands and the 2016 fire was not made explicit in public discourse. One reason for the omission is possibly due to the fact that the tar sands in Canada have become vital to many of those who were affected by the fire and to the country's economy as an energy superpower. In fact, a work by Debra Davidson and Mike Gismondi shows how oil sands discourse in Canada functions to normalize capitalist exploitation of this resource and legitimate the Alberta/federal governments,<sup>6</sup> while recent research argues that the fire activity in boreal forests has increased dramatically in the last few years and a strong connection linking drier climatic regimes, severe fire weather and climate change has been drawn.7

Although the concept of climate-induced migrants has been circulating for more than thirty years, not much has been written about how the internal displacement of people caused by environmental disasters has entered into public discourses. More specifically, the phenomenon of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs, from here on) moving inside the borders of their own countries as an effect of environmental disasters has received little critical attention with respect to how it is framed in discourse. The present article explores the discursive constructions of IDPs in Canadian news reports which refer to the 2016 Alberta fire. A corpus of news reports is analysed in a discourse-analytical perspective with the intent of identifying specific discursive strategies, frames and patterns in the representation of social actors within newspaper narratives. Attention is given to the convergence of discourses into sets of narratives that ultimately impact on politics, practices and social relations.<sup>8</sup> The analysis argues that the representations of IDPs are characterized by different patterns of language choice, including nomination, activation, mitigation, as well as different discourse *topoi*, compared to those emerging from the discourses on climate-induced migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, evident in previous studies.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, "Census 2015: Executive Summary" (2015), http://www.rmwb.ca/Assets/Corporate/Census+Reports/Executive+Summary+-+Municipal+Census+2015.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Government of Alberta, "Final Update 39: 2016 Wildfires" (2016), https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=41701e7ECBE35-AD48-5793-1642c499FF0DE4CF.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See Debra J. Davidson and Mike Gismondi, *Challenging Legitimacy at the Precipice of Energy Calamity* (New York: Springer, 2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Mike Fennigan et al., "Future Area Burned in Canada", *Climatic Change*, 72 (2005), 1-16; M.D. Flannigan and C.E. Wagner, "Climate Change and Wildfire in Canada", *Can. J. For. Res.*, 21 (1991), 66-72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996).

### 2. Methodology and Research Questions

The present study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. The analysis is corpus-based and therefore makes use of the tools of Corpus Linguistics (CL) in combination with the methods offered by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The choice was made in order to uncover "the social, political, historical and cultural context of the data".<sup>9</sup> Hence, the research has employed the models provided by Paul Baker, Baker and Gabrielatos and McEnery and Hardie.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, it is based on the premise that corpus work is "an empirical approach",<sup>11</sup> in that it aims at analyzing language in use, but it also maintains with Baker et al. that "[a] corpus analysis will allow us to see which choices are privileged, giving evidence for mainstream, popular or entrenched ways of thinking".<sup>12</sup> At the same time, a discourse-analytical perspective has been adopted in the attempt to "study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause".<sup>13</sup> The approach chosen is therefore discursive and the study is informed by CDA methods, since it relies on the assumption that "any part of any language text, spoken or written, is simultaneously constituting representations, relations, and identities", as pointed out by Fairclough and Wodak.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, it shares the view according to which discourse does manifest particular worldviews, relations, identities and ideologies, and that, as a set of "contextdependent semiotic practices"<sup>15</sup> that are socially constituted/constitutive, it cannot but be analyzed in its situatedness, considering its multiple layers of contexts. Accordingly, the ultimate intent of this article is to unveil the latent power and impact of discourse practices as the expression of ideologies in power, as well as the circumstances and the consequences of their production and usages. In doing so, the analysis examined frequencies and statistically significant lexical patterns in the corpus under investigation as well as their expanded concordances, taking into account collocations. Collocability was determined through mutual information (MI), a method that favors content words that, compared to function words, more clearly indicate discourse prosodies.<sup>16</sup> Starting from the quantified linguistic indicators, discoursal phenomena in the form of argumentative devices and strategies were then recognized and examined. A combination of the inventories provided by van Leeuwen and by Wodak and Meyer, including nomination, predication, argumentation, intensification, and then functionalization, activation and passivation was used to conduct the analysis on the representation of social actors.<sup>17</sup> Starting from how participants of social practices are nominated and therefore positioned in discourse, defining characteristics ascribed to them were identified by looking at predicational strategies. These were found to be the expression of news reporters' involvement in

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Paul Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press", *Discourse and Society*, 19 (2008), 273-306.
 <sup>10</sup> Baker, *American and British English: Divided by a Common Language?* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2017);

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Baker, American and British English: Divided by a Common Language? (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2017); "Representations of Islam in British Broadsheet and Tabloid Newspapers 1999-2005", Journal of Language and Politics, 9.2 (2010), 310-338; Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis (London: Continuum, 2006); Baker and Costas Gabrielatos, "Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding: A Corpus Analysis of Discursive Constructions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press, 1996-2005", Journal of English Linguistics, 36.1 (2008), 5-38; Tony McEnery and Andrew Hardie, Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2012).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Elena Tognini-Bonelli, Corpus Linguistics at Work (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Baker et al., A Glossary of Corpus Linguistics (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 2006), 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Michael Stubbs, *Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis", in Teun A. van Dijk, ed., *Discourse as Social Interaction: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (London: Sage Publications, 1997) 258-84.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse-historical Approach", in Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Baker and Gabrielatos, "Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding", 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Theo van Leeuwen, "The Representation of Social Actors", in Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcom Coulthard, eds., *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996) 32-70; Wodak and Meyer, eds., *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*.

discourse, who also make use of mitigation and intensification to tone down or sharpen the representation of IDPs to explicitly or implicitly support the argumentation for or against the tar sands industry. The strategies led to the identification of a limited number of discourse *topoi*, intended as "conclusion rules that connect the argument with the conclusion", <sup>18</sup> as well as to the metaphors and cognitive frames employed in Canadian news reports, which is the genre under investigation.

Given the crucial role that news media play in the circulation of knowledge about climate change, both as a narrative and a material phenomenon,<sup>19</sup> news reports in English from Canadian newspapers were chosen for this investigation. As a type of discourse, "news stories" have a quintessentially narrative dimension that relies on the socio-cognitive force of language and is the expression of ideological positions.<sup>20</sup> The alleged reliability of print news ultimately powers up the impact they have on the public opinion and for this reason the rhetorical strategies used to deliver news content is of interest to this analysis.

Boycoff points out that climate change has been covered by North American news media since the 1930s, with a particular focus on its devastating effects.<sup>21</sup> Although many scholars and researchers have dedicated their attention to US media coverage of climate change, based on a research conducted by Young and Dugas, to date there have been very few studies on Canadian news media coverage of the issue.<sup>22</sup> Antilla, for instance, proposes an analysis of public perception of global climate change through media constructions of scientific knowledge worldwide, including Canada, although only in comparison with the US and Europe.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, Young and Dugas investigate media treatment of climate change in Canada through the observation of two national newspapers, The Globe and Mail and The National Post, in the years 1988-2008.<sup>24</sup> They uncover a trend in Canadian news media towards the severance of climate change from its causes. In this sense, as their study reveals, climate change in Canada has become a metaphor and a window of opportunity for journalists to tell stories about politics and the economy that nonetheless fail to provide insights into the problem. Following a similar line, Stoddart, Halyza-Delay and Tindall analyze climate change news coverage in Canadian national newspapers from 1997 to 2010 and conclude that the Canadian news discourse about climate change is dominated by themes related to governmental responsibility, policymaking and ways to mitigate climate change itself.<sup>25</sup> Overall, all these studies take into account the issue and coverage of climate change but do not consider its impact on human migration and how this is framed in news discourse.

Similarly, within the empirical investigations into the discourses on climate change and climateinduced migration, IDPs moving inside the borders of their own countries as an effect of environmental disasters have received little critical attention with respect to how they are framed in news discourse. This is especially true if we compare the amount of research on IDPs with the works and analyses dedicated to more 'recognized' forms of environmental migration, such as that of refugees fleeing from areas devastated by disasters to reach destinations outside the borders of their own countries.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Carol Farbotko and Heather Lazrus, "The First Climate Refugees? Contesting Global Narratives of Climate Change in Tuvalu", *Global Environmental Change*, 22.2 (2011), 382-390; Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse: The Case of Climate Change and Migration* (Naples: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Van Dijk, News Analysis: Case Studies of International and National News in the Press (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1988).

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Maxwell T. Boycoff, "We Speak for the Trees': Media Reporting on the Environment", *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 34 (2009), 431-458.
 <sup>22</sup> Nathan Young and Eric Dugas, "Representations of Climate Change in Canadian National Print Media: The Banalization of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Nathan Young and Eric Dugas, "Representations of Climate Change in Canadian National Print Media: The Banalization of Global Warming", *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 48.1 (2011), 1-22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Liisa Antilla, "Climate of Scepticism: US Newspaper Coverage of the Science of Climate Change", *Global Environmental Change*, 15 (2005), 338-352.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Young and Dugas, "Representations of Climate Change".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Mark C. J. Stoddart et al., "Canadian News Media Coverage of Climate Change: Historical Trajectories, Dominant Frames, and International Comparisons", *Society and Natural Resources* (2015), 1-15.

Therefore, by focusing on the investigation of IDPs in Canadian news discourse, the article aims at filling a gap left by previous studies. The main research questions addressed herein are:

- 1. How are IDPs linguistically defined, nominated and constructed in the news coverage pertaining to the 2016 Alberta fire?
- 2. What are the discursive strategies employed?
- 3. What are the most frequent discourse *topoi*?
- 4. What ideologies lie behind certain representations of IDPs?

### 3. Corpus Design

A corpus of news reports was specifically designed for the purpose of this study and named Wildfire Newspaper Corpus (WNP\_Corpus). The timeframe set was April 30, 2016 – September 1, 2016, which corresponds to the beginning and the end of the fire coverage and post-recovery issues. The corpus includes news reports from Canada's major national and local newspapers, comprising 89 stories (67,819 tokens). The articles were retrieved from *ProQuest* using the query terms "Fort McMurray" [and] "fire" [or] "wildfire". It was then uploaded to the online platform *Sketch Engine* for investigation and analysis of raw frequencies and collocations. The SiBol corpus of English Broadsheet Newspapers was chosen as a reference corpus as it contains 650 million tokens and collects more general news articles on a wide range of topics, covering the years from 1993 to 2013.

### 4. Internally Displaced Persons in Canadian News Discourse

In line with CDA methods, the initial step in the analysis was to examine the wider context of use of the term *Internally Displaced Persons/IDPs* across institutional sources and glossaries. Its most common definition is generic and comes from the United Nation's *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, according to which IDPs are:

[p]ersons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.<sup>26</sup>

Although the document mentions natural and human-made disasters as one of the causes of human displacement, the definition regards the displacement caused by religious, political and discriminatory violence. Moreover, unlike refugees, IDPs do not have a special status in international law but rely only on national protection in response to their humanitarian crisis.<sup>27</sup>

Whereas the UNHCR has moved towards a definition of environmentally displaced persons as "people who are displaced from or who feel obliged to leave their usual place of residence, because their lives, livelihoods and welfare have been placed at serious risk as a result of adverse

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement", (1998), www.refworld.org/docid/3c3da07f7.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Robert McLeman and Francois Gemenne, "Climate-induced Community Relocations", in Robin Bronen, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Displacement and Migration* (London: Routledge, 2018), 395.

environmental, ecological or climatic processes and events,"<sup>28</sup> other definitions, recollected in Table 1, remain broader. While, as Russo remarks, the scientific and political debate on climate-induced migration in the last fifteen years, "has led to the emergence of highly creative and contested terms",<sup>29</sup> including *environmental refugee, environmental migrant, climate refugee, environmentally displaced person* etc., terminology (and international laws) exclusively related to climate-induced IDPs is still lacking some specificity. Indeed, the term itself, unless preceded by pre-modifying clusters (climate-induced, for instance), remains quite vague in that internal displacement can occur in several forms and be triggered by different causes, including wars and persecutions.

Oxford Dictionary	(IDP), a person who has been forced to move
	within their own country as a result of conflict or
	environmental disaster.
TransLegal Dictionary	someone who has been forced to leave their home,
	often because of war, but who still lives within
	their country's borders
Dictionary of Genocide	(IDPs) (also referred to as internal refugees
5.5	or displaced persons) refers to those who are
	fleeing armed conflict or internal strife
	and/or persecution (or the fear of
	persecution) but have not crossed an
	internationally recognized state border and
	are thus still residing within the territory of
	their own country
Historical Dictionary of the United Nations	(IDPs). The term designates persons forced
Instorical Dictionary of the United Nations	
	to flee or leave their homes for a variety of
	reasons, most commonly armed conflict,
	violence, violations of human rights and
	man-made or natural disasters within their
	own countries [] Wide variations in
	weather conditions, which may attribute to
	climate change are another contributing
	factor. Insofar as IDPs do not cross state
	borders, they cannot benefit from the rights
	and status provided by international refugee
	law and the protection and assistance of the
	Office of the United Nations High
	Commissioner for Refugees []
Encyclopedia of Human Rights	Internally displaced persons are individuals
	forced from their homes as a result of armed
	conflict, generalized violence, human rights
	violations, or natural or human-made
	disasters and who have not crossed an
	internationally recognized state border
	internationally recognized state border

Table 1. Definitions of Internally	Displaced Persons
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As it may be ascertained in Table 1, the definitions of IDPs, regardless of the reasons of their displacement, frame the category of subjects as individuals who are forced to leave their home, while remaining within the borders of their home states. If news discourse works according to the aforementioned definitions, then, in our corpus we could expect *IDPs* to share both the collocates and

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Brian Gorlick, "Environmentally-displaced Persons: a UNHCR Perspective", (2007), www.ony.unu.edu/seminars/2007/16May2007/presentation\_gorlick.ppt.
 <sup>29</sup> Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk*, 57.

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discourse prosody with *refugee*, since a strong reference to forced displacement is activated in both terms.

Further research into the Canadian institutional discourse shows that the term is not employed by the provincial government of Alberta and the federal government of Canada in their official reports on the 2016 fire. Two documents were examined in this regard, the "Home again. Recovery after the Wood Buffalo Wildfire" and "May 2016 Wood Buffalo Wildfire Post-Incident Assessment Report", both released by the government of Alberta through its official website, the former prepared for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the latter for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. In none of the final reports the term Internally Displaced Persons/IDPs occurs. On the contrary, the people of Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo affected by the fire are referred to by using a range of variable terminology that includes displaced residents, affected people, displaced people, evacuated people and evacuees. However, these definitions remain imprecise and are formulated as a rejection of Internally Displaced Persons. Also, the absence of the term Internally Displaced Persons in the final reports highlights a fundamental disagreement between the official documents of the province of Alberta on the one hand, and the examined glossary and definitions on the other, since IDPS are *de facto* renominated in Canadian institutional discourse. Although the focus of this article is not the examination of institutional discourse, the data offered some ground for undertaking the first steps in the quantitative analysis, since the clusters have been used as query terms to interrogate the corpus and shed some light into how IDPs have entered Canadian news discourse.

### 5. Internally Displaced Persons in the WNP\_Corpus

The quantitative analysis starts with the investigation of the query terms searched in the Wildfire Newspaper Corpus (hereafter WNP\_Corpus), in order to identify which terms were preferred to talk about IDPs, based on raw frequencies. In addition to the terms identified by taking into consideration official sources and glossaries (Table 1), a list of the most frequent nouns in the corpus was also retrieved to widen the pool of query terms and spot other nomination strategies. *Residents, refugees* and *people* were found to be possible candidates in this analysis and were therefore further investigated. Lists of occurring collocates were generated, so as to find potentially interesting clusters of meaning used in the representation of social actors. The span was set at five words on the left and right of the node, and collocability was determined through MI scores. Only collocate candidates with an MI score higher than 5 were included in the analysis.

Query term	Occurrences
People	242
Residents	71
Evacuees	59
Refugee	52
Internally Displaced Persons	0
affected people	0
evacuated people	0

Table 2. List of query terms a	and their raw frequencies
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As Table 2 illustrates, in this corpus IDPs are never named as such. The absence of the term is consistent with the lack of its usage within the provincial reports issued by the government of Alberta. Therefore, the data seems to suggest a connection between institutional and news discourses, since the latter picks up from the former, although re-contexualization and mediatization strategies occur as well.

In this case, the presence of both *evacuees* and *refugees* is relevant in this corpus, as they seem to occupy the gap left by the absence of *Internally Displaced Persons* more directly than other terms. Here, the discursive strategy of re-nomination occurring as functionalization is employed to discursively construct the social actors, in such a way that, in their lexicalization, the focus shifts away from their condition of being displaced to either their action of evacuating/being evacuated to a safer place (when they are referred to as *evacuees*) or to their vulnerability (when they are called *refugees*). We can hypothesize that both lexical choices are ideologically imbued since *evacuees* and *refugees* activate strings of meanings that contribute to the representation of the human disaster alternatively as the result of a natural event that was successfully managed by the government of Alberta because people were safely and quickly moved to a temporary shelter, or as a humanitarian crisis.

In order to confirm or deny the hypotheses, two lists of frequent collocates of *evacuees* and *refugees* were retrieved and organized in Table 3 and 4. This phase allows the identification of predicational strategies that unveil the traits, characteristics and qualities attributed to the social actors, which are strong indicators of the stance adopted in their representation.

Collocate	Co-occurrences	MI
host	6	10.08
staggering	3	9.57
overwhelm	3	9.08
airlift	3	9.08
camps	4	9.31
vast	3	8.72
Clear	4	8.61
majority	3	8.57
sent	3	8.31
private	3	8.08
either	3	7.80
car	3	7.80
money	3	7.37
trying	3	7.37
north	3	6.85
most	4	6.40
work	3	5.85
would	3	5.76
oilsands	3	5.61
Edmonton	6	5.61
were	6	5.27
McMurray	11	5.19
Some	3	5.07

Table 3. Collocate candidates of evacuees sorted by MI scores

Collocate	Co-occurrences	MI
Syrian	9	10.49
Immigrants	3	9.04
Against	4	8.59
Number	3	8.04
Violence	3	7.49
Canada	4	5.45
Muslims	6	5.35
About	3	5.34
Ву	5	5.26
It	3	5.15
Crisis	4	5.01

Table 4. Collocate candidates of refugees sorted by MI scores

By looking at the lists, it becomes apparent that *evacuees* and *refugees* are part of different discourse prosodies. Collocates of *evacuees* show that the term is employed in the corpus to refer to the people of Fort McMurray. On the other hand, *refugees* presents a more complex scenario in that the term appears to collocate with words such as *Muslims* and *Syrian* and with negative categories of reference (*violence* and *crisis*). If we expand the analysis of collocates to the observation of concordance strings, we will notice that discourses on refugees intertwine in this corpus with those on evacuees, although the two terms designate different social actors within a comparative framework that poses, for instance, the number of Syrian refugees and that of Fort McMurray evacuees on two opposite benches.

1 (i) doc#3	about Canadian culture and understand the local people, said Altaani, a Syrian	refugee	who came to Calgary with his wife and three sons in March. -/s>
2 (i) doc#1	7 Some 80,000 Fort McMurray residents - nearly four times the number of Syrian	refugees	accepted by Canada - have been forced to flee their own dreams. $\sc ssc ssc ssc ssc ssc ssc ssc ssc ssc $
3 (i) doc#5	6 Some 80,000 Fort McMurray residents - nearly four times the number of Syrian	refugees	accepted by Canada - have been forced to flee their own dreams. $<\!\!/s\!\!>\!\!s\!\!>\!\!This$
4 (i) doc#6	$7$ ; and his family, who had moved to northern Alberta only months ago as $\ensuremath{\textbf{Syrian}}$	refugees	, were evacuated once again.
5 (i) doc#6	9 our search. 16 - Jo Cox, 41, a British MP who championed the cause of Syrian	refugees	and campaigned for Britain to stay in the EU, was killed by a gun- and knife-wiel
6 (i) doc#7	5 3 federal government will spend more than \$1 billion to bring in and help Syrian	refugees	, but the best it can do for the 88,000 displaced and homeless residents of Fort I
7 (i) doc#7	6 ntry during the first three months of 2016, a large number of whom were Syrian	refugees	. <s> It noted Canada had not received that many new immigrants in a sing</s>
8 (i) doc#7	6 ∋ current system of demographic counts in July 1971. Falk said Syrian	refugees	were also a significant contributor to Manitoba's population gain in the last year.
9 (i) doc#7	6 I with the Kurdish Association of Manitoba recently told him about 1,300 Syrian	refugees	have arrived in the province since Nov. 1. murray.mcneill@freepress.mb.ca Cre

#### Fig. 1. Concordance strings of Syrian refugees

1 (i) doc#0	ste has poured into relief centres in Alberta set up to accommodate the 80,000	evacuees	.
2 (i) doc#2	government has announced plans to speed up access to EI for Fort McMurray	evacuees	.; Cole Burston, Afp-Getty Images / Two women walk between portable houses
3 (i) doc#2	ndering River, 200 kilometres south of Fort McMurray, that's housing some 400	evacuees	. >> Data di pubblicazione: May 7, 2016 >> A march of tradition, his
4 (i) doc#4	, 2016	evacuee	centres, but long-term needs remain Autore: Hopper, Tristin.
5 (i) doc#4	ctorists in the first minutes of the fire. By Saturday, the vast majority of	evacuees	were either in Edmonton, or scattered to family and friends across Canada.
6 (i) doc#4	Atlantic coast, Marine Atlantic was offering free passage to any Fort McMurray	evacuee	trying to get their car to Newfoundland.
7 (i) doc#4	ome, in particular, had sprung into action to mount a staggering private airlift of	evacuees	trapped in the north.
8 (i) doc#4	than 7,000 people. Buses would be sent into oilsands camps hosting	evacuees	, they'd be sent into the airport and loaded either into a packed airliner or into the
9 (i) doc#4	ered vacant by the economic downturn.	evacuee	still shaken by the fire said she was nervous to go to a supply centre because s

Fig. 2. Concordance strings of evacuees

Two *topoi* emerge from the analysis of concordance strings when *refugees* occurs in the corpus: the *topos* of finance (Canadian evacuees are more in need of funds compared to refugees from elsewhere)

Anglistica AION 21.2 (2017), 53-75 ISSN: 2035-8504 doi: 10.19231/angl-aion.201724 and the *topos* of difference (Canadian evacuees are not refugees, because they are more 'real'). The *topoi* overlap and support the same argumentation, i.e. Alberta evacuees need to be assigned more funds than refugees because they are the people who are really in need. The reporters, however, are very careful in not confusing the two terms (*evacuees* and *refugees*) when it comes to nominating Canadian and allegedly non-Canadian displaced persons, since only Fort McMurray residents are functionalized as evacuees, whereas non-Canadian citizens are referred to as refugees to Canada, even if they were affected by the fire as the rest of Fort McMurray people. The extract below, taken from the *Toronto Star*, provides an example:

Fahed Labek and his family, who had moved to northern Alberta only months ago as *Syrian refugees*, were evacuated once again. Amany Darwish, president of the Canadian True Power organization in Fort Mac, said she believes about six families of *Syrian refugees* fled to safety, but was concerned painful memories would be stirred. (*Toronto Star*, 6/05/2016)

In this report, the representation of Syrian refugees frames the social actors as more vulnerable than the residents who had to leave their houses, because fleeing to safety would stir painful memories. Refugees are therefore categorized as emotional and helpless. It is worth recalling, in this regard, the case of the people of New Orleans uprooted by hurricane Katrina in 2005, addressed by *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the Associated Press, in their initial reporting, as *refugees*, which caused strong reactions both by the storm's survivors and by the federal government. The response was due to the fact that, according to part of the public opinion, including George W. Bush, these people were Americans, not refugees, which was deemed, instead, a racist term, "[b]ecause the concept of the 'refugee' summoned a sense of vulnerability that contradicted everything the United States – and its citizens – supposedly stood for."<sup>30</sup> *Internally Displaced Persons* was also disregarded both by US news media and within the institutional debate. Canadian news reporters seem to have avoided similar issues by adopting different nomination strategies.

In another extract, references to Syrian refugees are made in order to amplify the dramatic impact of the number of people who had to flee from their houses in Fort McMurray compared to that of the refugees that Canada had to accept:

Some 80,000 Fort McMurray residents - nearly four times the number of *Syrian refugees* accepted by Canada - have been forced to flee their own dreams. This is a human tragedy of near unimaginable proportions for a country that has never known the cruelty of war displacement. (*Leader Post*, 6/05/2016)

Even though helplessness does not characterize the representation of evacuees, the strategy of argumentation is employed to frame the condition of Fort McMurray residents as more dramatic than that of the Syrian refugees who came to Canada in search of shelter. However, this occurs only in discourses where the *topos* of finance occurs. As indicated by lexical choices and intensification (*nearly four times, near unimaginable, has never known*), the epistemic status of the proposition is modified and the illocutionary force of the utterance widened, while argumentation is used to justify the preferential treatment of Albertan evacuees compared to refugees. In fact, according to the reporter's perspective, evacuees are experiencing a human tragedy that is not comparable to that of Syrian refugees who entered the country, but that is close enough to what a war displacement might have produced, should Canada have experienced war. The discourse of Alberta evacuees being more in need than refugees does not seem to be simply boosting newsworthiness; instead, it evolves into the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Adeline Masquelier, "Why Katrina's victims aren't refugees: musings on a 'dirty' word", *American Anthropologist*, 108.4 (2006), 736.

debate over whether the federal government should assign more funds to face the emergency (*topos* of finance). Similarly, in only one case the evacuees of Fort McMurray are referred to as *refugees*, although the reporter uses direct speech to distance him/herself from the statements of the speaker. In fact, in this extract from *The Hamilton Spectator*, the journalist reports the words used by North Greenville mayor David Gordon when pleading his citizens to help those affected by the fires in Fort McMurray. The mayor uses the phrase *true refugees* in an effort to criticize the Canadian government that has spent more than \$1 billion to help Syrian refugees and allegedly did not do enough for the evacuees of Fort McMurray:

These people need help. These are *the true refugees of Canada*; 80,000 to 90,000 people have been forced out of their homes, forced out of their jobs - they have nothing. (*The Hamilton Spectator*, 16/05/2016)

The discourse emerging from the extract revolves around the opposition real vs. bogus refugee that has animated the debate over the 'refugee crisis'. By means of predication (*true*) and repetition (*forced out/forced out*), *refugees* shifts to occupy the category of *evacuees*, since evacuees are represented as being more real and more in danger, therefore more in need of funds from the government of Canada. The *topos* of difference is supported by the strategy of othering refugees to Canada and unveils an anti-immigration stance and anti-refugee rhetoric that is built on the appropriation of the term *refugee* to claim that the fire evacuees are the only 'refugees' that Canada should financially support.

Turning backwards to the analysis of collocates, we can now concentrate on the representation of evacuees. By looking at Table 3, collocate candidates can be intuitively grouped into words pertaining to the domains of hospitality (*host, camp, oilsands*), mobility (*staggering, airlift, car, north, McMurray, trying, Edmonton, sent*), quantity (*vast, majority, most, some*), finance and property (*money, private*). Interestingly, the string of concordances retrieved for *oilsands* collocating with *evacuees* (Fig. 3) reveals that uses of the noun revolve around the *topos* of hospitality in that tar sands camps were used as hosting venues during the emergency.



Fig. 3. Concordance strings of oilsands collocating with evacuees

The occurrences of *oilsands* as a collocate of *evacuees* place the term within a humanitarian framework that is even more visible if we extend the analysis to the wider context of the report. In an extract taken from the *Calgary Herald*, the association between tar sands companies and evacuation processes is strengthened since the Albian Aerodrome, southwest of Albian village and very close to Fort McMurray, operated by popular oil company Shell Canada, is said to having been used for evacuating people from the emergency area, whereas it normally brings workers into the tar sands region.

The Shell-owned Albian Aerodrome, in particular, had sprung into action to mount a staggering private airlift of *evacuees* trapped in the north. The airport is normally used exclusively for private 737 flights ferrying workers into the *oilsands*, but for several days it coordinated military and charter flights evacuating more than 7,000 people. Buses would be sent into *oilsands* camps hosting *evacuees*, they'd be sent into the airport and loaded either into a packed airliner or into the cargo hold of a C-130 Hercules. (*Calgary Herald*, 9/05/2016)

Anglistica AION 21.2 (2017), 53-75 ISSN: 2035-8504 doi: 10.19231/angl-aion.201724 In this extract, the strategy of argumentation is used to justify an overall positive representation of the tar sands companies operating in the area of Fort McMurray. By means of activation, Shell Canada is proposed as a dynamic force (agent) in the attempt of solving a humanitarian crisis, while evacuees are passivated as undergoing the activity of being saved (patients) within the same framework. Both roles are activated through predicational strategies that frame Shell Canada (the reference to the tar sands is metonymical) as springing into action repeatedly ("for several days") while evacuees are trapped or hosted at tar sands camps. The ideology hidden behind such discursive strategies is, therefore, one that sympathizes with the tar sands industry in Alberta and its proponents. However, the ideological load in the discourse of legitimation emerging from the extract should not come as a surprise since the *Herald* has proved to be the Canadian daily newspaper most closely associated with the tar sands.<sup>31</sup>

In order to check the extent to which evacuees are passivated or activated in this corpus, the word sketch tool offered by *Sketch Engine* was used to retrieve the occurrences of *evacuees* as the subject and the object of clauses.

Verbs with evacuees as object		
trap	3	
host	3	
house	2	
shake	2	
fly	2	
invite	2	
transport	1	
accommodate	1	
support	1	
displace	1	
help	1	
give	1	

Table 5. Verbs with evacuees as object sorted by number of occurrences

Verbs with evacuees as subject		
be	6	
try	3	
trickle	2	
Wait	2	
do	2	
put	1	
check	1	
head	1	
use	1	
take	1	
face	1	

Table 6. Verbs with evacuees as subject sorted by number of occurrences

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Shane Gunster and Paul Saurette, "Storylines in the Sands: News, Narrative, and Ideology in the *Calgary Herald*", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 39, 333-359.

As visible from Table 5 and 6, *evacuees* in this corpus occurs as the subject and as the object of clauses in equal proportion, a trend that seems to be in line with the occurrences of *evacuees* as a subject and an object of clauses in the SiBol corpus. In the reference corpus, the occurrences of *evacuees* as a subject only precede verbs of movement such as *arrive*, *leave* and *flee*, whereas within our corpus, when it occurs as a subject *evacuees* precedes verbs of movement but also of action, such as *head*, *take*, *try* and *trickle* (Fig. 4). This means that in Canadian news reports the representation of evacuees does not narrow down the social actors to their condition of being displaced, but includes their ability to overcome their displacement by taking actions.

1 (j	doc#4	otorists in the first minutes of the fire.	evacuees	were either in Edmonton, or scattered to family and friends across Canada.
2 (j	doc#4	Atlantic coast, Marine Atlantic was offering free passage to any Fort McMurray	evacuee	trying to get their car to Newfoundland.
3 (j	doc#4	Fort McMurrayites who spent the night along Highway 63. But for the	evacuees	still trickling down, most have been wellfuelled and well-supplied by oilsands (
4 ()	doc#4	omic troubles have just been solved, according to some of the more pragmatic	evacuees	who were waiting their turn on Saturday for an escort south.
5 ()	doc#4	omic troubles have just been solved, according to some of the more pragmatic	evacuees	who were waiting their turn on Saturday for an escort south.
6 (j	doc#6	ry foreign workers who have fled Fort McMurray face an uncertainty that other	evacuees	do n't.
7 ()	doc#6	king for employment insurance to be extended to foreign workers and all other	evacuees	who do n't qualify.
8 (ì	doc#11	Ve Love Fort Mac' is seen on a farm near Colinton on Friday as Fort McMurray	evacuees	head south to flee a massive wildfire affecting the northern Alberta city.; Larry \
9 ()	doc#11	s at the Edmonton airport on Friday.; Ryan Remiorz, The Canadian Press / An	evacuee	checks his smartphone as he rests at a shelter on Friday in Lac La Biche.; Col
10 (j)	doc#36	e headed to the Fort McMurray 468 First Nation, southeast of the city.	Evacuees	were able to stop for food, water and gas there when they fled the fire.
11 (i)	doc#41	storists in the first minutes of the fire. By Saturday, the vast majority of	evacuees	were either in Edmonton, or scattered to family and friends across Canada. </td
12 (j	doc#41	Atlantic Coast, Marine Atlantic was offering free passage to any Fort McMurray	evacuee	trying to get their car to Newfoundland.
13 (j	doc#41	Fort McMurrayites who spent the night along Highway 63. But for the	evacuees	still trickling down, most have been well-fuelled and wellsupplied by oilsands (
14 (i)	doc#41	omic troubles have just been solved, according to some of the more pragmatic	evacuees	waiting their turn on Saturday for an escort south.
15 (j	doc#54	Source CP PHOTO Data di pubblicazione: Jun 27, 2016 Source Fort McMurray	evacuees	take up temporary residence in Brighton Autore: Campbellford, John.
16 (j	doc#62	storists in the first minutes of the fire. By Saturday, the vast majority of	evacuees	were either in Edmonton or scattered to family and friends across Canada as fa
17 (j	doc#62	e ferry service Marine Atlantic was offering free passage to any Fort McMurray	evacuee	trying to get their car to Newfoundland.

Fig. 4. Concordance strings of evacuees occurring as a subject

A recurrent pattern emerging from the analysis of concordance strings is  $\{evacuees + [be] + -ing form\}$ , which suggests that evacuees are framed as a dynamic group in the process of *using* and *waiting*, as the following extracts testify:

Having an opinion is one thing, flaunting it on the same Twitter hashtag that *evacuees were using* to share vital information is something else entirely. If there was any thought that would most assuredly not help evacuees in that moment, it was the airing of grievances against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, climate change and Alberta Premier Rachel Notley. (*Winnipeg Press*, 7/05/2016)

In the worst way possible, a lot of Fort McMurray's economic troubles have just been solved, according to some of the more pragmatic *evacuees who were waiting* their turn on Saturday for an escort south. Oil prices are up. Reconstruction work will bring jobs back to the city. (*Calgary Herald*, 9/05/2016)

The examples show instances of activation in which *evacuees* are coded as actors in material processes (waiting to go south and using an hashtag). Both representations occur within a framework that includes climate change and oil. In the first extract the reporter condemns the way people on social networks have criticized the federal and provincial government and blamed climate change. Both Justin Trudeau and Rachel Notely are nominated by means of functionalization which legitimizes their roles as institutional representatives and suggests that the writer's stance sympathizes with their positions. Similarly, in the second extract the reporter deems the economic troubles of Fort McMurray solved, as a positive result of the crisis. In this framework, evacuees are not caught in the midst of a humanitarian

crisis, but are strategically represented as in the process of waiting their turn to go south, while the oil industry will bring jobs and spin the economy into the city once again.

One interesting aspect of discursive representations is the use of metaphors. A metaphor employed in the representation of *evacuees* revolves around the use of the lexical verb *trickle*, comparing the movement of evacuees to the gentle flowing of a stream or the falling of drops. The metaphor recurs in two identical reports by the *Calgary Herald* and *National Post*. It is worth pointing out that both newspapers are owned by the Postmedia newspaper chain, which suggests that they both share the same ideological standpoint.

In the early stages of the disaster, these impromptu rescuers had been a godsend to thousands of out-of-gas Fort McMurrayites who spent the night along Highway 63. But for the *evacuees* still *trickling down*, most have been well-fuelled and well-supplied by oilsands camps and military airlifts, and they're *making a beeline* to accommodations around Edmonton. (*Calgary Herald*, 9/05/2016)

Although water metaphors have been widely used in news reports about refugees and asylum seekers,<sup>32</sup> where images of floods, tides and waves abound, here the reference to water is toned down and mitigates the representation of evacuees as slowly and safely streaming south. The picture seems to be quite distant from the threatening and uncontrollable waves of migrants allegedly throwing the hosting countries into dangerous crises, as mostly claimed in populist discourses on immigration. On the contrary, evacuees are caught in the last phase of a now solved emergency, in a framework that, once again, provides a positive evaluation of the tar sands industry and of the fire evacuees. Another metaphor emerging from the extract that is worth noticing is that comparing evacuees to bees heading straight to their accommodations. The image backs up the previous metaphor in an overall representation of evacuees as being disciplined and moving out of Fort McMurray in a non-chaotic way, which would confirm, in this perspective, that according to the reporter no real emergency happened or that the emergency was handled perfectly by the tar sands industry that played an active role.

A pattern that emerged from the concordance analysis of *evacuees* (Fig. 5) occurring as an object is the use of the strategy of intensification, which is not employed, though, when the term occurs as a subject.

1 (j	doc#0	te has poured into relief centres in Alberta set up to accommodate the 80,000	evacuees	. <s> A variety of offerings of places to stay and use of vehicles have been</s>
2 (j	doc#2	dering River, 200 kilometres south of Fort McMurray, that's housing some 400	evacuees	. >> Data di pubblicazione: May 7, 2016 >> A march of tradition, his
3 (j	doc#4	ome, in particular, had sprung into action to mount a staggering private airlift of	evacuees	trapped in the north.
4 (j	doc#4	than 7,000 people. Buses would be sent into oilsands camps hosting	evacuees	, they'd be sent into the airport and loaded either into a packed airliner or into th
5 (j	doc#4	ered vacant by the economic downturn.	evacuee	still shaken by the fire said she was nervous to go to a supply centre because :
6 (j	doc#6	on.	evacuees	open work permits, so they can search for a new job in Canada.
7 (j	doc#13	He praised Albertans who have responded generously to help displaced	evacuees	and First Nations communities that welcomed fleeing Fort McMurray residents.
8 (j	doc#16	passed \$60 million.	evacuees	on the ground, as reported by CTV News Calgary.
9 (j	doc#39	ential employees were evacuated.	evacuees	at its work camps.
10 (j	doc#41	ome, in particular, had sprung into action to mount a staggering private airlift of	evacuees	trapped in the north.
11 (j	doc#41	than 7,000 people. Buses would be sent into oilsands camps hosting	evacuees	, they'd be sent into the airport and loaded either into a packed airliner or into the
12 (j	doc#41	ered vacant by the economic downturn. $\mbox{-}\mbox{/s}\mbox{-}\mbox{On social media, at least one}$	evacuee	still shaken by the fire said she was nervous to go to a supply centres because
13 (j	doc#42	nies were scrambling to contain the crisis and spending their own money to $\ensuremath{\text{fly}}$	evacuees	out of the region.  Without their quick and all-hands-on-deck response,
14 (j	doc#62	red Albian Aerodrome sprung into action to mount a staggering private airlift of	evacuees	trapped in the north.
15 (j	doc#62	ore than 7,000 people. >Buses were sent into oilsands camps hosting	evacuees	, transporting those evacuees to the airport where they were loaded either into
16 (j	doc#62	> Buses were sent into oilsands camps hosting evacuees, transporting those	evacuees	to the airport where they were loaded either into a packed airliner or into the ca

Fig. 5. Concordance strings of evacuees occurring as an object

<sup>32</sup> Baker and Gabrielatos, "Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding".

Anglistica AION 21.2 (2017), 53-75 ISSN: 2035-8504 doi: 10.19231/angl-aion.201724 Numbers are often used "to give the impression of objective research and scientific credibility",<sup>33</sup> although none of the figures' sources is cited. While elsewhere, in studies regarding minority groups, refugees and immigrants, numbers are associated to the *topos* of danger in order to convey the idea of a mass invasion,<sup>34</sup> here they are used to praise the efficiency of the evacuation procedures as well as the hosting capabilities showed by the tar sands industry and by fellow Canadians in general. Interestingly, in one report, the metaphor of water shifts away from being employed in the representation of evacuees to that of the materials donated to help evacuees and "poured" into Albertan relief centers, while 80,000 people are promptly and safely accommodated.

Moving forward in the analysis of collocates, collocate lists were also retrieved for *people* and *residents*.

Collocate	Co-occurrences	MI
evacuating	4	7.92
90,000	7	7.75
2,000	4	7.68
goodness	3	7.50
age	4	7.24
Living	5	7.10
Lives	4	7.05
10,000	3	7.05
stories	4	6.92
80,000	7	6.91
Leave	5	6.56
thousands	4	6.27
fled	4	6.36
access	3	5.95
come	6	5.90
evacuated	4	5.73
nearly	4	5.71
forced	5	5.65
buildings	5	5.65
evacuation	8	5.59
trying	3	5.50
start	3	5.43
many	9	5.22
homes	7	5.21

Table 7. Collocate candidates of people sorted by MI score

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Russo, "Floating Signifiers, Transnational Affect Flows: Climate-induced Migrants in Australian News Discourse", in Andrew Baldwin and Giovanni Bettini, eds, *Life Adrift: Climate Change, Migration, Critique* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 199.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Christopher Hart, Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science: New Perspectives on Immigration Discourse (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Collocate	Co-occurrences	MI
Let	4	9.66
Displaced	6	9.13
80,000	9	9.04
90,000	3	8.30
Flee	3	8.30
Fleeing	3	8.25
Return	6	8.11
Some	5	8.06
Evacuated	4	7.59
Leave	3	7.57
Homes	6	6.73
Evacuation	4	6.34
Mcmurray	23	5.99
Many	3	5.26

Table 8. Collocate candidates of residents sorted by MI score

The collocates in Table 7 can be divided into groups, according to the domain they pertain to: mobility (*evacuating, fled, evacuated, evacuation, leave, come, forced, access*), quantity (*90,000, 2,000, 10,000, 80,000, many, nearly*) and property (*homes, buildings*). Although this list is longer than the one retrieved for *evacuees* (Table 3), the collocates seem to be less varied since they could only be divided into three semantic groups, whereas the collocates of *evacuees* cover a more articulated spectrum, ranging from words pertaining to the domain of mobility to that of finance and hospitality. It can be argued that while *evacuees* presents more diversified semantic preferences and enters a range of discourses within a variety of topoi, *people* in this corpus is mainly used in narratives focusing on the evacuation process and in combination with numbers. The collocates of *residents* appear to be even more restricted since they can be grouped into words of mobility (*displaced, flee, fleeing, return, evacuated, leave, evacuation, McMurray*) and quantifiers (*80,000, 90,000, some, many*).

Although *people* is a generic collective noun, its strongest collocates, pertaining to the semantic group of mobility, show that in this corpus the noun tends to collocate with words related to the evacuation process, which suggests that several combinations of *people* and *evacuating, evacuation, evacuated, living* etc. are used in spite of or as another possibility for *evacuees*. The results confirm the initial hypothesis, i.e. different strategies of re-nomination of IDPs occur in this corpus. The same applies to *residents*, although in this case the strongest collocate combination is *displaced residents* which represents another productive alternative to *evacuees*, covering the semantic gap left by the absence of *Internally Displaced Persons*.

Both *people* and *residents* are described in this corpus by means of quantifiers, using tokens that range from 80,000, 90,000, and *thousands* to 10,000, 2,000 and the cluster *more than* followed by a number.
i doc#24	to grab what they could, lock their doors and leave.	people	were trying to get out on a few available exit points.
i doc#29	The fire spread into the oilsands capital on May 3 and forced more than $80,\!000$	people	to leave. <code><s></s></code> It destroyed roughly 2,400 homes and other buildings _ about
i) doc#30	out 10 per cent of Fort McMurray's 25,000 buildings.	people	were evacuated from the northern Alberta community.
i doc#65	his father, Neil, told the Mississauga News.	people	living there and now it's a ghost town.
i doc#65	cuation that Notley said could hardly have gone better when evacuating 80,000	people	from a town that had only two roads out.
i doc#17	ould be \$9 billion in insurable losses.	people	like most any other in the country. But at 56.78 degrees north latitude a
<ol> <li>doc#55</li> </ol>	ould be \$9 billion in insurable losses.	people	like most any other in the country. But at 56.78 degrees north latitude a
i doc#74	9 and attributed it mainly to an influx of new immigrants.	people	arrived in the country during the first three months of 2016, a large number of w
i) doc#27	rd 15 helicopters are involved in fighting the wildfire that has driven over 88,000	people	from their homes in the oil patch community. Goodale was also not pre
i doc#71	to jam one in there this week. $<\!\!/s\!\!>\!\!<\!\!s\!\!>$ At the same time as many of the 88,000	people	who fled Fort McMurray were sitting gridlocked between the flames, some dista
i doc#16	e need help.	people	have been forced out of their homes, forced out of their jobs - they have nothing
i) doc#21	ainly be said of Moose Jaw, which welcomed some of the approximately 90,000	people	who fled the fire.
(i) doc#23	he fact all business operations came to halt in a Fort McMurray, a city of 90,000	people	, could also affect Canada's GDP reading for May.

#### Fig. 6. Concordance strings of people occurring with quantifiers

i doc#5	3 ent and 13.9 per cent respectively. Alberta as a whole added 421,918	residents	since the previous census was taken, an increase of 11.6 per cent. Th
i doc#9	$_{\rm O}$ to tour a damaged neighbourhood on the ground. -/s>s> More than 80,000	residents	had to evacuate their homes May 3 as the flames carved a destructive path thr
i doc#1	forest has forced the evacuation of Fort McMurray.	residents	of the northern Alberta city have been evacuated.
i doc#2	2 ons.	residents	who have been forced to evacuate the city to contact their insurance providers
i doc#3	to to tour a damaged neighbourhood on the ground.	residents	had to evacuate their homes May 3 as the flames carved a destructive path thr
i doc#5	I raging out of control, spread into the city, forcing the evacuation of its 80,000	residents	. <s>Mark was working at a college downtown, where he's a learning and</s>
i doc#6	2 dfires, which are still burning, have forced the evacuation of more than 80,000	residents	. <s> Data di pubblicazione: May 9, 2016 </s> <s> Rebuilding Fort McMurr</s>
i doc#6	7 the middle of the northern oilsands capital of Fort McMurray, forcing all 80,000	residents	to flee.
i doc#2	5 s and floods. The fires in May forced the evacuation of almost 90,000	residents	from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and destroyed about 2,400 hor
i doc#5	s and floods. The fires in May forced the evacuation of almost 90,000	residents	from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and destroyed about 2,400 hor
i doc#5	7 /as constructed in Edmonton in 1938. The city had fewer than 90,000	residents	and there were only about 700 Muslims in Canada at the time. The co

Fig. 7. Concordance strings of residents occurring with quantifiers

It is worth noticing that the pattern {more than + [number] + people/residents} indexes the topic of emergency and disaster, as in the following examples:

The fire spread into the oilsands capital on May 3 and forced *more than 80,000 people to leave*. It destroyed roughly 2,400 homes and other buildings - about one-tenth of the city. (*Moose Jaw Times Herald*, 12/07/2016)

The winds shifted and what was a small localized evacuation turned into the largest in Alberta's history. Many people were given 30 minutes to grab what they could, lock their doors and leave. *More than 80,000 people* were trying to get out on a few available exit points. Think about the entire city of Moose Jaw or Prince Albert being asked to be evacuated. Where do you go? What do you take? (*Moose Jaw Times Herald*, 7/05/2016)

In both extracts, the representation of people as numbers occurs as part of narratives of the evacuation that rely on personalization and dramatization. According to Boykoff and Boykoff, these are "first order journalistic norms, because these factors are significant and baseline influences on both the selection of what is news and the content of news stories".<sup>35</sup> As Bennet remarks, personalization is "the tendency to downplay the big social, economic, or political picture in favor of the human trials

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Maxwell Boykoff and Jules Boykoff, "Climate Change and Journalistic Norms: a Case-study of U.S. Mass-media Coverage", *Geoforum*, 38.6 (2007), 1192.

tragedies, and triumphs that sit at the surface of the events".<sup>36</sup> In this case, the Moose Jaw Times Herald restrains its coverage of the fire to the micro level of individuals. Stories are dramatized by highlighting dramatic details in a *crescendo* of tension aiming at amplifying the 'spectacular' consequences of the fire and triggering feelings of affect and sympathy. What is construed is a "regime of pity" where suffering is presented as an aesthetic spectacle.<sup>37</sup> Through such reports, that seem to be very similar to the TV footage that Chouliaraki defines as "ecstatic news", the readers are involved in a relationship of proximity with the victims of the fire; they become part of the news narrative as they are put in the position of voyeurs of and participants to the pain of the other.<sup>38</sup> By means of sentimental empathy and reflexive identification between the sufferers and the readers, pity and care are built as "socially constructed disposition to feeling".<sup>39</sup> More evidently so in the second extract, where intensification is also used to frame the fire as "the largest in Alberta's history". In the first extract, the topic of emergency, revolving around the number of people evacuated and the amount of buildings destroyed, occurs in a framework where Fort McMurray is nominated by means of metonymy as the tar sands capital. The strategy seems to be aimed at constructing a relationship between the emergency created by the fire and the tar sands, which may be interpreted as a negative evaluation of the oil industry, blamed as having a causative responsibility in the emergency.

When *people* or *residents* are used in the narratives of evacuation, dramatization appears to be the most used strategy. Following the same line of previous extracts, in another report taken from *The StarPhoenix*, the representation of the people fleeing the fire makes use of the metaphor of the exodus, which creates an association between the forced evacuation of Fort McMurray people to the struggle and journey of the Jews towards freedom in Israel:

Consider the orderly exodus of people who, quite literally, had to drive through fire to escape. (*The StarPhoenix*, 6/05/2016)

In this extract, people are represented as the heroes of their own salvation, since they heroically face challenges in order to escape. In aiming to achieve emotive effects, the movement of people is predicated as an exodus, but, surprisingly enough, the term is modified by *orderly*, which mitigates the connotation of *exodus* as a mass departure that is nonetheless delivered in a non-chaotic way. Therefore, the term, instead of bringing in a negative discourse prosody, contributes to the overall activation and positive evaluation of the social actors. Conversely, in our reference corpus, *exodus* is found to strongly collocate with *refugees* (9.33 MI score) and to bring about a negative discourse prosody, since words occurring in its surrounding are *prevent*, *civil* and *war*. The metaphor is therefore re-contexualized in this report, and the *topos* of displacement, usually employed in narratives of outgroups outnumbering in-groups, is overcome within a framework that provides a positive evaluation of IDPs and of their 'journey'.

So far, it seems that IDPs named as *people* or *residents* tend to be activated in the representations collected in the corpus under investigation. However, in order to check the extent to which they are activated or passivated, the occurrences of both *people* and *residents* behaving as subjects and objects of clauses were retrieved.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Lance W. Bennett, *News: the Politics of Illusion* (New York: Longman, 2002), 45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> See Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: Sage, 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Ibid., 13.

	<i>people</i> as subject
Be	32
Have	12
Flee	6
leave	5
Get	4
Start	3
Call	3
Go	3
Near	3
Think	2
Know	2
experience	2
Ask	2
Seem	2
Wait	2
Try	2
become	2
Flock	1
Light	1
Fleeing	1
nurse	1
choose	1
repeat	1
prepare	1
Stay	1
Seek	1
return	1
struggle	1
arrive	1
include	1
contribute	1
Feel	1
Look	1
Want	1
loose	1
leave	1
Take	1
Do	1

Table 9. Verbs occurring with people as subject sorted by number of occurrences

Verbs with <i>people</i> as object								
Be	7							
evacuate	4							
Kill	3							
prepare	3							
Help	3							
employ	2							
Beg	2							
Gain	2							
Get	2							
remind	1							
prefer	1							
credit	1							
Pull	1							
Die	1							
injure	1							
house	1							
Urge	1							
drive	1							
Light	1							
Stop	1							
displace	1							
force	1							
Give	1							
make	1							
Take	1							
Have	1							
Say	1							

Table 10. Verbs occurring with people as object sorted by number of occurrences

As visible from Table 9 and Table 10, based on raw frequencies, *people* occurs as the subject of clauses more often that it occurs as the object, and it usually precedes verbs of movement such as *flee*, *leave* and *go*, as was noticed for *evacuees* in its occurrences as a subject. Similar results were obtained from the observation of *residents*, as Table 11 and Table 12 show.

Verbs with <i>residents</i> as subject							
Be	11						
Have	7						
Flee	4						
Care	2						
Lose	2						
move	2						
bring	2						
purchase	2						
refuse	2						
Rally	1						
suffer	1						
Join	1						
collect	1						
leave	1						
Need	1						

Table 11. Verbs occurring with residents as subject sorted by number of occurrences

Verbs with residen	ets as object
displace	4
schedule	3
let	2
evacuate	2
add	1
ask	1
flee	1
force	1
have	1
say	1
be	1
take	1
have	1
say	1

Table 12. Verbs occurring with *residents* as object sorted by number of occurrences

Overall, it seems that both *residents* and *people* share similar discourse prosodies and representations. While refugees are often deprived of their agentivity, in this corpus, IDPs, alternatively named as *evacuees, people* or *residents* are denied the alleged helplessness with which refugees are generally represented, since the state of emergency they experience is only transitory. More specifically, although salient pre-modifiers of *people* and *residents* include *displaced* and *evacuated*, which could have suggested an overall passivation of the social actors, the data show that IDPs are framed as doers rather than do-tos, whereas, for instance, numerous studies have found that refugees are often seen as helpless, passive victims.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the Canadian news reports provide an alternative portrayal to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Farbotko and Lazrus, "The First Climate Refugees?".

those accounts that represent refugees in terms of a potential national security problem and as a flow of 'others' threatening national borders.<sup>41</sup>

#### 6. Concluding remarks

The 2016 Alberta fire lasted for two months. Coverage of the fire concentrated between May 1 and May 12, when evacuation orders were issued by the government of Alberta and forced people to evacuate. The analysis has found that, in the corpus under consideration, IDPs are never named as such by Canadian news reporters. On the contrary a range of alternative terms are chosen, also in compliance with the terminology adopted in Canadian institutional discourse, more specifically in two official reports, the "Home again. Recovery after the Wood Buffalo Wildfire" and "May 2016 Wood Buffalo Wildfire Post-Incident Assessment Report", where IDPs are re-nominated as *evacuees* and *residents*. The analysis confirms that Canadian news discourse is informed by Canada's institutional discourse in that terminology is re-contexualized, while other discursive strategies are also employed and can be seen as the expression of dominant ideologies and discourse *topoi*.

The analysis has focused on four query terms, but it found that only three were used as renominations of Internally Displaced Persons. Uses of refugees in this corpus occur in the wider frame of representation of IDPs, although the term is never employed to name them. On the contrary, it activates the topoi of finance and difference since, by means of argumentation strategies, Canada's IDPs are said to be more in need of funds than non-Canadian refugees. At the same time, when IDPs are named as *evacuees*, the analyzed news reports seem to highlight the resilience showed by Fort McMurray IDPs, on the one hand, and the ability of the tar sands industry to intervene and avoid a humanitarian crisis, on the other. The latter case especially applies to the news reports from newspapers that have notoriously showed a pro-oil-industry position, such as the National Post and the Calgary Herald. It also seems interesting to notice that, across these reports, the fire is realized as wildfire, and by means of predications (out of control, roaring, raging) that aim at framing it as a natural event and, therefore, evacuation as a consequence of an environmental disaster. Moreover, the results seem to challenge the initial hypothesis according to which IDPs would have been expected to share collocates and discourse prosody with refugees, since references to forced displacement are embedded in the definitions of the two terms. While in the representation of climate-induced migration analyzed by Russo,<sup>42</sup> fear appeals that trigger anxiety, vulnerability and alarm characterize the framing of transnational mobility in newspaper discourse, here the characterization of IDPs, when these are linguistically realized as *evacuees*, relies on lexico-grammatical choices that are meant to dignify Canadian strength and resilience, on the one hand, and also to legitimate the tar sands industry on the other. Based on collocations and prosody, it could be argued that the coverage appears to prevent readers from demonizing the evacuees as a mass of refugees who will live on federal welfare.

Conversely, when IDPs are named as *people* or *residents*, different prosodies and discourse *topoi* are activated. While strategies of argumentation occur in news reports where *evacuees* are differentiated from *refugees*, in the news reports where IDPs are lexicalized as *people* or *residents*, the social actors fall into a narrative that privileges the *topos* of disaster and the strategies of intensification and dramatization to trigger affect and sympathy. Despite the *topos*, however, *people* and *residents* tend to be activated rather than passivated, which is in line with the general representation of IDPs in this corpus, regardless of the employed nomination strategies. However, it has been noticed that when *people* and *residents* occur, the evaluation of the tar sands industry varies. Indeed, in narratives where

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Nick Gill, "Environmental Refugees': Key Debates and the Contributions of Geographers", *Geography Compass*, 4 (2010), 861-871.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> See Russo, The Evaluation of Risk, 106-110.

the strategy of intensification occurs in the form of quantifiers collocating with the query terms, a link is mildly unveiled between the emergency caused by the fire and the tar sands, which seems to suggest a negative evaluation and de-legitimation of the oil industry. This is realized by means of references to Fort McMurray as the hub of the tar sands, whereas, in more legitimating reports, the oil sands industry is represented as a pro-active participant in the evacuation procedures.

One last consideration regards the general usage of discourse *topoi*. It has been stated that the *topoi* of finance, difference and emergency occur throughout the corpus, although with different discursive associations. While the *topoi* of finance and difference are activated by occurrences of *refugees* when compared to *evacuees*, the *topos* of emergency emerges when IDPs are lexicalized as *people* or *residents*. However, even in this last case, the emergency itself is mitigated and IDPs are never constructed by means of threat-connoting cues. Two metaphors spotted in the qualitative analysis, that of the non-chaotic exodus and the representation of evacuees as a gentle, trickling flow, provide further confirmation. It seems that the recurring *topoi* and typical associations identified by Wodak in immigration discourse, such as the *topoi* of burden, character, crime, danger, disadvantage, displacement etc., that justify exclusionary social and political practices, are here overturned in such a way that there is no othering of an in-group vs. an out-group.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, the *topoi* of hospitality and assistance, for instance, constructs IDPs as an inner part of the Canadian society.

To conclude, based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis conducted on the Wildfire Newspaper Corpus, it can be argued that different re-nomination strategies of IDPs occur in Canadian news discourse on the 2016 Alberta fire, each activating certain characterizations of the social actors that unveil more or less positive evaluations of the tar sands discourse. At the same time, ideological positions emerge in news reports that deny the use of the term *Internally Displaced Persons*. News reporters opt, instead, for the framing and understanding of people displacement in Alberta as an environmental rather than a climate-induced event, which is in line with Canada's recent ambiguous response to climate-related issues.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Wodak, Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (London: Sage, 2001).

Antonio Fruttaldo

# Climate-induced Migration and International Law. Assessing the Discursive Legal Construction of Climate Refugees

**Abstract:** The following research aims to focus on the legal steps taken by the international community in the definition and identification of climate-induced migration.

As an international legal framework is still missing, the challenges posited by environmental changes are often addressed in the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP), the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These decisions are used to implement, from a legal perspective, what previous international laws and regulations lack, as is the case with climate-induced migrants. Therefore, a corpus collating the decisions adopted by the COP (spanning from COP3, which took place from 1 to 10 December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, to COP23, which was held from 6 to 17 November 2017 in Bonn, Germany) will be analysed by using Corpus Linguistics methodologies. The online corpus analysis platform Sketch Engine will be used to address the discursive construction of the environmental challenges discussed diachronically under the COP decisions. In this way, the following investigation will discuss the complex legal challenges associated with climate change-induced displacement under international law. Additionally, the paper also addresses terminological issues linked to the very definition of people who are forced to be displaced due to climate change-related problems. Therefore, a web-based corpus will be analysed to see how climate-induced migrants are defined and discursively constructed in the online environment.

Keywords: climate change, climate-induced migration, web as corpus, corpus-based discourse analysis, international law, terminology

#### 1. Introduction

As the Earth's ocean and seawaters continue to rise, entire ecosystems are decimated or altered by the toxicity of industrial waste, and extreme weather events and disasters (such as cyclones, floods, and the desertification of certain areas) destroy specific regions, human populations are inevitably and forcibly displaced. The resulting displaced persons, generally referred to as 'climate-induced migrants' or 'environmental migrants', may either become internally displaced persons within their national borders or attempt to cross international borders as a means of survival.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Abdikarim Ali, *Climate-Induced Migrants, International Law, and Human Rights: An Assessment*, unpublished MA Thesis (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2015). In this paper, the terms 'climate-induced migration' and 'environmental migration and displacement' are used interchangeably in order to refer to the phenomenon under investigation. However, it must be acknowledged that, in the academic literature, many different terms have been used to describe the phenomenon of displaced individuals moving on the grounds of events, conditions, and changes in the environment, such as 'ecomigrants', 'environmental refugees', 'climate displacees', etc., see Robert McLeman and François Gemenne, "Environmental Migration Research: Evolution and Current State of the Science", in McLeman and Gemenne, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Displacement and Migration* (London: Routledge, 2018), 3-16. While Section 4 will further explore some of the terminological aspects linked to this phenomenon, for the time being, in choosing the terms that have been adopted hereinafter, the following definition of what constitutes an environmental migrant according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has been taken into consideration: "Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment that adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad" (International Organisation for Migration, *Glossary on Migration*, Second Edition, International Migration Law No. 25 (Geneva: IOM, 2011), 33.

From an international legal perspective, the origins of the refugee question emerged in the early nineteenth century with the advance of extradition treaties and the principle of the non-extradition of political offenders.<sup>2</sup> However, it was in the aftermath of World War I that the increasing number of displaced persons, who lacked a legal status, provided the very basis for the development of international refugee protection instruments. Notwithstanding this urgent requirement, early forms of displaced persons' legal protection primarily consisted of the issuance of travel documentation, and only applied to "specific categories of refugees, on the basis of their ethnic origin, the failure of protection by the government of their country of origin, and the fact that they had not acquired the nationality of any other country".<sup>3</sup> Therefore, a joint international strategy had not yet been developed, and nations tended to adopt different tools to rule on individual cases. International cooperation was only reached thanks to the establishment of the High Commission for Refugees in 1933, which was instituted in order to deal with the refugee crisis stemming from Germany. The High Commission was then officially incorporated into the League of Nations in 1938. In order to alleviate the massive amount of displaced persons from Germany, a temporary organisation named the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was established in 1943, which facilitated the repatriation of millions of displaced Europeans and provided emergency relief assistance.<sup>4</sup>The status of remaining refugees was later addressed by the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), which was established in 1947. Finally, in 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created by the UN General Assembly as a subsidiary organ under Article 22 of the UN Charter.

One of the main aims of the UNHCR is to protect anyone who finds themselves outside their country of nationality, or any persons without a nationality, who is fleeing their country or former habitual residence out of a well-founded fear of persecution (i.e., due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion) and, therefore, is unable or unwilling to avail of the protection of their home government or, in the case of the stateless, return to their habitual residence.<sup>5</sup> The UNHCR's definition of protectable persons is interestingly similar to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which was signed in Geneva on July 28that year and came into force on 22 April 1954.

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention represents the centrepiece in international refugee protection, defining a refugee as any person who is "unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion".<sup>6</sup> However, as can be seen from this definition, the 1951 UN Convention was limited in its scope. As a matter of fact, it was specifically drawn up in order to apply only to persons fleeing Europe "as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951".<sup>7</sup> A solution to these restrictions of the Convention arrived 16 years later with the establishment of the United Nations 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.<sup>8</sup> The newly formed protocol abolished the 1951 Convention's definitional limitations and afforded the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

The definition offered with the implementation of the 1967 Protocol on the status of refugees, however, while being a turning point in international law, did not include climate-induced migrants as candidates who can be awarded international protection, since they cannot be justifiably taken into

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Agnès Hurwitz, *The Collective Responsibility of States to Protect Refugees* (New York: Oxford U.P., 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Guy S. Goodwin-Gill and Jane McAdam, *The Refugee in International Law* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2007).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Clark Gray, "Human migration in a changing climate", *Global Environmental Politics* 13.1 (2013), 128–132.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, with an Introductory Note by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Geneva: UNHCR Communications and Public Information Service, 2011), 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibid., 14. <sup>8</sup> Ibid.

account by international refugee law due to the absence of persecution. Jane McAdam, in her report *Climate Change Displacement and International Law*, argues that environmental migration and displacement posits extremely difficult challenges from a legal perspective because of three main factors.<sup>9</sup> First, according to the author, the legal classification of refugees provided in the 1951 Convention and the implementation of the 1967 Protocol on the status of refugees can only be applied according to international law, meaning that it can only regard individuals crossing an international border. However, in most cases, environmental migration and displacement are largely internal forms of migration. In the last eight years, a total of 203.4 million internal environmental migrants and displaced persons (EMDPs) have been registered in connection with disasters and natural calamities.<sup>10</sup> The most affected areas are India (3.7 million EMDPs), China (3.6 million) and Nepal (2.6 million). In addition to disasters and natural calamities, there are also forced migrations for environmental reasons that are more directly linked to factors of human origin. Droughts and development projects, for example, especially dams and urban development projects, are at the origin of tens of millions of EMDPs, albeit diluted over time and interacting with other natural or anthropogenic causes.

This observation brings us to the second factor highlighted by McAdam.<sup>11</sup> There are indeed significant challenges in classifying climate change as persons at risk of persecution. While "[c]limate processes, such as shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and rising sea levels, as well as more frequent and intense severe weather events, such as storms and cyclones, will affect agriculture, infrastructure, services, and the continued habitability of certain parts of the world", these events can also threaten fundamental human rights such as "the right to life, health, property, culture, means of subsistence, and, in extreme cases, self-determination".<sup>12</sup> While climate-induced disasters can thus lead to harmful consequences on human rights, they do not, however, constitute a form of persecution according to international law. This is mainly due to the legal identification of a 'persecutor', which remains the key obstacle for EMDPs, since they are not actually being persecuted by their home government but by the specific environmental events that threaten their lives.

Therefore, while the effects of climate change can be classified as a form of persecution, as McAdam points out in her final factor concerning the extremely difficult challenges to protecting EMDPs from a legal perspective, the language in international refugee law stipulates otherwise.<sup>13</sup> As stated previously, persecution is only defined on the basis of religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership to a particular social group. In this sense, EMDPs cannot be regarded as refugees at all from a legal point of view, since they are not being persecuted on these grounds. Therefore, superior courts around the world still remain unified in their stance according to which climate-induced migrants cannot be classified as refugees, given that the 1951 UN Refugee Convention does not recognise individuals fleeing their countries in search of economic betterment, or as a result of natural disasters, as such.

These observations, hence, demonstrate how, from a legal point of view, institutional systems are still unprepared to protect and respond to the plight of climate-induced migrants.<sup>14</sup> They undeniably seem to fall outside the scope and definition of the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. While elite individuals continue to obstruct attempts to politically recognise and address the issues relating to climate-induced migration,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Jane McAdam, *Climate Change Displacement and International Law: Complementary Protection Standards* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Salvatore Altiero and Maria Marano, *Crisi Ambientali e Migrazioni Forzate: L'"Ondata" Silenziosa Oltre la Fortezza Europa* (Rome: Associazione A Sud – Ecologia e Cooperazione ONLUS, 2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> McAdam, Climate Change Displacement.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Vera Ferreira, "Climate-Induced Migrations: Legal Challenges", in Julia M. Puaschunder, ed., *Intergenerational Responsibility in the 21st Century* (Vernon: Vernon Press, 2018), 107-122.

the international community continues to discuss the question of migration and climate change. Additionally, scant attention has been paid to the phenomenon of EMDPs by policymakers and academics, thus emphasising a strong disconnect between popular representations of the issue and the way in which it is viewed by these groups.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, in becoming very leery of quantitative predictions, academics have tended to minimalise the effects of such issues.

As an international legal framework is still missing, and while "[t]he UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol simultaneously do not focus and lack unequivocal provisions to address the menace of climate change-induced displacement and its impact on the social fabric and human rights", the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) are used to implementing, from a legal perspective, what previous international laws and regulations lack, as is the case with climate-induced migrants.<sup>16</sup> All the states that are parties to the UNFCCC are represented at the COP, during which they review the implementations of the UNFCCC and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts, and take the decisions necessary to promote and support the effective implementations of the UNFCCC, including institutional and administrative arrangements.

Bearing this in mind, the following investigation aims to analyse the way the COP has addressed specific concerns about environmental matters over the years by analysing a corpus spanning from 1997 to 2017 and collating the decisions approved by the COP. Given the legal pitfalls that have been pointed out, the COP can thus be seen as playing a seminal role in dictating the political agendas of states and the media representation of matters concerning environmental issues.<sup>17</sup> In this way, framing how climate change has been discursively approached by the COP can shed light on what kind of climatic changes are addressed by this super-national body. As a matter of fact, another difficulty that has been underlined in the literature on EMDPs is the challenge of where the cause of climate-induced migration can be found.<sup>18</sup> Given the multicausal nature of climate change-related issues, it might be beneficial to better understand what the COP addresses when it discusses the human-made as well as natural vulnerabilities that are the root causes of these forms of migration.

The present paper also wants to better define the linguistic status of EMDPs. Another issue that has been underlined in the literature is the fact that it seems to be difficult to grant legal protection to EMDPs due to the lack of appropriate terminology for individuals who have migrated due to climate change problems.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, both Piguet *et al.* and White, reflect on the appropriate terminology used in the literature.<sup>20</sup> While the terms 'climate refugees' and 'environmental refugees' are still fairly used, the authors reject them and propose the terms 'climate migrants' or 'climate-induced migrants'. This is due to the fact that these terms, according to Piguet *et al.* and White, more accurately reflect that most climate-induced migrants do not cross an international border and, thus, are not classified as refugees under international laws. While

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Andrew Baldwin et al., "Securitizing 'Climate Refugees': The Futurology of Climate-Induced Migration", *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.2 (2014), 121-130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Stellina Jolly and Nafees Ahmad, *Climate Refugees in South Asia: Protection Under International Legal Standards and State Practices in South Asia* (Singapore: Springer, 2019), 89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Anne L. Laursen et al., "Framing Climate Change in a Popularised Setting: The Case of the COP Conferences", paper presented at the "Language(s) in Knowledge Dissemination" workshop, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (Italy), 11-13 October2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Neelopal Adri and David Simon, "A Tale of Two Groups: Focusing on the Differential Vulnerability of "Climate-induced" and "Non-climate-induced" Migrants in Dhaka City", *Climate and Development*, 10.4 (2018), 321-336.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Benoit Mayer, "The International Legal Challenges of Climate-Induced Migration: Proposal for an International Legal Framework", *Colorado Journal of International Environmental Law and Policy*, 22.3 (2011), 357-416; Chris Methmann and Angela Oels, "From 'Fearing' to 'Empowering' Climate Refugees: Governing Climate-induced Migration in the Name of Resilience", *Security Dialogue*, 46.1 (2015), 51-68; Emily Wilkinson et al., *Climate-induced Migration and Displacement: Closing the Policy Gap* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Étienne Piguet et al., eds., *Migration and Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2011); Gregory White, *Climate Change and Migration: Security and Borders in a Warming World* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2011).

the proposed terms are still imperfect in that they presume to identify a clear subset of migrants who have been induced to move primarily by climate changes, which even in this case does not capture the entirety of the complex picture, the following investigation wants to further analyse the way this typology of migrants has been terminologically defined by looking at a randomised corpus of online texts on the topic.

A second issue addressed by this paper in analysing the web corpus under investigation is the ongoing presence of competing narratives about the nature and magnitude of climate-induced migration. Previous investigations have stressed specific discourses surrounding EMDPs.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the present study wants to further investigate the online discursive construction of these individuals by adopting a corpus-based analytical approach.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the present investigation will highlight emerging narratives regarding EMDPsso as to better define their discursive status.<sup>23</sup>

### 2. Methodology and Data Collection

In order to analyse the way the COP has addressed matters related to the environment over the years, a corpus was manually collected by downloading the .pdf files of the decisions issued by the COP, spanning from 1997 to 2017.<sup>24</sup> The files were then converted into a .txt format and annotated using XML encoding.<sup>25</sup> The corpus, thus collected, comprised 407,108 word tokens, and was uploaded to the Sketch Engine online platform, which was used as the primary analysis tool for this investigation.<sup>26</sup>The XML encoding allowed for the creation of different sub-corpora, each one representative of a specific year (see Table1).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Giovanni Bettini, "Climate Barbarians at the Gate? A Critique of Apocalyptic Narratives on 'Climate Refugees'", *Geoforum*, 45 (2013), 63-72; Bettini, "Climate Migration as an Adaption Strategy: De-Securitizing Climate-Induced Migration or Making the Unruly Governable?", *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.2 (2014), 180-195; Bettini, "Where Next? Climate Change, Migration, and the (Bioppolitics of Adaptation", *Global Policy*, 8.1 (2017), 33-39; Romain Felli, "Managing Climate Insecurity by Ensuring Continuous Capital Accumulation: 'Climate Refugees' and 'Climate Migrants'", *New Political Economy*, 18.3 (2013), 337-363; Julian Reid, "Climate, Migration, and Sex: The Biopolitics of Climate-Induced Migration", *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.2 (2014), 196-209; Bettini et al., "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? The Fading Contours of (InJustice in Competing Discourses on Climate Migration", *Geographical Journal*, 183.4 (2017), 348-358; Katherine E. Russo, "Floating Signifiers, Transnational Affect Flows: Climate-induced Migrants in Australian News Discourse", in Andrew Baldwin and Bettini, eds., *Life Adrift: Climate Change, Migration, Critique* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017), 195-210.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Paul Baker and Tony McEnery, "A Corpus-based Approach to Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in UN and Newspaper Texts", Journal of Language and Politics, 4.2 (2005), 197-226; Baker, Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis(London: Continuum, 2006); Baker, Sociolinguistics and Corpus Linguistics (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 2010); Baker, Using Corpora to Analyze Gender (London: Bloomsbury, 2014);Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press", Discourse and Society, 19.3 (2008), 273-306; Baker et al., Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The Representation of Islam in the British Press (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2013); Baker and Erez Levon, "Picking the Right Cherries? A Comparison of Corpus-Based and Qualitative Analyses of News Articles about Masculinity", Discourse and Communication, 9.2 (2015), 221-336.

 $<sup>^{23}</sup>$  The author of this manuscript would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their generous support, insightful criticisms, and constructive remarks. The reviews were extremely helpful in contributing to this final product. While the author could not always follow their advice, this manuscript reads in a more focused way thanks to their efforts. The author takes full responsibility for any time he has neglected to follow their advice.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> The decisions of the Conference of the Parties can be accessed online, see United Nations Climate Change, "Conference of the Parties (COP)", https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Andrew Hardie, "Modest XML for Corpora: Not a Standard, but a Suggestion", ICAME Journal, 38.1 (2014), 73-103.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Adam Kilgarriff et al., "The Sketch Engine", in Geoffrey Williams and Sandra Vessier, eds., *Proceedings of the Eleventh EURALEX International Congress: EURALEX 2004* (Lorient: Université de Bretagne-Sud, 2004), 105-116; Kilgarriff et al., "The Sketch Engine: Ten Years On", *Lexicography*, 1.1 (2014), 7-36.

Sub-corpora	No. of word tokens	No. of word types
COP3 – Kyoto, Japan (December 1997)	19,877	15,669
COP4 – Buenos Aires, Argentina (November 1998)	21,086	16,622
COP5 – Bonn, Germany (October 2000)	16,333	12,875
COP6 – The Hague, Netherlands (November 2001)	9,827	7,746
COP6-2 – Bonn, Germany (July 2001)	20,265	15,975
COP7 – Marrakech, Morocco (October 2001)	25,342	19,977
COP8 – New Delhi, India (October 2002)	14,161	11,163
COP9 – Milan, Italy (December 2003)	24,940	19,66
COP10 – Buenos Aires, Argentina (December 2004)	9,841	7,757
COP11 – Montreal, Canada (December 2005)	45,771	36,082
COP12 – Nairobi, Kenya (November 2006)	15,772	12,433
COP13 – Bali, Indonesia (December 2007)	14,009	11,043
COP14 - Poznan, Poland (December 2008)	12,325	9,716
COP15 – Copenhagen, Denmark (December 2009)	13,964	11,008
COP16 - Cancun, Mexico (November 2010)	14,792	11,660
COP17 – Durban, South Africa (November 2011)	12,371	9,752
COP18 – Doha, Qatar (November 2012)	16,468	12,982
COP19 – Warsaw, Poland (November 2013)	17,933	14,130
COP20 – Lima, Peru (December 2014)	27,483	21,665
COP21 – Paris, France (November 2015)	19,077	15,038
COP22 – Marrakech, Morocco (November 2016)	19,778	15,591
COP23 – Bonn, Germany (November2017)	15,693	12,371
	tot. 407,108	tot. 320,931

Table 1. The Conference of the Parties Decisions Corpus (CPDC) and its sub-corpora

The data thus collected and annotated have been investigated by using Corpus Linguistics methodologies.<sup>27</sup>More specifically, the online corpus analysis platform Sketch Engine has been used to address the discursive construction of the environmental challenges discussed diachronically under the COP decisions.

The wordlist function available on Sketch Engine was used for the computation of keywords in the Conference of the Parties Decisions Corpus (CPDC). The wordlist was calculated by searching for lempos attributes.<sup>28</sup> A cut-off point of minimum frequency of five occurrences was imposed and, in order to further ensure that the selection of given items was not only due to their frequency but also to their dispersion in the corpus under investigation, the Average Reduced Frequency (ARF) was also imposed in the calculation of keywords.<sup>29</sup> The ARF is a statistical measure available on Sketch Engine that allows the "frequency for words with bursty distributions" to be discounted.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, thanks to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Baker, Using Corpora; McEnery et al., Corpus-Based Language Studies: An Advanced Resource Book (London: Routledge, 2006); McEnery and Hardie, Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2012).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Compiling a keyword list by showing lempos attributes means allowing users not only to look at the lemmas that are most typically used but also to show next to the lemmas the type of the part of speech (POS) that has been automatically attributed to them by the Sketch Engine in-built tagger.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Petr Savický and Jaroslava Hlavácová, "Measures of Word Commonness", *Journal of Quantitative Linguistics*, 9.3 (2002), 215-231.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Kilgarriff, "Simple Maths for Keywords", in Michaela Mahlberg et al., eds., *Proceedings of Corpus Linguistics Conference CL2009* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2009), http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/publications/cl2009/171\_FullPaper.doc.

this statistical measure, "for a word with an even distribution across a corpus, ARF will be equal to raw frequency, but for a word with a very bursty distribution, only occurring in a single short text, ARF will be a little over 1".<sup>31</sup> In this way, this measure guarantees that the items featured in a wordlist are truly indicative of peculiarities in the corpus.

In order to study changing or enduring "ways that language is used in the construction of discourses",<sup>32</sup> a keyword analysis was performed on each sub-corpus of the CPDC by contrasting each one of them against a reference corpus comprising all the other sub-corpora in the CPDC. In this way, not only differences but also lockwords, that is, words that remain stable in their usage over time, have been highlighted.

As for the analysis of the specific discourses surrounding EMDPs, a web corpus was collected by using WebBootCaT.<sup>33</sup> The WebBootCaT tool, which is part of the Sketch Engine interface, allows the web to be crawled on the basis of a set of seed words, which are used to automatically download pages from the web. The seed words that have been used in the compilation of the Environmental Migration and Displacement Corpus (EMDC) are listed in Table 2.

#### WebBootCaT - Seed words

climate change migrant\*, climate change refugee\*, climate displacee\*, climate induced migrant\*, climate-induced migrant\*, climate migrant\*, climate refugee\*, ecomigrant\*, environmental migrant\*, environmental refugee\*

Table 2. Seed words used for automatic collection via WebBootCaTfor the Environmental Migration and Displacement Corpus (EMDC)

The seed words for collection for the EMDC were selected, first, through an analysis of the literature on environmental migration and displacement.<sup>34</sup> A pilot corpus was then collected with WebBootCaT (the so-called Climate Refugees Corpus (CRC)). An analysis of the most frequently occurring n-grams in this preliminary corpus showed further terms related to EMDPs, thus expanding the list of seed words and allowing us to recompile a more encompassing corpus, that is, the EMDC, which is comprised of 3,453,077 word tokens representative of 202 URL domains.

In the following sections, a brief analysis of the most salient patterns spotlighted in the two corpora under investigation will be provided within the scope of the present study. Far from being a comprehensive analysis of the way environmental issues are discussed in the CPDC and how EMDPs are represented on the web, this study instead wants to shed light on the close relationship between law and social practices. As Mertz argues, law can be seen as "the locus of a powerful act of linguistic appropriation, where the translation of everyday categories into legal language effects powerful changes".<sup>35</sup> In this sense, law can be seen as a valuable tool in order to translate and regulate the everyday social experiences of humankind into a stylised, professionalised and internally coherent form of discourse expressing a system of authority in society. Therefore, "as the rhetoric of a particular group or class, and as a specific exercise of power and of power over meaning … legal language, like any other language usage, is a social practice and … its texts will necessarily bear the imprint of such

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Baker, *Using Corpora*, 1; see also Anna Marchi, "Dividing up the Data: Epistemological, Methodological and Practical Impact of Diachronic Segmentation", in Marchi and Charlotte Taylor, eds., *Corpus Approaches to Discourse: A Critical Review* (London: Routledge, 2018), 174-196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Marco Baroni at al., "WebBootCat: A Web Tool for Instant Corpora", in Elisa Corino et al., eds., *Proceeding of 12<sup>th</sup> EuraLex Conference* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2006), 123-132; see also Marco Venuti, "The Female Husband: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century America", in Giuseppe Balirano and Oriana Palusci, eds., *Miss Man? Languaging Gendered Bodies* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 2-18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> See, for instance, Piguet et al., *Migration and Climate Change*; White, *Climate Change and Migration*; McLeman and Gemenne, "Environmental Migration Research".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Mertz, "Legal Language: Pragmatics, Poetics, and Social Power", Annual Review of Anthropology, 23.1 (1994), 441.

practice or organisational background".<sup>36</sup> In this way, by analysing the decisions adopted by the COP and the way in which the web discusses issues related to climate migrants, the following study aims to strengthen that link between institutional practices and lay discourses.

# 3. Discussion

In the following sections, some of the results which arose from the corpus-based investigation of the corpora collected for this study will be discussed. In particular, Section 3.1 examines the keywords computed in the analysis of the CPDC using the methodology described in Section 2. Instead of showing the frequency of each of the keywords in the different sub-corpora, only the ARF will be displayed so as to highlight the significance in terms of the frequency and distribution of each lemma in that specific component of the CPDC. Section 3.2, on the other hand, focuses on the lexical status of the seed words used for the collection of the EMDC. More specifically, the frequency for each of the seed words will be displayed and commented on. The distribution of some of them will then show how specific terminology regarding environmental migration and displacement tends to be adopted on the web. Finally, a word sketch analysis of the four most frequently used terms will be provided.

# 3.1 A Diachronic Analysis of the COP's Decisions: Environmental Issues and Lockwords

In the following paragraphs, the results of the keyword analysis performed on each sub-corpus of the CPDC will be illustrated. The keywords have been calculated by contrasting each component of the CPDC to the rest of the corpus which, therefore, was used as a reference. Table 3 shows the first 10 keywords for each sub-corpus.

		Keywords in the CPDC	
#	СОРЗ	COP4	COP5
1	limitation-n (ARF: 352.2)	conclusion-n (ARF: 379.4)	see-n (ARF: 857.2)
2	protocol-n (ARF: 4226.0)	list-n (ARF: 332.0)	revise-v (ARF: 428.6)
3	dioxide-n (ARF: 251.5)	compilation-n (ARF: 284.5)	communication-n (ARF: 1469.4)
4	scientific-j (ARF: 301.9)	issue-n (ARF: 1138.2)	unfccc-n (ARF: 734.7)
5	technological-n (ARF: 905.6)	non-annex-n (ARF: 426.8)	secretary-n (ARF: 306.1)
6	total-j (ARF: 251.5)	assistance-n (ARF: 332.0)	workshop-n (ARF: 428.6)
7	assign-v (ARF: 301.9)	initial-j (ARF: 379.4)	guideline-n (ARF: 979.6)
8	change-v (ARF: 251.5)	intergovernmental-j (ARF: 284.5)	initial-j (ARF: 367.4)
9	advice-n (ARF: 1006.2)	regard-v (ARF: 284.5)	united-n (ARF: 1285.7)
10	sink-n (ARF: 402.5)	step-n (ARF: 237.1)	nations-n (ARF: 1102.1)
#	COP6	COP6-2	COP7
1	gef-n (ARF: 508.8)	behalf-n (ARF: 345.4)	agreements-n (ARF: 315.7)
2	cop-n (ARF: 814.1)	negotiation-n (ARF: 592.2)	capacity-n (ARF: 1894.1)
3	current-j (ARF: 508.8)	negotiate-v (ARF: 493.5)	bonn-n (ARF: 315.7)
4	compliance-n (ARF: 508.8)	china-n (ARF: 246.7)	environmentally-a (ARF: 315.7)
5	amount-n (ARF: 508.8)	central-n (ARF: 296.1)	sound-j (ARF: 315.7)
6	will-x (ARF: 2340.5)	statement-n (ARF: 740.2)	integrated-j (ARF: 236.8)
7	they-d (ARF: 712.3)	segment-n (ARF: 246.7)	strengthening-n (ARF: 197.3)
8	special-j (ARF: 712.3)	canada-n (ARF: 493.5)	coordinate-v (ARF: 236.8)
9	decide-v (ARF: 2238.7)	bonn-n (ARF: 592.2)	effectively-a (ARF: 197.3)
10	adverse-j (ARF: 508.8)	australia-n (ARF: 345.4)	country-driven-j (ARF: 236.8)

<sup>36</sup> Peter Goodrich, Legal Discourse: Studies in Linguistics, Rhetoric and Legal Analysis (London: Macmillan, 1987), 2.

#	COP8	COP9	COP10
1	consultative-n (ARF: 353.1)	conversion-n (ARF: 240.6)	capacity-building-j (ARF: 609.7)
2	initial-j (ARF: 706.2)	biomass-n (ARF: 280.7)	global-n (ARF: 2032.3)
3	more-a (ARF: 353.1)	soil-n (ARF: 401.0)	facility-n (ARF: 1930.7)
4	preparation-n (ARF: 988.6)	land-use-n (ARF: 1363.3)	environment-n (ARF: 2133.9)
5	cooperation-n (ARF: 706.2)	co2-j (ARF: 200.5)	bilateral-j (ARF: 711.3)
6	communication-n (ARF: 1412.3)	decrease-n (ARF: 240.6)	key-j (ARF: 508.1)
7	expert-n (ARF: 1129.9)	total-n (ARF: 481.2)	multilateral-j (ARF: 812.9)
8	continue-v (ARF: 1129.9)	documentation-n (ARF: 601.4)	agency-n (ARF: 508.1)
9	government-n (ARF: 423.7)	ipcc-n (ARF: 521.3)	opportunity-n (ARF: 508.1)
10	programme-n (ARF: 1977.3)	forestry-n (ARF: 1082.6)	experience-n (ARF: 609.7)
#	COP11	COP12	COP13
1	design-n (ARF: 458.8)	alternate-j (ARF: 507.2)	fee-n (ARF: 428.3)
2	publicly-a (ARF: 415.1)	joint-n (ARF: 380.4)	biennium-n (ARF: 571.1)
3	simplify-v (ARF: 480.7)	clean-j (ARF: 1268.1)	clean-j (ARF: 1284.9)
4	sum-n (ARF: 109.2)	question-n (ARF: 380.4)	kyoto-n (ARF: 5139.6)
5	propose-v (ARF: 1420.1)	authority-n (ARF: 634.0)	protocol-n (ARF: 4925.4)
6	valid-j (ARF: 109.2)	amend-v (ARF: 317.0)	serve-v (ARF: 2569.8)
7	written-j (ARF: 174.8)	concern-v (ARF: 443.8)	trust-n (ARF: 428.3)
8	actual-j (ARF: 262.2)	kyoto-n (ARF: 4501.6)	joint-j (ARF: 428.3)
9	documentation-n (ARF: 437.0)	serve-v (ARF: 3043.4)	share-n (ARF: 356.9)
10	reason-n (ARF: 196.6)	rule-n (ARF: 887.6)	cover-v (ARF: 571.1)
#	COP14	COP15	COP16
1	bank-n (ARF: 892.5)	consultative-n (ARF: 358.1)	cooperative-n (ARF: 473.2)
2	fund-n (ARF: 11034.5)	communications-n (ARF: 358.1)	achievement-n (ARF: 338.0)
3	cers-n (ARF: 405.7)	biennium-n (ARF: 429.7)	social-j (ARF: 540.8)
4	board-n (ARF: 8924.9)	inventory-n (ARF: 859.4)	long-term-j (ARF: 878.9)
5	chair-n (ARF: 811.4)	budget-n (ARF: 572.9)	working-n (ARF: 473.2)
6	service-n (ARF: 1298.2)	training-n (ARF: 429.7)	capability-n (ARF: 473.2)
7	world-n (ARF: 811.4)	national-n (ARF: 358.1)	enhanced-j (ARF: 540.8)
8	condition-n (ARF: 1217.0)	reduce-v (ARF: 429.7)	mitigation-n (ARF: 1757.7)
9	adaptation-n (ARF: 8843.8)	expert-n (ARF: 1074.2)	nationally-a (ARF: 473.2)
10	term-n (ARF: 1947.3)	long-term-j (ARF: 429.7)	technology-n (ARF: 2839.4)
	COP17	COP18	COP19
Ħ	wood-n (ARF: 404.2)	green-n (ARF: 728.7)	results-based-j (ARF: 446.1)
#			<b>3</b> \ /
1	, ,	$damage_n (\Delta RE \cdot 264.2)$	
1 2	account-v (ARF: 808.3)	damage-n (ARF: 364.3) standing-n (ARF: 425.1)	forest-n (ARF: 2174.8) platform-n (ARF: 390.3)
1 2 3	account-v (ARF: 808.3) dioxide-n (ARF: 727.5)	standing-n (ARF: 425.1)	platform-n (ARF: 390.3)
1 2 3 4	account-v (ARF: 808.3) dioxide-n (ARF: 727.5) product-n (ARF: 404.2)	standing-n (ARF: 425.1) reaffirm-v (ARF: 364.3)	platform-n (ARF: 390.3) green-n (ARF: 613.4)
1 2 3 4 5	account-v (ARF: 808.3) dioxide-n (ARF: 727.5) product-n (ARF: 404.2) calculate-v (ARF: 565.8)	standing-n (ARF: 425.1) reaffirm-v (ARF: 364.3) loss-n (ARF: 364.3)	platform-n (ARF: 390.3) green-n (ARF: 613.4) standing-n (ARF: 501.9)
1 2 3 4 5 6	account-v (ARF: 808.3) dioxide-n (ARF: 727.5) product-n (ARF: 404.2) calculate-v (ARF: 565.8) commitment-n (ARF: 5092.6)	standing-n (ARF: 425.1) reaffirm-v (ARF: 364.3) loss-n (ARF: 364.3) acknowledge-v (ARF: 485.8)	platform-n (ARF: 390.3) green-n (ARF: 613.4) standing-n (ARF: 501.9) coordination-n (ARF: 501.9)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	account-v (ARF: 808.3) dioxide-n (ARF: 727.5) product-n (ARF: 404.2) calculate-v (ARF: 565.8) commitment-n (ARF: 5092.6) land-n (ARF: 1697.5)	standing-n (ARF: 425.1) reaffirm-v (ARF: 364.3) loss-n (ARF: 364.3) acknowledge-v (ARF: 485.8) mitigation-n (ARF: 1214.5)	platform-n (ARF: 390.3) green-n (ARF: 613.4) standing-n (ARF: 501.9) coordination-n (ARF: 501.9) finance-n (ARF: 1561.4)
1 2 3 4 5 6	account-v (ARF: 808.3) dioxide-n (ARF: 727.5) product-n (ARF: 404.2) calculate-v (ARF: 565.8) commitment-n (ARF: 5092.6)	standing-n (ARF: 425.1) reaffirm-v (ARF: 364.3) loss-n (ARF: 364.3) acknowledge-v (ARF: 485.8)	platform-n (ARF: 390.3) green-n (ARF: 613.4) standing-n (ARF: 501.9) coordination-n (ARF: 501.9)

#	COP20	COP21	COP22
1	ambition-n (ARF: 509.4)	agreement-n (ARF: 6814.5)	biennial-j (ARF: 1011.2)
2	pathway-n (ARF: 254.7)	nationally-a (ARF: 1048.4)	finance-n (ARF: 4904.4)
3	gcf-n (ARF: 181.9)	goal-n (ARF: 419.4)	flow-n (ARF: 707.9)
4	temperature-n (ARF: 363.9)	communicate-v (ARF: 629.0)	workplan-n (ARF: 353.9)
5	move-v (ARF: 181.9)	determine-v (ARF: 1048.4)	financial-n (ARF: 707.9)
6	differentiate-v (ARF: 545.8)	serve-v (ARF: 2463.7)	standing-n (ARF: 606.7)
7	enhanced-j (ARF: 727.7)	lesson-n (ARF: 262.1)	billion-m (ARF: 303.4)
8	mitigation-n (ARF: 2328.7)	financial-n (ARF: 262.1)	green-n (ARF: 505.6)
9	agreement-n (ARF: 2656.2)	light-n (ARF: 262.1)	committee-n (ARF: 2426.9)
10	contribution-n (ARF: 2365.1)	refer-v (ARF: 2778.2)	challenge-n (ARF: 252.8)
#	COP23		
1	dialogue-n (ARF: 1083.3)		
2	workplan-n (ARF: 318.6)		
3	standing-n (ARF: 828.4)		
4	coherence-n (ARF: 318.6)		
5	indigenous-j (ARF: 318.6)		
6	finance-n (ARF: 1911.7)		
7	goal-n (ARF: 382.3)		
8	committee-n (ARF: 1911.7)		
9	financial-n (ARF: 318.6)		
10	welcome-v (ARF: 637.2)		

Table 3. Lists of the top 10 keywords in the different sub-corpora of the CPDC

Due to reasons of space, the findings provided in Table 3 cannot be exhaustively commented on here. The lists, however, illustrate specific milestones in the evolution of the protocols adopted by the COP regarding environmental matters. For instance, it can be noticed that the focus slowly moves from issues related to air pollution (see keywords such as 'dioxide', 'sink', 'CO2', etc.) to other forms of hazards (i.e., climate change-related issues; see keywords such as 'wood', 'forest', 'land', 'temperature', etc.). In this way, despite being limited or, rather, more restricted in its initial scope, the COP has slowly come to address a large variety of issues that impact human beings.

Another interesting result brought to the fore by the keyword analysis is the sudden colonisation of the CPDC by business discourse. Indeed, the financial crisis of 2007-2008 seems also to have impacted on the way the COP addresses specific issues. An increasing number of economic terms (e.g. 'financial', 'bank', 'fund', 'fee', etc.) can be observed in the years after the financial crisis, thus linking economic issues with environmental ones in a specific way. Consequently, it is not surprising to see a connection being made between natural resources and their safeguarding, and economic resources. When one is at stake, therefore, the other is compromised.

A series of lockwords that seem to be discursively stable over time is represented by all those terms that in a certain way are used to 'reaffirm' what previous COPs have established. The verb 'enhance', for instance, is repeatedly featured as a keyword in different subsections of the corpus, demonstrating its anaphoric reference to previous decisions. In particular, a quick collocation analysis (the statistical measure used was logDice; 5R/5L) of the term has demonstrated how it generally co-occurs with words such as 'action', 'implementation', and 'cooperation'. Another interesting collocate of the verb 'enhance' is represented by the word 'ambition' (e.g., "In accordance with Article 4 of the Convention, all Parties to progressively enhance the level of ambition of their mitigation commitments", taken from COP20). This term seems to be perfectly in line with what has been said previously regarding the COP's continuous encouragement to implement previous decisions and, more importantly, switch the focus to the futurity of such actions. Therefore, one of the most salient discourses arising from the

keywords displayed in Table 3 is related to the failure of the parties to adopt the environmental strategies that the COP has suggested.

3.2 Defining Climate-induced Migration: Data from the Web

As for the analysis of the EMDC, the focus has been placed on the seed words that were used in its collection. Table 4 shows the number of occurrences and the normalised frequency (per million words) of the seed words.

Environmental migrants and displaced	No. of occurrences in the EMDC	Normalised frequency
persons		(per million words)
climate displacee*	19	5.50
ecomigrant*	25	7.24
climate induced migrant*	49	14.19
climate-induced migrant*	166	48.07
climate change migrant*	210	60.80
climate change refugee*	386	111.80
climate migrant*	916	265.27
environmental migrant*	1,005	291.04
environmental refugee*	1,466	424.55
climate refugee*	1,862	539.20

Table 4. Number of occurrences and normalised frequency (per million words) of the seed words used to collect the EMDC

As Table 4 shows, only four of the seed words used in the collection of the corpus seem to be frequently used on the web. While generalisations on the correctness of these terms cannot be made given the nature of the EMDC, which is only representative of online interactions, it is nonetheless interesting to notice that words such as 'climate-induced migrant\*' or 'ecomigrant' are rarely used to refer to EMDPs. However, frequencies alone are not truly representative of the actual usage of the most frequently occurring seed words. Indeed, only the analysis of their distribution in the corpus allows us to better understand which of them are frequently employed by online users. Therefore, the following figures show the distribution of 'climate migrant\*' (Fig. 1), 'environmental migrant\*' (Fig. 2), 'environmental refugee\*' (Fig. 3) and 'climate refugee\*' (Fig. 4) in the corpus under investigation.



Fig. 1. Distribution of the seed word 'climate migrant\*' in the EMDC





Fig. 2. Distribution of the seed word 'environmental migrant\*'in the EMDC



Fig. 3. Distribution of the seed word 'environmental refugee\*'in the EMDC



Fig. 4. Distribution of the seed word 'climate refugee\*'in the EMDC

Of these terms, 'environmental migrant\*', 'environmental refugee\*' and 'climate migrant\*'seem to be the ones that are most frequently used and evenly distributed in the corpus, while 'climate refugee\*'seems to display a bursty distribution and, therefore, its usage seems to be relegated to specific texts in the corpus. In the following figures, the word sketches of 'environmental migrant\*', 'environmental refugee\*' and 'climate migrant\*'are provided. A word sketch is a tool available in Sketch Engine that allows one to quickly access a summary of the linguistic environment that specific lemmas are apt to be found in. In this way, a summary of the collocational behaviour of the terms under investigation is provided, thus allowing us to look at the discourses these terms are usually found in.

modifiers of			modifiers of "migrant"				nouns modified by		verbs with "migrant" as			verbs with "migrant" as		
"environmen	tal"				16.63	"migran	<u>t"</u>		object			subject		
		0.71	rural-urban	22	9.17			1.01			18.85			20.16
also <u>2</u>		3.62	emergency	21	8.81	change	2	1.59	protect	<u>20</u>	9.17	refer	<u>7</u>	9.1
			forced	12	7.98				know	<u>7</u>	9.14	try	<u>5</u>	9.0
"environmen	tal" a	nd/or	transborder	7	7.61				define	<u>13</u>	9.11	live	<u>12</u>	9.0
		7.96	motivated	Z	7.59				forecast	3	8.80	originate	3	8.6
rural-urban	22	12.51	rural-urban	6	7.31				recognize	8	8.71	embody	2	8.3
motivated	7	11.18	so-called	3	6.32				regard	8	8.63	preclude	2	8.2
forced	12	10.64	region	3	6.22				accommodate	3	8.41	miss	2	8.1
so-called	3	9.76	DOOL	4	6.13				mix	2	8.35	move	5	8.1
incoming	2	9.64	displacement	4	6.13				enumerate	2	8.29	reside	2	7.9
imperative	2	9.57	term	3	6.07				categorize	2	8.27	vary	2	7.6
net		9.37	action	3	6.06				become	<u>8</u>	8.17	migrate	3	7.5
	2		imperative	2	5.81				gain	3	8.02	remain	<u>3</u>	7.2
poor	3	8.32	acp	2	5.80				safeguard	2	8.01	state	2	7.1
voluntary	2	8.28	incoming	2	5.80				mention	3	7.96	be +	112	6.8
possible	2	8.09	category	2	5.79				frame	2	7.79	argue	2	6.7
many	5	7.96	many	<u>∠</u> 5	5.68				force	13	7.68	do	5	5.2
potential	2	7.75	most	3	5.67				help	2	7.02	have	10	5.0
future	2	7.53	net						receive	3	6.86			
temporary	2	7.52		2	5.66				understand	2	6.58			
other	2	5.54	voluntary	2	5.52				address	5	6.53			
			bangladesh	2	5.39				expect	2	6.51			
			governance	2	5.31				include	7	6.36			
			temporary	2	5.29				face	2	6.24			
			possible	2	5.21				exist	2	6.20			
			potential	<u>2</u>	5.04				be	= 26	5.82			
											0101			
"migrant" and	1/or		migrant: prep	ositio	nal nh	25.05	"migrar	t" is a						
ingrane and		10.08							4.33					
solution	5	9.53	of "migrant		242		person	28						
refugee	<u>24</u>	9.15	for "migran		49		people	6	10.94					
scope	4	9.15	"migrant" in		26		paveme	_	10.48					
displacee	2	9	to "migrant		26		refugee	_	9.29					
obligation		8.61	"migrant" as		11		Terugee	<u> </u>	9.29					
potential	3	8.57	on "migran	ť."	<u>10</u>	1.01	migran	t: prep	ositional phrases	s				
	2		as "migrant	c .	9		whe	ther "m	igrant" 2 0	.20				
climate	7	8.33	"migrant" from		9	0.91			igrane i o	120				
person	3	8.03	"migrant" to	<u>.</u>	6	0.60	adjecti	ve pred	licates of "migra	int"				
situation	2	7.71	"migrant" of	<u>.</u>	5	0.50			1	.61				
population	3	7.14	"migrant" with	in	5	0.50	invisible	e	2 11	.61				
justice	2	6.96	between "r	nigrar	<u>nt" 5</u>	0.50	problen	natic		.68				
displacement		6.23	about "mig	rant"	3	0.30	able		-	.12				
change	3	3.79	"migrant" with		2	0.20			,					
			"migrant" on .		2	0.20								
			from "migr	ant"	2	0.20								
			"migrant" at		2	0.20								
				_	-									

#### environmental migrant (adjective) Alternative PoS: <u>noun</u> (freq: 2,403) (environmental-I filtered by migrant-n)

Fig. 5. Word sketch of 'environmental migrant\*' in the EMDC

2 0.20

2 0.20

... at "migrant"

"migrant" since ...

#### environmental refugee (adjective) Alternative PoS: <u>noun</u> (freq: 2,403) Environmental Migration and Displacement Corpus freq = <u>1,375</u> (398.19 per million)

environmenta	ıl-j filtere	ed by re	fugee-n)								
"environmen	tal" and/	or	verbs with "re	efugee" a	s object	verbs with	"refugee" as	subject	refugee: preposition	al phra	ases
		3.64			16.36			14.62	of "refugee"	251	18.25
ecological	<u>17</u>	11.49	define	38	10.58	form	<u>3</u>	8.58	on "refugee"	37	2.69
so-called	<u>5</u>	10.93	distinguish	<u>8</u>	9.76	seem	<u>5</u>	8.57	"refugee" in	31	2.25
potential	3	8.48	total	5	9.41	find	4	7.90	as "refugee"	26	1.89
many	<u>5</u>	8.02	recognize	8	8.63	be 🕇	<u>121</u>	6.94	for "refugee"	16	1.16
			ignore	4	8.59	have	25	6.37	to "refugee"	13	0.95
modifiers of	"retugee"		become	<u>11</u>	8.57	do	4	4.95	"refugee" from	12	0.87
		6.04	aid	<u>3</u>	8.56				"refugee" as	9	0.65
term so-called	29	9.07	exclude	3	8.34	"refugee" a	nd/or	7.71	"refugee" around	Z	0.51
	5	6.73 5.55	accept	4	8.03	climate		9.26	with "refugee"	5	0.36
many	5	5.33	recognise	4	7.97		<u>14</u>	9.20	between "refugee"	5	0.36
potential	3	5.4Z	describe	3	7.36	migrant convention	<u>18</u>	7.26	about "refugee"	5	0.36
nouns modified by "refugee"		consider	4	6.73	population	<u>3</u> 3	7.07	"refugee" for	4	0.29	
		1.38	protect	3	6.38	people	<u>3</u>	6.75	"refugee" under	4	0.29
migrant	6	5.55	be	<u>38</u>	6.36	people	2	6.75	"refugee" with	3	0.22
<u> </u>	_		use	4	5.98				"refugee" at	<u>3</u>	0.22
			increase	4	5.79						
			include	4	5.53				adjective predicates	of "re	
			displace	3	5.08						1.24
									ambiguous	4	12.42
									"refugee" is a		
											2.11
									people 7		11.40
									problem <u>3</u>		9,91
									person <u>3</u>		9.70
									<u>s</u>		

Fig. 6. Word sketch of 'environmental refugee\*' in the EMDC

Climate migrant <sup>(noun)</sup> Environmental Migration and Displacement Corpus freq = <u>1,086</u> (314.50 per million) (climate-n filtered by migrant-n)

climate: prepositional phrases		verbs with "migrant" as object		verbs with "migrant" as subject		migrant: prepositional phrases					
of "climate"	3	0.28			27.35			21.64	of "migrant"	261	24.03
			recognize	<u>50</u>	11.12	fit	Z	9.79	for "migrant"	49	4.51
modifiers of "m	igrant	:	force	<u>76</u>	10.16	fall	<u>11</u>	9.74	"migrant" in	40	3.68
		30.57	assist	Z	8.81	designate	4	9.01	as "migrant"	19	1.75
change +	<u>200</u>	9.94	racialised	4	8.77	come	<u>10</u>	8.81	to "migrant"	17	1.57
change-	11	7.79	guarantee	<u>4</u>	8.35	deserve	<u>3</u>	8.55	"migrant" as	15	1.38
induced			construct	4	8.31	face	<u>6</u>	8.14	on "migrant"	8	0.74
most	<u>10</u>	7.22	compensate	<u>3</u>	8.26	threaten	<u>3</u>	7.80	about	_	0.74
refugee	<u>22</u>	7.05	protect	<u>11</u>	8.17	need	4	7.18	"migrant"	<u>8</u>	0.74
future	<u>9</u>	6.81	argue	<u>3</u>	8.06	include	<u>5</u>	7.02	with	7	0.64
forced	<u>6</u>	6.75	produce	<u>5</u>	8.02	do	<u>14</u>	6.75	<u>"migrant"</u>	_	
potential	<u>7</u>	6.67	entitle	3	7.96	be	<u>93</u>	6.56	by "migrant"	<u>6</u>	0.55
bangladeshi	4	6.46	accept	4	7.84	have	<u>16</u>	5.72	"migrant" under	<u>6</u>	0.55
change-related	4	6.33	define	<u>6</u>	7.80				"migrant" from		
	<b>b</b>		become	<u>5</u>	7.32	"migrant" a	nd/or			<u>5</u>	0.46
nouns modified "migrant"	by		manage	<u>3</u>	7.01			13.63	"migrant" at	4	0.37
		1.66	regard	<u>3</u>	6.99	refugee	<u>69</u>	10.61	"migrant" with	3	0.28
etc. 5		9.49	identify	<u>3</u>	6.53	etc.	5	9.48		2	0.20
			consider	3	6.24	effect	Z	8.95	<u>"migrant" like</u>	3	0.28
			be	<u>31</u>	6.06	migration	<u>8</u>	5.34			
						change	5	4.51	adjective predic "migrant"	ates o	_
											2.58
									· ·	<u>4</u>	10.48
									likely	<u>5</u>	7.73
									possessors of "m	igran	۳
									203303301301 11	is an	0.28
									mexico 3	3	11.34

Fig. 7. Word sketch of 'climate migrant\*' in the EMDC

As can be seen from Fig. 5, 'environmental migrant\*' usually seems to be found in relation to discussing a specific type of environmental migration and displacement, that is, when discussing internally displaced persons within their national borders. 'Environmental refugee\*' and 'climate migrant\*' seem to be more encompassing, even though the former generally seems to be used together with the word 'ecological' (i.e., 'ecological and environmental refugee\*'), thus highlighting another important aspect of the way these individuals are represented. Indeed, in the case of 'environmental refugee\*', more attention seems to be placed not only on climate-induced migration linked to environmental issues but also anthropocentric reasons.

All the terms under investigation share, however, the same collocate, that is, the verb 'recognize'. Indeed, one of the most frequently occurring discursive patterns that these terms are found in is represented by the lack of acknowledgement by the international community of this type of refugees, thus calling for immediate action in order to solve this.

### 4. Concluding Remarks

The present study aimed to place emphasis on some problems related to the definition of environmental migration and displacement, specifically from a terminological point of view. Human mobility in the context of climate change migration has indeed emerged as a distinct area of research, but policies are still lacking in the protection of EMDPs. The first question addressed in this paper was related to the way the Conference of the Parties (COP), which is the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), has discussed matters related to the environment over the years. Since its decisions are used to implementing what previous international laws and regulations lack from a legal perspective, as is the case with climate-induced migrants, the corpus has yielded some interesting results in the way that the failure to adopt given strategies and specific interests have been addressed over the decades. A second question addressed in this study was strictly related to the appropriate terminology for individuals who have migrated due to climate change or environmental hazards. While some of the terms that have been taken into consideration are rejected by some scholars, they nonetheless still appear regularly. Of course, further investigation needs to be carried out in order to analyse other genres and, therefore, map the usage of given terms more accurately. However, these preliminary results hope to be a stepping stone towards the better definition of environmental migrants and displaced persons, since, by simply trying to come together and adopt a specific term, this would lead to a possible recognition from a legal point of view, as this is something that is still missing.

Nina Venkataraman

# The Role of Absences in Framing Environmental Refugees in *The New York Times*

**Abstract:** In examining the framing of 'environmental refugees' in *The New York Times* (1985-2015), I argue that patterns of absence may provide insights into how elite newspapers might be silent; or, may mute discussions on complementary constructs of restorative justice and moral opprobrium. Even counter-discourses offered by leaders of the low-lying nations that frames paradigms of resilience, adaptation and sustainability are seen to foreclose non-state conceptions of alternative futures. A full line of absences that include masks, void and traces – as identified by Arran Stibbe in *Ecolinguistics* (2015) – is seen as a necessary way to explain what gets lost in the chain of signification. This study suggests that both these conceptual tools (i.e., framing and patterns of absence(s)) should be merged together, if, we are to show that when an issue is framed in a certain manner it also structures what is (dis)advantageous to certain groups. Without the application of this approach, we are unwittingly participating in selectively silencing the evidence for the projection of the frame.

Keywords: climate-induced migration, environmental refugees, discourse, framing, patterns of silence

# 1. Introduction: Ecolinguistics and Environmental Refugees

Previous studies in the field of Ecolinguistics have addressed the unequal ecological impact of language use and see the study of climate change as a means of understanding how interconnections between the social and environmental spheres are developed or broken based on ecological considerations and scientific conclusions. By placing ecology and language as its central normative framework, the present article will build upon findings in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis to focus on "discourses that have (or potentially have) a significant impact not only on how people treat other people but also on how they treat the larger ecological systems".<sup>1</sup>

The term 'environmental refugee(s)' is often used interchangeably with 'climate refugee(s)'. It is a controversial construct, not accepted legally, yet the term is used by journalists and opinion-makers alike to refer to people who have had to leave their home due to the consequences of climate change, be it sudden and violent or slow and gradual. Biermann and Boas define environmental refugees as "people who have to leave their habitats (and home territory) immediately or in the near future because of sudden or gradual alterations in their natural environment related to at least one of three impacts of climate change: sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and drought and water scarcity".<sup>2</sup>

Since the term has no legal basis, it is debated to this day in academic circles.<sup>3</sup> The legal description often serves to differentiate refugees of war and civil strife who escape tangible persecuting agents from those who try and escape climate change which cannot be rightly classified as a persecuting agent. An environmental refugee may, therefore, be defined as an exceptional case of refugee because the term frames the environment as a persecuting agent from which people seek refuge. Moreover, new

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Arran Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (London: Routledge, 2015), 118.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Frank Biermann and Ingrid Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World: Toward a Global Governance System to Protect Climate Refugees", *Global Environmental Politics*, 10.1 (2010), 60-88, 67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse: The Case of Climate Change and Migration* (Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018), 56.

reports frame environmental refugees as the threatening risk of climate change often showcasing sudden, violent or dramatic events in apocalyptic tones.<sup>4</sup> Yet even though climate change can be seen to 'affect' people who move to escape, they are not granted refugee status.

The essay argues that one of the most noticeable characteristics of the representation of environmental refugees in The New York Times (henceforth NYT) is the lack of column space dedicated to the specific exigencies of their movement and their varied motivations, the impossibility of refugee status, and the possibility of positive outcomes which may follow mobility. Instead, articles are often constructed in the linear manner of cause-problem-solution format, cause-effect format or eventanalysis format, highlighting the threats and risks of climate change and the consequential movement. The topos of numbers<sup>5</sup> is especially salient: reporters routinely stress a 'huge number' of migrants may be the greatest consequence of climate change – the fear for the "large swatches of humanity" and the risk associated with accepting them is layered in the reports.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, despite the pervasive diffusion of modern-day communications, the lay reader knows very little about environmental refugees. Accordingly, the aim of the essay is to examine the role of absence in the reportage of environmental refugees in NYT within the ecolinguistic tradition of questioning our ecological conceptions of humans, species and the environment. The study will focus on discursive "absence",<sup>7</sup> not merely as a set of tools to categorize certain lexico-grammatical or discourse features that are not framed in the text, but rather as a reflection on what kinds of meanings are ignored or absent from the discussion.

### 2. Methodology and Operational Definitions

A corpus was designed by selecting texts from *NYT* covering a thirty-year time span (1985-2015).<sup>8</sup> The articles were retrieved from the Lexis Nexis database. *NYT* was chosen for the analysis, as it enjoys the status of being an elite newspaper that sets the political agenda and frames the terms of political debate.<sup>9</sup>

The orientation towards the absences in the texts was based on deconstruction, according to which no reading of a text is fixed or autonomous as it consists of nodes of signification where 'traces of difference' can be detected between presence and absence.<sup>10</sup> The analysis of absences also aided the interpretation of the validation by *NYT* of certain topics which are present in the texts. Yet, the essay focuses on the examination of how absences communicate through the unsaid. Examples have been provided only if a pattern (i.e., repeated absences of the same kind) have been noticed in more than 0.36 % of the total population of texts.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See Giovanni Bettini, "Climate Migration as an Adaptation Strategy: De-securitizing Climate-induced Migration or Making the Unruly Governable?", *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.2 (2014), 180-195.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ruth Wodak, "Us and Them: Inclusion and Exclusion – Discrimination via Discourse", in Gerhard Delanty et al., eds., *Identity, Belonging and Migration* (Liverpool: Liverpool U.P., 2008), 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See Melani Schroeter and Charlotte Taylor, eds., *Exploring Silence and Absence in Discourse, Empirical Approaches* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The choice of the rather long-time span ensures that the results are not distorted by specific climatic events such as the Tsunami of 2009 or the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See David Tewksbury and Dietram A. Scheufele, "Special Issue on Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: Agendas for Theory and Research", *Journal of Communication*, 57.1 (2007), 1-8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, edited by John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham U.P., 1997); Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (New York: Longman, 1995); Wodak et al., eds., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P. 1999); Teun A. van Dijk, *Society in Discourse: How Context Controls Text and Talk* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See Adam Jaworski, *The Power of Silence: Social and Pragmatic Perspectives* (Newbury Park, CA.: Sage, 1993); Jaworski, ed., *Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997).

Two patterns of textual and thematic absence are the focus of this essay:<sup>12</sup>

1) *Thematic Absences*: Thematic silences ignore a topic, theme, or subject altogether,<sup>13</sup> and are also referred to as "void".<sup>14</sup> What distinguishes these absences from others is that such missing topics or actors constitute an important part of the issue, yet they are not mentioned at all in the discussion. They are not traceable or missing as a consequence of low newsworthiness, the journalists' value judgments or the agenda/political leanings of the information source.



Figure 1. Overview of the patterns of absences

2) *Textual Absences*: In textual silence there is an omission of some piece of information that is pertinent to the topic at hand. Textual silences leave a trace in the text that is retrievable either at the clausal, sentential, or textual level.<sup>15</sup> Textual silences can further be grouped as 'traces' or 'masks'. A 'trace' is "something that is erased but still present", whereas a 'mask' is erased and "replaced by a distorted version of itself".<sup>16</sup>

The category of traces includes: presuppositions, probable estimates and implications. In a presupposition the writer assumes, prior to writing.<sup>17</sup> The analysis of presupposition is, therefore, a powerful instrument to: 1) detect what writers believe (or know) that recipients believe; or 2) trace strategic moves through which reporters suggest that specific (presupposed) beliefs are true, although that may not be so.<sup>18</sup> Fairclough suggests that presuppositions generate assumptions that may be existential (assumptions about what exists); propositional (assumptions about what is, can or will be the case); or value (assumptions about what is good and desirable).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Van Dijk's notion of context is foregrounded knowledge in this research. Context refers either to what is important and relevant and what may be left implicit in discussing the full complexity of a social situation. Context helps understanding the professional or social domain, genre, purpose, location, date, time, circumstances, participants' role in the construction of a piece of news, that may be left implicit or not. See van Dijk, *Society*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See Dennis Kurzon, "Toward a Typology of Silences", Journal of Pragmatics, 39.10 (2007), 1673-1688.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Thomas Huckin, "Textual Silence and the Discourse of Homelessness", *Discourse and Society*, 13.3 (2002), 347-372, 348. <sup>16</sup> Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, 149.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Presuppositions are of two kinds: existential and logical. Since existential presupposition are fundamental to the way language works, they are often not obviously manipulative. See Lesley Jeffries and Daniel McIntyre, *Stylistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2010). This research, for the moment, focuses on logical presuppositions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage, 1998).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Fairclough, Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research (London: Routledge, 2003), 55-58.

For their part, implicatures are violations of the 'cooperation principle' of conversation.<sup>20</sup> They are the suggestions connoted by the text that are not stated explicitly by exploiting the cooperation principle. Each reader will construct implied information suggested by the implications differently.

Probable estimates encoded as numerals and used with hedges also fit the category of traces as they suggest estimates regarding future scenarios that allow the writer to magnify the issue in terms of numbers.

Masks help project a distorted version of reality through the repetitive use of suggestive catchphrases and buzzwords, metaphors, nominalizations, and exemplars. This essay will only detail the use of metaphors, catchphrases and buzzwords, exemplars and nominalized forms, since much has already been said about passive voice and transitivity patterns.<sup>21</sup> Nominalizations express actions or processes as nouns, thus making processes and participants less explicit.<sup>22</sup> Metaphors, catchphrases and buzzwords are ways in which the information of a certain aspect of the issue is masked in a different fashion and often silences the reality. While metaphors are used to compare different concepts, catchphrases and buzzwords are phrases employed by the media so often that a systemic association of a theme with the repeated usage of specific buzzwords and catchphrases is created. Finally, exemplars are examples, projected as personal stories or testimonials.

The research results and the discussion that follows provide an overview of the entire gamut of absences that are observed as patterns in our corpus. The flaw in this methodology is that some absences are indeed truly silent, as they do not form a pattern. Still, there may be singular occurrences of them over the thirty-year period.

# 3. Results and Discussion: Constructing the Discourse of Absence

#### 3.1 Thematic Absences

Two significant absences that deal with the 'legal' aspect of this issue were found in the corpus: the lack of legal status for environmental refugees; and, the strategies through which this lack can be solved. These themes form a 'void' in the reportage.

### 3.1.1 Lack of Legal Status

In legal terms, environmental refugees do not exist. Yet, evidence that people move in response to climate change exists. At present, the refugee system is deficient as it does not recognize climate change and its consequences on human displacement. 'Environmental refugees' are absent from the 1951 "United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees", and the subsequent 1967 "Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees".<sup>23</sup> The scope for further development and expansion of existing refugee laws to cater for people who have been displaced as a consequence of climate change is at hand, but it rests on the political will and consent of many states. Given this background, *NYT* reports do not discuss this lack of status with the exception of one case, which will be discussed later. The lack of legal status prevents the access of environmental refugees to the protection measures

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Grice's cooperation principle of conversation depends on four maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner (see Herbert Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation", in Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, eds., *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts* (Waltham: Academic Press, 1975), 22-40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> See Michael A. K. Halliday and James R. Martin, *Writing Science: Literacy and Discursive Power* (London: Falmer Press, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> UNHCR, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees" (1951, 1967), http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.pdf.

provided, for example, by a global organization like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The only mention regarding the clause in U.S. immigration laws that grants 'special protected status' to people from countries that have "suffered a catastrophic war or an environmental disaster"  $(37)^{24}$  is found in the context of a discussion regarding Haitians, who were given an extension of their status for a few months after the 2010 earthquake. The article does not dig into the legal status of environmental refugees, but portrays the U.S. as a benevolent host: "Haitians who receive the temporary status will be able to obtain documents allowing them to live here and work legally" (37).

In another report, the U.S. is said to revoke this special status to people escaping a volcano eruption in Montserrat, because the volcanic activity would not cease "in the foreseeable future" (4). In the latter case, *TNYT* functions as a guard-dog, questioning the Homeland Security's rationale for deporting people who settled in the U.S. after a disaster on humanitarian grounds. Both these examples in the data shed some light on the fact that the U.S. can accommodate people who have been displaced due to climate change, yet the reporter does not investigate the politics of reframing a refugee as someone who has fled due to the effects of climate change.

The recognition that a "legal gap exists with regard to cross-border movements in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change" (2) is discussed in the conclusions of one report. However, despite the acknowledgement, the report does not address the 'legal gap' regarding the lack of refugee status for environmental refugees. Instead, in choosing to use the phrase "cross-border movement", the reporter seems to mask the fact that these people are 'forced' to move, representing their action as a voluntary one; Moreover, the 'legal gap' addressed by two countries in Europe (i.e., Sweden and Norway) are projected as recommending action in the hotspots where human displacement takes place: Central America, the Horn of Africa, Southeast Asia and the islands of the South Pacific. A little known fact is that both Sweden and Norway have created a system that allows immigration of women and children because of climate change affecting their countries. Moreover, the article focuses on climate change causing mass migrations as a means of warning rather than addressing the legal gap *per se*. The three points above validate the claim that there is a thematic silence or void where the legal status of being an environmental refugee is not discussed in the newspaper.

Another thematic absence is represented by the disappearance of small nation islands (SIDS), which presents a unique case of being a synecdoche for the effects of climate change on human displacement. In *NYT* the attention of the reader is diverted towards the Maldives' attempt to buy land elsewhere to accommodate the nation. None of the articles feature the legal status of a nation that sinks under water. The legal apparatus to tackle statelessness and relocation is thematically silent.

Finally, lawsuits are mentioned in *NYT* as a means of persuasion to "force the United States or corporations to reduce emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases" (43). Here too the legal path seems to be foreclosed even for discussion as, "[t]hey will have a real hard time proving causation, that the United States government has caused sea levels to rise" (43). The very idea that legal suits against the U.S. could be brought forward in order to contain the effects of global warming and that this process might help people elsewhere is defined as "nuts". Despite the fact that the article discussed legalizing international relations regarding climate change, there was a void in addressing the legality of displaced people or refugees.

To substantiate the fact that this is indeed a void is to understand that this information is in some way less important than what is framed in *NYT*. Framing studies suggest that frames are powerful units of discourse, thus what is said, made salient and discussed is deemed more important than what is not.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Hereafter the selected articles from *The New York Times* will refer to the list in numerical order in the Appendix provided at the end of this essay.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> See Paul D'Angelo, "News Framing as a Multiparadigmatic Research Program: A Response to Entman", *Journal of Communication* (2002), 870-888.

Even if we were to accept the idea that a writer is allowed not to be aware of all aspects of an issue, it is hard to believe that for over thirty years *NYT* reporters have not considered it important to discuss the lack of a legal status for these people, which is what makes this a controversial construct to begin with.

#### 3.1.2 Addressing Movement with Dignity

Another void in this issue is to frame human movement in more positive terms. From an ecolinguist perspective, it is relevant to find that the whole issue of people seeking refuge is framed in relation to 'risk' rather than as a humanitarian problem. Also, climate change is framed as a threatening force having an impact on lives, in more than one way. *NYT* evaluates the movement of people in alarming tones by denominating it "mass migration" (10) of "large swatches of humanity" (29).

The void in the newspaper comes from not even addressing this movement as an adaptive strategy in positive terms. On the contrary, the movement is discussed as a cause of concern, drain of resources and a human security risk (28). Implicit then is the suggestion that these people do not have the ability to adapt to change.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the void of a positive and dignified representation of the movement of people allows *NYT* to frame the issue as a risk or threat. This discourse of absence is instead framed as the opposite, i.e. mass migration is a security threat. This focus gains trust, allowing for the void or absence to be subjugated knowledge and ensuring the frame of movement as a security risk to be entrenched in the media.

### 3.2 Textual Absences

Traces and masks have been retrieved at the lexical, clausal and textual level in NYT news articles.

#### 3.2.1 Traces

Amongst the traces listed in Ecolinguistic literature, the focus in this essay is on presuppositions, probable estimates, and implicatures.<sup>27</sup>

1) *Presuppositions*: presuppositions have assumptions built into the text, that is their meanings remain elusive to the news, as they are not directly encoded into the text but are the background upon which certain themes are built. One repeated example in *TNYT* is the assumption that climate change is indeed "the problem" that causes human displacement. Collapsing the triggers of human migration into one external agent of climate change called "the problem" triggers the presupposition that there are no other problems that confront these people who want to relocate. The following example validates the point: "Despite growing efforts in many countries to tackle the problem, the global situation is becoming more acute as developing countries join the West in burning huge amounts of fossil fuels" (25).

In *NYT* there were four other kinds of presuppositions. The first is signalled by change-of-state verbs which encode a presupposition because the earlier state-of-affairs have changed by the process of the verbs and this is presumed. In *NYT*, the physical changes seen on Earth are encoded as a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> One of the counter-arguments made against the movement of refugees comes from the fact that these people still have the ability to move, thus they have made a conscious decision to move. Those who cannot move are seen as the genuine victims of climate change in that they stay still and do not move. In this light, migration is considered as conscious choice for betterment which explains why there is some resistance in calling these people 'refugees'. If this logic were to be applied, the movement of people displaced by civil strife and war should suffer the same logic. Similarly, the true victims should be the ones who stay, not the ones who undertake a journey in order to escape. Based on the same logic, they should not be protected by a 'refugee' status.<sup>27</sup> Stibble, *Ecolinguistics*.

presupposition. The terrifying climate change as an agent of destruction is placed outside of human actions and their interactions with other humans. When climate change is presented as separate or affecting the lives of people, then the nature of the problem is presented purely in scientific terms or in terms of immigration issues. Table 1 shows a few examples to validate the point.

Verb	Example	Explanation
Externally caused change – "Stop" Existential presupposition	"We can do nothing to stop climate change on our own, and so we have to buy land elsewhere," Nasheed said in November (42).	The verb "stop" presupposes that there was a state of affairs that was happening before it ceased. The verb presupposes a different state of affairs; the effect is that the hidden nature of the meaning is less amenable to comment, or debate.
Externally caused change – "Start" Propositional Presupposition	Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission told world leaders on Nov 30th that climate change could "destabilise entire regions and start massive forced migrations and conflict over natural resources" (10).	The use of the verb "start" presupposes that there was a different state of affairs preceding this one. This presupposed information is not detailed, it could be one way by which further questions need not be raised about the present/future state of affairs.
Internally caused change – "Wither" Value presupposition	Maybe we have decided that the deficits are too large and the money too scarce and that it is better just to look the other way until the city withers and disappears (18).	Despite the fact, that wither is a verb that is an internally caused change of state verb. The presupposed information here is a conscious allowing of this process that is again human controlled. Humans enable the process.

Table 1. Examples of change-of-state verbs encoding presuppositions

The presuppositions observed in this research were varied: the presumed knowledge of what exists, could exist and encoded presuppositions about what is valuable and good. This trace, then, allows the reader to focus on what is being said in the text, that climate change is a destructive force, which then allows for responsibility to be encoded as a global phenomenon external to us. Descriptions focus on the nature of migration or the physical changes being made to the warming planet.

Next, a small group of factive verbs encode presuppositions, as the clausal complements are presupposed. Factive verbs in English like 'realize', 'understand', 'regret', 'discover' and some uses of 'know' allow for the clausal complement to be presupposed.

Factive Verb - Presupposition	Comment
Lawmakers need to understand that for New Orleans the words "pending in Congress" are a death warrant requiring	suffering due to bureaucratic delays.
no signature (18).	- Value presupposition.
Although military and intelligence planners have been aware of the challenge posed by climate changes for some years, the Obama administration has made it a central policy focus (7).	<ul> <li>The presumed knowledge held by the military and intelligence planners is that climate change has challenges.</li> <li>Existential presupposition.</li> </ul>

Table 2. Selected examples of factive verbs encoding presuppositions

While the newspaper does explicitly frame the problems and issues surrounding climate change, the traces suggested by the use of factive verbs presupposes knowledge of a state of affairs that is consequential to the movement of environmental refugees. The trace seen in the article is about climate change, which draws the attention away from environmental refugees. This allows the news articles on environmental refugees to be more about climate change than human displacement.

The third type of presupposition observed is the use of cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences. The focus of the sentence changes so that important pieces of information shift to the post-modifying relative clausal complement. With the dummy subject 'it' heading the sentences, the actual content of the sentence is placed within the presupposed subordinate clause.

Clefts and Pseudo-Clefts-Presuppositions	Explanation
It is also said that rising temperatures would change the nature of US military missions, increasing the demands for resources in the Artic and the coastal regions that would be affected by higher sea levels (17).	<ul> <li>The presupposed knowledge is presented in the subordinate clause which details what could change. It is not just the physical changes, but the nature of US military missions too.</li> <li>Propositional Presupposition.</li> </ul>
It's not just the actual disasters that might rise, it is the accumulating stress that are placed on a lot of different countries and the possibility of war, conflict, refugees, displacement that arise from climate change (22).	<ul> <li>The most important information, that "climate change" has been attributed the cause of these events/processes is placed at the very end.</li> <li>Propositional Presupposition.</li> </ul>
It is also worth noting that the panel's scientists – acting in good faith on the best information then available to them – probably underestimated the range of sea-level rise in this century, the speed with which the Arctic ice cap is disappearing and the speed with which some of the large glacial flows in Antarctica and Greenland are melting and racing to the sea (28).	<ul> <li>The actual physical changes detailed at the end of the sentence are presupposed to be true. Yet the focus of the sentence is on the scientists of IPCC.</li> <li>Propositional Presuppositions.</li> </ul>

Table 3. Selected examples of clefts and pseudo-cleft sentences encoding presuppositions

The details provided in the subordinated clauses allow a trace of the information about the consequences of climate change to be visible. Most of the traces seem to point at the effects of climate change, thus the environmental refugees are 'just' one of the effects of climate change.

The next category is that of the iteratives where the earlier and later occurrences of the process is presupposed. The presupposed information directs the attention in *NYT* towards the outcome of 'reports', 'treaties' and 'defence reviews' rather than on presumed knowledge of earlier and later state of affairs.

Examples					
But even before the current reassessment, parties to the 1992 treaty had agreed that these steps were inadequate and had opened talks aimed at stronger measures. (46)	The panel's draft report has yet to undergo <u>review</u> by governments, but its members say they expect few if any substantial changes in the findings. (46)	There's a reason why the quadrennial defence <u>review</u> – [which] the secretary of defence and the Joints Chiefs of Staff work on – identified climate change as one of our most significant national security problems. (22)			
Even with all that pain, can it yet be called the nation's worst environmental disaster? (27)	People like me don't want to work on the land anymore," Mr Ren said. "It's backbreaking work. I've tried it. The land is not fertile, and it is far from any water. It's just not worth it." (48)	A system already burdened by a large Iraqi refugee population may not be able to absorb another influx of displaced persons. (23)			

Table 4. Selected examples of comparatives encoding presuppositions

The iterative triggers of adverbs (e.g., yet, anymore) and determiners (e.g., another) allow for the subjugated knowledge of the state of affairs of the victims of climate change to be alluded to. Yet the trace only hints at the troubles that the migrants face. The lack of access to the details of their condition leads to broad brush strokes of the suffering reported without actual detailing how lives have changed.

In conclusion, presuppositions are ways through which the discourse of absence is weaved into the text, alongside salient information. The assumptions made are powerful and not highlighted as the main proposition in the texts. The traces show that environmental refugees are constructed primarily in ways which promote generalisations about human movement due to climate change. In *NYT* the reportage on environmental refugees is subordinated to climate change.

2) Probability Estimates: the next set of traces with regard to this issue is seen in the repetitive use of probability estimates.<sup>28</sup> Probability estimates may be defined as stating that an event/process is likely to happen with differing amounts of certainty. Consider the following example: "The United Nations estimates the costs of global warming at *more* than \$300 billion a year" (43 [emphasis mine]). In this case, lower bounds of the probability estimates are indicated by the use of "more than" (also "above", in other cases), while upper bounds could be indicated by "less than" or "lower than" a certain percentage.<sup>29</sup> Classified as hedges, these terms along with others allow for a proposition to be magnified or its value to be diminished with relation to the numerical value stated. Linguistically, a hedge is a word or phrase that modifies the force or accuracy of a statement.<sup>30</sup> A hedge, used along with a numerical value, allows the reportage to express approximates when the information is made more or less precise than the corresponding value of numeral value used alone. This is evident from the extract below: "A continuing rise in average global sea level ... is likely to amount to more than a foot and a half by the year 2100" (47 [emphasis mine]). Here the use of "more than" allows the writer to be less precise than the corresponding "A continuing rise in average global sea level ... is likely to amount to a foot and a half by the year 2100". the lack of a probable estimate makes the statement more accurate. Since climate change deals with an unpredictable future, the reporter cannot be accused of non-factual reportage with probability estimates.<sup>31</sup>

Predicting climate change and its effects on human beings is an inherently uncertain activity.<sup>32</sup> The probability estimates help quantify that climate change is indeed affecting the lives of humans, yet the readers can also infer other information not explicitly stated in the propositions.

An overview of the probability estimates used by *NYT* is shown below in Table 5. The estimates with regards to climate change predictions and environmental human displacement convey nuances of uncertainty.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See Russo, "Speculations about the Future: Populism and Climate Change in News Discourse", in Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio et al., eds., *Populist Discourse: Critical Approaches to Contemporary Politics* (London: Routledge, 2019), 190-206.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> See Sigrid M. Hohle and Karl H. Teigen, "More than 50% or Less than 70% Chance: Pragmatic Implications of Single-Bound Probability Estimates", *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 31.1 (2018), 138-150.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> George Lakoff, "Hedges: A study in Meaning Criteria and the Logic of Fuzzy Concepts", *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 2.4 (1973), 458-508, 458.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> See Russo, "Speculations about the Future".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> As stated earlier, environmental migration is complicated by the fact that triggers can be as varied as a single disaster (such as a hurricane or earthquake) or multiple triggers like changing climate patters effecting livelihoods along with operating governments and states being unable to support these people and their needs.

Approximates	Climate change	The effects of climate change on human displacement
Almost	The Bush administration says it is spending almost \$3 billion a year on energy technology research as its major contribution to combating climate change. (2)	The United Nations resident coordinator for Mozambique, Ndolamb Ngokwey, said in a telephone interview from Maputo, the capital, that almost 27,000 flood refugees had been placed in 53 camps and that nearly 42,000 more had fled rising waters and sought refuge elsewhere. (51)
Nearly	This summer, Lake Mead fell to its lowest level since it was initially filled. It has dropped nearly 150 feet in the last 14 years. (19)	In a worse-case projection, a Vietnamese government report released last month says that more than one-third of the delta, where 17 million people live and nearly half the country's rice is grown, could be submerged if sea levels rise by three feet in the decades to come. (36)
Or so	At the very least, sea level rises of a foot or so could wipe out island ecosystems. (33)	If such a program were to start in 2010, the United States, for example, would have to be prepared to accept 150,000 to a half-million immigrants a year for the next 70 years or so. (9)

Table 5. Examples of probable estimates

Hence, the use of probability estimates expresses uncertainties that can be due to natural variability in the data accounted for in different locations, including space for possible measurement errors and incomplete knowledge of future and present scenarios. These probability estimates imply that we cannot predict future scenarios pertaining to the health of different eco-systems accurately.

Despite climate change science being considered an unpredictable science, there is still overwhelming evidence that eco-systems have had to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change. Yet, when discussions include human displacement, the traces suggested by the use of probability estimates also hide the actual issue. What the traces in the form of probability estimates hide is the actual number of people moving, enumerating the trigger points having caused outward movements and whether it was primarily climate change that caused this movement.

Probability estimates also imply that the effects of climate change on human displacement are primarily based on conjectures, save observations that accounted for after specific disasters and those areas where one can observe the movement of people. The specific reported disaster is arranged into a recognisable pattern where the report focuses on people movement, thereafter receiving help. This helps to frame the issue in a familiar pattern of disaster-aftermath-help. The articles direct attention to the deluge and swathes of humanity moving due to climate change. The probability estimates build up a problem of huge numbers: the implication is that there are vast numbers of people on the move due to climate change.

Furthermore, research shows that probable estimates were also used without hedges that build up the image of many people on the move:

- "Another study, the Stern Report, released last December by the British government, projected *hundreds of millions* of 'environmental refugees' by 2050" (39 [emphasis mine]);
- "This dark situation underlies the thorny debate over the world's responsibilities to the millions of people likely to be displaced by climate change" (35 [emphasis mine]);

"... the displacement of *hundreds of millions* of climates refugees, civil unrest, chaos and the collapse of governance in many developing countries, large-scale crop failures and the spread of deadly diseases" (28 [emphasis mine]).

The use of non-specific probable estimates like "millions" and "hundreds" allows the writer to attribute a certain magnitude to the disaster and/or subsequent human displacement. The use of generic references like these implies that the issue is a serious one and warrants attention. What is interesting about this trace is that it also functions as a mask in that a different version of reality is presented to the reading audience. The actual number moving due to climate change is far removed from what is reported.<sup>33</sup> This trace also erases the grim reality of the individual realities and moves the focus to a large-scale movement suggested by these probable estimates.

To conclude, probability estimates serve to build uncertainty, yet they leave traces of information that do not project the reality as it is. The probability estimates then help claim-makers and elite social actors to manage the quantification to suit the purpose of making salient issues of climate change's effects or negative impact of large movements of people.

3) *Implicatures*: the last set of traces observed in the research is the implicatures suggested by the repeated use of certain propositions. Scalar implicatures violate the maxim of quantity with the use of "some", "many" and "few".<sup>34</sup> The argument made here reiterates the argument already made in the section on probable estimates.

Ex	amples
Scientists trying to predict the consequences of climate change say that they see <u>few</u> safe havens from the storms, floods and droughts that are sure to intensify over the	That is surely because the area is desert scrubland, and $\underline{\text{few}}$ people were inconvenienced by the spill. (27)
coming decades. (30)	The proposition implies that not many people were affected oil
The proposition implies not many safe havens will survive the effects of climate change.	spill. This makes absent that other non-human species also could have been affected by the same.

#### Table 6. Examples of scalar implicatures

The use of scalar implicatures allows for climate change's effects to be couched in the message. The implied message carries the weight of the magnitude of the problem depending on the argument. When it comes to climate change the implied information presents some space for hope, yet when it comes to affecting the lives of human and non-human species in less populated regions, the implicature is that their lives are not as important as those living in other places.

In conclusion, implicatures leave a trace of the information suggested by the proposition. Only context dependent research makes the trace visible. Sentences in isolation may be otherwise unwittingly overanalysed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Richard Black et al., "Migration and Climate Change: Toward an Integrated Assessment of Sensitivity", in Thomas Faist and Jeanette Schade, eds., *Disentangling Migration and Climate Change: Methodologies, Political Discourses, and Human Rights* (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 29-53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Implicatures found in the research were varied and many, but because of space constraints the focus will only be on scalar implicatures that flout the maxim of quantity. See Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1989).

#### 3.2.2 Masks

1) *Metaphors*: metaphors help mask the lived reality of the people suffering anthropogenic climate change. Metaphors are implied comparison between two things, where one is experienced through the other. As they make abstract concepts more relatable, they anchor the discourse by framing a particular understanding over other possible interpretations.<sup>35</sup>

The overarching metaphor employed is encoded in the lexical compound "environmental refugee". The metaphor very clearly masks the reality, for "environmental refugee" is a complex meeting of various comparisons. The refugee is one who seeks refuge, this is a mask by itself, for environmental refugees are not even acknowledged as refugees, they are being compared to refugees who seek the assistance of global organizations like the UNICEF, UNHCR and governing bodies of host nations. Also, to call these people environmental refugees means that they are escaping the environment much like "war refugees" or "civil refugees", in which cases the refugees are escaping war or civil strife. The environment or climate cannot be an active agent alone, consciously causing displacement. In the use of the term, the future for these people is recast into the present. Thus, the use of the lexical compound allows us to mask perspectives that fit into the discussion of war against climate change; yet this is different from the reality of these victims. The term environmental refugee still retains the core essence of "refugee" in its literal sense (i.e., a person who has legitimate reasons to leave their home-state, having necessity to seek refuge, or a person who wishes to be resettled by receiving states); yet, as NYT promotes good climate behaviour and protection, there is a promotion of fear from the sheer pressure of hosting the overwhelming numbers of humans displaced as well. In such a metaphoric presentation, the environmental refugee becomes part of the perspective that climate change is the security threat. The environmental refugee then is a metaphoric representation of people at the mercy of host countries.

Many of the identified conceptual metaphors are commonly used in other discourses too.<sup>36</sup> 'Battle against climate change' is often used, but there are also other metaphors commonly associated with migration. The table below categorises metaphoric source domains, and examples of their occurrences.

The battle against climate change was the most pervasive metaphor used. While the metaphor was effective in enabling better descriptions of our fight against climate change, the environmental refugees were only classified as the victims in the battle. This masks the reality of SIDS who resist being called refugees as they do have operating governments that work for their people. The metaphor also negates the efforts of these people who are doing much to mitigate the effects of climate change without moving.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Brigitte Nerlich and Nelya Koteyko, "Compounds, Creativity and Complexity in Climate Change Communication: the Case of 'Carbon Indulgences'", *Global Environmental Change*, 19.3 (2009), 345-353.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> A conceptual metaphor refers to the understanding of one idea or conceptual domain in terms of the other. See Lakoff and Mark Johnson, "Conceptual Metaphors in Everyday Language", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 77.8 (1980), 453-486.

	Metaphor: War
Metaphor Occurrence	Examples
Threat	In 2007 the report also described climate change as a 'threat multiplier' or a problem that could enhance o contribute to already resisting causes of global disruption (16)
Dangerous	The president argued that climate change had set off dangerous domino effects around the world, prompting severe drought in Nigeria that was exploited by the terrorist group Boko Harem (17)
Fight	What makes the approach of this environmental fight extraordinary is that the plaintiffs would not just b people who live near a source of pollution but those who are thousands even many thousands of miles away (43)
Conflict	Those plans include attempts to integrate environmental concerns into the development plans of ministric and enterprises, modifications that could conflict with their ambitions for growth, he said. (36)
Combat	The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification – like the climate talks, it grew out of the Eart Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (10)
Unleash	Otherwise we will bust through the limit of a 2-degree Celsius rise in average temperature that clima scientist will believe will unleash truly disruptive ice melt sea level rise and weather extremes. (22)
Death	So Syria as a whole is slowly bleeding to death of self-inflicted gunshot wounds. (24)
Ravage	It is not the first time the United States has faced a mass internal migration: think of the "okies" who fled th drought-ravaged Dust Bowl for fertile California (16)
Victims	We may not pollute the world, yet we are victims of extreme weather and climate change. (6)
Negotiate	The panel, a United Nations group of 2500 scientists from around the world, advices parties to a 1992 trea that are negotiating reductions in heat trapping greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide. (47)
Portocols	They say they were inspired by the Bush administration's refusal to go along with the Kyoto Protocol, the internationally negotiated framework for reducing green-house-gas emissions. (43)

Table 7. Examples of the conceptual metaphor War

In the next table, the conceptual metaphor of pressure masks the reality of climate change and environmental refugees. Pressure is actualised in two ways, the first being the pressure of mitigating the effects of climate change, and the second being the pressure of tackling the problem of human displacement.

	Metaphor: Pressure		
Metaphor Occurrence	Examples		
Pressure	He cited the prospects of waves of 'environmental refugees' fleeing ravaged third world economies or low- lying areas and causing destabilizing pressures' for industrialised countries. (46)		
Strain	a study of alternative fuels and a look at how major power relations could be strained by a changing climate. (7)		
Stretch	Forecasters predicted heavy rains Cahora Bassa hydroelectric dam, the largest in southern Africa, for signs that it was being stretched to capacity. (51)		
Squeeze	Mali one of the world's poorest countries is being squeezed by what farmers herders. Government officials and Western donors say may be the worst drought in its history. (41)		
Tension	If there is any tension between science and Maldivians' conservative religious values, Nasheed said he hoped to dampen it before the Italians arrived. (42)		
Force	People forced to leave their homes because of climate change are not easily classified under existing human rights, refugee or asylum law. (10)		
Stress	but recently our researchers came across a WikiLeaks cable that brilliantly foreshadowed how environmental stresses would fuel the uprising. (23)		

Table 8. Examples of the conceptual metaphor Pressure

The use of the conceptual metaphor of pressure in the above examples suggests that environmental refugees are more often associated with negative, rather than positive connotations of the metaphor. Be it the suffering they are facing, or the possibility of prospective trouble they will give the host nations, the conceptual metaphor of pressure masks the reality of the person who is forced to move.

	Metaphor: Water		
Metaphor Occurrence	Examples		
Drown	But a policy paper called "Our drowning neighbours" by the now governing Labour Party, said Australia should help meld an international coalition to address it. (35)		
Influx	A system already burdened by a large Iraqi refugee population may not be able to absorb another influx of		
Absorb	displaced people. (23)		
Outflow	In Jiangxi Province, the outflow of farmers leaped from 200,000 in 1991 to more than 3 million last year. (48)		
Pour	The West poured in aid without helping to find a key to greater food production (41)		
Surge	The president said the conditions could create a global surge of climate change refugees (17)		
Swell	The urban-dwellers with meagre but stable incomes send cash or the relatives move to the cities, swelling households and stretching overburdened resources. (41)		
Tide	30-year-old Ren Jen drifted into Beijing this month, part of the migrant tide of 50 million peasants (48)		
Wave	The grim alternative affects all nations – more severe storms, more famine and floods, new wave of refugees, coastlines that vanish, oceans that rise(7)		

Table 8. Examples of the conceptual metaphor Water

Above, the metaphor of the elemental force of water is actualised in the texts with the news reports only focussing on the negative aspects of the movement of water.<sup>37</sup>

Yet again, the metaphor of water allows the reportage of environmental refugee to build the narrative of humans moving in large numbers. The potent power of water is a scaffold with which negative imagery is built of environmental refugees having no choice but to move. What the metaphors mask is the nature of the movement. Human suffering is masked by the numbers of people moving, thus the attention is garnered for the argument against restraining these movements.

In comparing the metaphoric usage of war, pressure and water one understands that there are significantly more metaphors that refer to the problems of climate change than to human displacement itself. The difference came in the way the two topics masked the issues. There is no doubt that climate change is a battle that everyone has to fight, with the act of fighting the battle resulting in loss, damage and negotiations, but the metaphor of a war accentuates the North-South divide by developing an argument for the "winners and losers" adapting to climate change. In fact, the articles in *NYT* tend to include the voice of climate change sceptics by positing that the North is able to adapt to climatic change (46; 29) and therefore wins the battle through the financial resources used to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Consequently, in the battle against climate change, victims are inevitable. Treaties, summits and talks require the two sides of the opposing camps to sit and negotiate good climate behaviour. Thus, deals were reported, and claims were made about how much was achieved through treaties. The use of a war metaphor was accentuated the attempt by *NYT* to show the reading public how much or how little was done to tackle climate change.

The development of a conceptual metaphor allows us to understand how one conceptual domain was understood in connection to another.<sup>38</sup> The use of metaphors associated with water and pressure,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> See Paul Baker and Tony McEnery, "A Corpus-based Approach to Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in UN and Newspaper Texts", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 4.2 (2005), 197-226; Baker et al., "A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press", *Discourse & Society*, 19.3 (2008), 273-306.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> See Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
for instance, push the readers towards an understanding of human displacement in negative terms. Thus, when employing metaphors that show the characteristics associated with water and pressure,<sup>39</sup> the journalists suggest tacitly how their readers should see and interpret the phenomenon of human displacement. However, since human displacement has been framed in negative ways, the phenomenon is not associated to any solutions, either expressed directly or implicitly. Thus, when policymakers are confronted with 'a global surge of climate change refugees' (17) or relationships are 'strained' (7) *NYT* seems to develop a description of the issue in familiar terms of unplanned and unwanted immigration, rather than positing solutions or suggesting remedies.

2) Catchphrases and Buzz Words: when used repeatedly, catchphrases allow the reader to associate people, actions, events and states with a specific phenomenon. The point of a catchphrase is the ubiquitous usage of the term in the media. US former President Barack Obama, for example, used the catchphrase 'threat- multiplier' (17), to describe climate change, suggesting that this was a dangerous dimension which threatened the very sovereignty of the US. The catchphrase collapses the causal reasoning linking climate change to security threats, by suggesting that the warming climate will have a severe impact on the lives of people: agricultural yields will decline, hurricanes and tropical storms will occur more often, sea-levels will rise; but these phenomena will affect people in different ways. People in developing and least developed countries (in Asia and Africa for example) will suffer from these effects as well as from uneasy access to clean drinking water and extreme climatic events. This means that many 'weak' countries will face additional stress coming from environmental issues. This will lead to conflict and unrest. Also, climate change could be seen as triggering and intensifying wars and armed conflicts, wherever special security engagements and military interventions are undertaken to ensure national security. The catchphrase 'threat-multiplier' suggests, then, that climate change will affect the underdeveloped South which in turn will pose a security risk to the more prosperous North as populations that suffer in the South will possibly migrate to the North; or, resource scarcity will lead to conflicts of interest which could only be solved through military intervention. The 'threatmultiplier' or the synonymous use of 'domino-effect' (17) or 'catalyst for conflict' (17) suggest that climate change is to blame for human displacement issues. These catchphrases force the reader to essentially make a link between environment and security, masking the reality of the clausal chain of probable consequences. Yet, it is evident that the 'threat-multiplier' catchphrase can be politically instrumentalised when used to augment military interventions to ensure land security against 'mass migration' (10) or for abating unrest where "climate change is an active, driving force in starting a conflict" (16).

Another catchphrase that was found repeatedly across the 30-year period is 'waves of environmental refugees' (7; 26; 46). The noun 'waves' is very common in immigration discourses.<sup>40</sup> The catchphrase helps develop themes associated with risk. A common pattern is the use of the catchphrase occurring with numbers, often 'millions' (24 occurrences) referred to the number of people seeking refuge. By reiterating that 'large swathes of humanity' will be affected (29), the pattern builds an argument against hosting such large numbers.

The point of these catchphrases is that since they are applied universally across the decades, there is a misleading premium placed on their ability to evoke common assumptions on a subject. These

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> CHANGES ARE MOVEMENT is the underlying metaphor that supports the water metaphor, whereas PEOPLE ARE CONTAINERS supports the pressure metaphor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> See Jonathan Charteris-Black, "Britain as a Container: Immigration Metaphors in the 2005 Election Campaign", *Discourse and Society*, 17.5 (2006), 563-581; Sanjay Chaturvedi and Timothy Doyle, eds., *Climate Terror: A Critical Geopolitics of Climate Change* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Paul A. Chilton and Mikhail Ilyin, "Metaphor in Political Discourse: The Case of Common European House", *Discourse and Society*, 4.1 (1993), 7-31; Gerald O' Brien, "Indigestible Food, Conquering Hordes, and Waste Materials: Metaphors of Immigrants and the Early Immigration Restriction Debate in the United States", *Metaphor and Symbol*, 18.1 (2003), 33-47.

catchphrases mask the issue by suggesting a linear understanding of climate change as the cause of trouble, environmental refugees as the consequence and thus reduce a multifaceted problem to a narrow understanding of the issue.

While former US President Obama used the catchphrase 'threat multiplier', the ex Vice President Al Gore contributes to the 'thorny debate' (28) by reiterating the 'destabilizing power' of climateinduced crises that industrialised countries have to face (28). The descriptor, "destabilizing" alternates with "power", "force" and "effect". Such buzzwords are used to suggest that climate change has the power to cause unrest and trouble. Buzzwords are often repeated by the media and end up creating associations between a specific subject and a specific jargon. In our case, buzzwords are used to justify the call for more military spending on immigration and homeland security in using 'destabilizing power/force/effect' to describe climate change, the issue is developed as one that deals exclusively with security threats.

Ex. 1. "Such climate-induced crisis could topple governments, feed terrorist movements or destabilize entire regions". (4)

Ex. 2. "Scientists fear climate effects so severe that they might destabilise governments, produce wave of refugees, precipitate the sixth mass extinction of plants and animals in Earth's history". (13)

These buzzwords in their varied textual realisations draw attention once again to the consequences of climate change. In this sense, they silence the causes of the issue such as the physical realm of unstable soil, due to soil erosion, unstable grounds due to ice-melts, to focus exclusively on the destabilizing power of climate change as a cause of a security threat. Al Gore categorically makes the connection between security and environmental refugees: he cited the prospect of waves of "environmental refugees" fleeing ravaged third world economies or low-lying areas and "causing enormous destabilizing pressures" for industrialised countries (28). Thus, the human face of climate change morphs into being the face of security threats, firmly entrenching the frame of environmental refugees as security threats.

Other buzzwords associated with climate change discourses are nominalisations such as 'sustainability', 'mitigation' and 'adaptation' which find way into the coverage of the issue with differing effects. For example, the word sustainable, the popular buzzword that most discussion on ecosystems and their carrying capacities contains had been used only three times over thirty years to show that continual misuse of other ecosystems in an unregulated manner is problematic. Even the nominalised lexical realisations which silence the efforts of the agents fail to be used astutely by *NYT* to frame ways by which countries could be called to attach value to nature and humans who are displaced and provide ways by which the health of various ecosystems can be encouraged.

Adaptation	Mitigation	Vulnerability
There is no doubt we in the US can adapt, but we shouldn't think those adaptations are cost-free. (47)	Because of the uncertainties of climate change and the variables of mitigation measures, it is impossible to rank nations precisely on a scale of risk. (36)	most are more vulnerable to climate change and less able to adapt to it than are the industrialised nations of the cooler latitudes. (46)

Table 10. Nominalisations in NYT

Since climate change needs to be detailed in terms of its characteristics, these associated buzzwords are often used to mask how environmental refugees are the true victims, who do not have the recourses to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change.

3) *Exemplars*: the definition of exemplars is, "a sample of incidents from a population of all occurrences that share particular characteristics most commonly manifested in news-media as personal stories or testimonials".<sup>41</sup> Exemplars are rarely "randomly sampled from the population, and thus, do not reliably represent the phenomenon with which they intended to correspond".<sup>42</sup> Since exemplars are repeated in the coverage, what happens is that the frame is populated with selective examples that gain currency.

One case that should be considered is the representation of disappearing island nations.<sup>43</sup> This is the synecdoche of climate change effects on humans and human displacement. Island-nations are characterised by "narrow resources bases and dependency on links to the outside world".<sup>44</sup> They become an interesting case study in the "international global climate change arena",<sup>45</sup> and often get framed for being examples of the un-resilient, which then allows international actors to help in efforts to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change (33; 46; 25; 43; 32; 3). Featuring people from island-nations provides specific concrete evidence of the consequences of climate change to showcase an understanding of environmental challenges at local levels, on specific people. Thus, exemplars put a human face on an abstract issue. The island-nations' woes represented through the voices of the people exemplify a juxtaposition of the interrelationship between the geopolitics of climate change and development.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the repeated representation of a 'community under threat' in the news article is constructed with the personalised stories emerging from the island nations:

Ex. 1. Although island nations and their people generate low levels of emissions, they still have to cope with the consequences of climate change:

"What we need to do is nothing short of decarbonizing the entire global economy," he said, his high voice cracking. (42)

Ex. 2. The low-lying nature of island nations coupled with their geographical dispersion, weak and fragile infrastructures and rising sea levels exacerbate their vulnerability to climate change:

"We can do nothing to stop climate change on our own, and so we have to buy land elsewhere," Nasheed said in November. (42)

The selection of island nations, emblematic of disappearing ecosystems, may encourage assumptions of climate change and its consequences on people. The assumption packed into providing island nations' voices as exemplars is that they fit very well into framing climate change as a disastrous scenario excluding the resilience and adaptation strategies employed by various ecosystems in those island

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Riva Tukachinsky et al., "Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words? The Effect of Race-related Visual and Verbal Exemplars on Attitudes and Support for Social Policies", *Mass Communication and Society*, 14.6 (2011), 720-742, 722.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Carol Farbotko, "Wishful Sinking: Disappearing Islands, Climate Refugees and Cosmopolitan Experimentation", *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 51.1 (2010), 47-60.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Godfrey Baldacchino and Daniel Niles, eds., *Island Futures: Conservation and Development Across the Asia-Pacific Region* (Kyoto: Springer Japan, 2011), 1. <sup>45</sup> Amelia Moore "Climate Changing Small Islands: Considering Specific Region Islands and Sp

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Amelia Moore, "Climate Changing Small Islands: Considering Social Science and the Production of Island Vulnerability and Opportunity", *Environment and Society*, 1 (2010), 116-131, 116.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Dennis, Rumley, "Ideology, Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Discourses in the Indian Ocean Region", *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 6.2 (2010), 147-154.

nations. Instead, in projecting exemplars like the one in the following example, one is left with a mask of "only" passive victimhood:

... in Salman Rushdie's 'Imaginary Homelands', he says you can imagine your home, but then you imagine with words that you know. So, basically, you would always be imagining the beach, imagining the palm tree, imagining the horizon. You can't be doing that in the middle of Rajasthan''. His voice wavered like that of a man on the verge of tears, and the normally upbeat president looked grief-stricken. "Believe me, we don't want to go there. We are fine here. Moving will never be easy for anyone. (42)

Not even one article on environmental refugees in *NYT* seems to include the rich traditional ecological knowledge used to implement sustainable resource management in the island nations. The success stories of Aitutaki (Cook Islands) Kiribati and Niue resilient fisheries are excluded from *NYT* narratives on climate change and environmental refugees. These "deferring and complimentary ways of knowing" and adapting to climate change are never featured.<sup>47</sup> As a matter of fact, the exemplars offered by island nations focus only on the negative consequences of climate change. This failure to engage with any alternative perspective on climate change narrows the adaptation to climate change only through migration. The use of the exemplars such as the ones mentioned above, silences the effort and the attempts made by these people to adapt and mitigate climate change as an alternative to moving away from the island.

Similarly, offering China as an example and including individual stories of people as exemplars for internal human displacement testifies to how selective prominence is given to issues that are related, but that can easily lead to false assumptions. To suggest that floating populations and internal migrant workers seeking a better life are environmental refugees allows for the connotative meaning of 'refuge' to come into play without actually making a connection to the actual category of people escaping severe and harsh climatic events or environmental degradation. This relationship is masked with the choice of quotations by the migrants:

"The local people there bullied us because we were from the countryside," he said. And the factory boss, who had promised high wages, delivered only half of that on payday. (49)

To use China as the only example of internal migration conjures up associated arguments of burgeoning populations affecting the distribution of resources, and migration is represented as a conscious decision and strategy to seek a better standard of living. Finally, international migration does not call into question the legal status of refugees as discussed earlier.

There is no doubt that these anecdotes of human displacement allow the reader to understand the issue a little better in terms of degrees of affectedness.<sup>48</sup> However, they orient the reader towards a certain interpretation of social reality which prevents the understanding of the issue at large.

#### 4. Conclusion

The choices made by *NYT*, both thematic and textual, direct the reader in envisaging a reality that may not be complete because of the presence of voids, traces and masks. These textual and thematical constellations of knowledge regarding themes and discussions of people, processes and events are weaved in with the frames. We can draw the following conclusions from this study. First of all, climate change is a global phenomenon, presented as such, although the problem of environmental refugees is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Susan A. Crate, "Climate and Culture: Anthropology in the Era of Contemporary Climate Change", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 40 (2011), 175-194, 175.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Christina Nilsson and Mark Nuttall, eds., "Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples", Indigenous Affairs, 1-2 (2008), 4-15.

framed as a problem confined to the developing and least developed countries. In *NYT*, the environmental refugees are the human face for the glocal effects of climate change, yet the reportage presents patterns of absences regarding their lived reality, their movements and the nature of such movements.

Secondly, the absences in a text need not be a consciously manipulative strategy employed by the news providers, but a result of their choices. Studying the patterns of absences foregrounds both information otherwise alluded to but not delved into, and information constructed in a negative manner because of choosing to mask alternative interpretations of reality. These constructed and context-dependent absences are classified into masks and traces. The analysis may further help researchers to theoretically classify absences in discourse. One absence was defined as a void but may also be defined as a manipulative silence.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, much has been said about climate change discourses in Ecolinguistics,<sup>50</sup> yet very little has been said about humans as both victims and perpetrators of climate change. This research validates the point that there must be better ways to represent both humans and non-human species in an environment that we need to take care of. This way interconnections can be validated between the natural world and us.

#### APPENDIX

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Thomas Huckin, "Textual silence and the Discourse of Homelessness", Discourse and Society, 13.3 (2002), 347-372.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> See, among the others, Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, and Richard J. Alexander, *Framing Discourse on the Environment: A Critical Discourse Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

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## Climate-induced Migration and Infotainment. The Ultimate Edge of News Construction?

Abstract: Climate-induced migration is not an extensively studied issue, nevertheless it is one of the most interesting and socially widely-impacting types of migration. In this paper, climate-induced migration is discussed in relation to the rise of a number of news writing strategies. As Brands (1998) suggested, entertainment formats are increasingly acquiring importance as first-hand sources of information, and this may trigger a process of reduction in the quantity and quality of news the media offer, provided that the rules of entertainment do not necessarily comply with the rules of news construction. Besides other news writing strategies, the inverted pyramid paradigm seems to decline in favour of a more narrative style or of more technologically-rooted forms of texts such as hypertexts. From a description of infotainment and of other journalism styles, the paper moves on to present a contrastive analysis and the results of in-field research carried out to investigate what kind of narratives are at play and how news is constructed. For the contrastive analysis, a corpus of pictures (taken from .it and .uk web domains) and Italian and British newspaper articles were collected. Images were collected together with articles, given the importance that the visual level and imagery have gained in news construction.

Keywords: migration, climate change, narratives, journalism, media, image

#### 1. Introduction

In a period in which exposure to information seems quicker and easier than ever before, it is difficult to understand how and why some news topics remain unknown. People are constantly connected with what happens in the world, news communications have become pervasive. Nevertheless, people seem to be less or differently informed, especially in regard to significant topics such as migration. It affects people's lives every day, yet people's scant involvement and knowledge are arguably linked to the modified nature of news construction, which increasingly focuses on elements other than the quality of information.<sup>1</sup> As Brants suggested, entertainment formats have increased as first-hand sources of information, and this may trigger a process of reduction in the quantity and quality of news the media offer, provided that the rules of entertainment do not necessarily comply with the rules of news construction.<sup>2</sup> In this light, the aim of the article is to investigate how climate-induced migration is dealt with in the news media in order to understand to what extent it is affected by 'infotainment' and what kind of news narratives are at play in such forms of news delivery. For the purposes of this study, a corpus of pictures (taken from .it and .uk web domains) and Italian and British newspaper articles was collected and categorized according to Monica Bednarek and Helen Caple's taxonomy "balance framework",<sup>3</sup> and used as input for an in-field research questionnaire in order to verify the original

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The changed nature of news construction is linked to ongoing technological development and to the widespread use of the web as a source and as the best locus where news is looked for. Even though it would be interesting to investigate this aspect too, for consistency, it does not seem productive and will be studied as a follow-up.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Kees Brants, "Who's Afraid of Infotainment?", European Journal of Communication, 13.3 (1998), 315-335.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple, News Discourse (London: Continuum, 2012).

claim that news construction increasingly draws on entertainment techniques as far as climate-induced migration is concerned.<sup>4</sup>

#### 2. News Construction and Style Change

Infotainment first appeared in the 1980s as an "explicit genre-mix of 'information' and 'entertainment' in news and current affairs programming".<sup>5</sup> Broadly speaking, it was the outcome of the convergence of two different functions in one text: the entertaining and the informative ones. It was therefore tied to a change in the traditional division of information into hard and soft news, which had become less neatly demarcated. As Brants notes, although it was firstly evaluated in negative terms, it was considered as the only way for the news to survive: "Many authors ... claim that commercialization and competition in broadcasting lead to a downgrading of ... information and, even worse, to a crisis in ... communication highlighted by the increasing reliance of television news media on entertainment formats".6 Infotainment soon became a portmanteau word to refer to "all that was wrong with contemporary television",7 perhaps due to the influence of Neil Postman's claim that US public discourse was turning into entertainment and that the 'epistemology of television' was not meant to provide in-depth knowledge because its main aim was to distract and communicate by means of entertainment only.8 Following the same line of thought, in 1992, Bernstein considered the increase in the quantity of news responsible for the decrease in its quality and accuracy, which corroborated a 'sleazoid infotainment culture' engaged in pandering to audiences instead of informing them.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in regard to the British context, Franklin noted a change in "journalism's priorities", which led to a growing interest for the trivial with respect to more serious issues.<sup>10</sup>

Today, we are witnessing a steady increase of infotainment, which is arguably due to a change in the audience. Readers have developed different needs due to the change in their daily routines and to the reduction of their spare time.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, news production companies have modified their attitudes and requirements, including those related to the financial aspect.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the increasing growth of news channels and online newspapers has entailed a fragmentation of the audience.<sup>13</sup> The provision of a 'mixed kind' of news, which blends information and entertainment features, has been defined as productive, socially positive and target focused.<sup>14</sup> However, the spread of such a mode of news construction is not as successful as it might seem. Numerous studies show how the number of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> William Gamson et al., "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18 (1992), 373-393; Barbie Zelizer, *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2010).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Daya K. Thussu, News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Brants, "Who's Afraid of Infotainment?".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Thussu, *News as Entertainment*, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Carl Bernstein, "The Idiot Culture", The New Republic (8 June 1992), 22-28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Bob Franklin, Newszak and News Media (London: Arnold, 1997).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Bala A. Musa, "News as Infotainment: Industry and Audience Trends", in Musa and Cindy Price, eds., *Emerging Issues in Contemporary Journalism, Infotainment, Internet, Libel, Censorship et Cetera* (Lewiston, Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 131-156.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid.; see also Doug Underwood, When MBAs Rule the Newsroom: How the Marketers and Managers Are Reshaping Today's Media (New York: Columbia U.P., 1995); Harold Vogel, Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide for Financial Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge: U.P., 2004).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> James G. Webster and Thomas B. Ksiazek, "The Dynamics of Audience Fragmentation: Public Attention in an Age of Digital Media", *Journal of Communication*, 62.1 (2012), 39-56; Philip M. Napoli, *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2010); Elizabeth Bird, *The Audience in Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2003); Ursula Rao, *News as Culture: Journalistic Practices and the Remaking of Indian Leadership Traditions* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Matthew A. Baum, Soft News Goes to War (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 2005); Thussu, News as Entertainment.

new readers (i.e., people who did not read before infotainment was proposed as a mode of writing and news delivery) does not increase remarkably nor does the number of those who choose infotainment instead of 'more traditional' forms of news.<sup>15</sup> This means that, perhaps, infotainment might attract unprecedented readers, playing a social role, but it does not change the habits and sources of 'older' readers'.

Infotainment, as a form of news delivery, entails a different attitude on behalf of the practitioners in regard to the informative function they should satisfy.<sup>16</sup> Unlike what happens in 'more traditional' definitions of hard news, according to which reliability, informativeness and truth are fundamental values, infotainment's most sought attainments are to be more attentive to the audience's response than to the quality of the news as a whole. It is a commonplace to consider entertainment as distant from 'traditional' hard news, as its 'antonym' so to say. Unlike traditional definitions of hard news, in fact, it does not have to abide by the truth- and reliability conditions, and for this reason, it has long been deemed inappropriate to deliver the news. Moreover, infotainment is primarily investigated contrastively with traditional definitions of hard news. Some of the differences between infotainment and 'traditional' hard news can be listed as follows in Table 1.<sup>17</sup>

Infotainment	Journalism
<ul> <li>An entertaining presentation of the news;</li> <li>A blend of entertainment and information in media products;</li> <li>A catchphrase to discuss new developments in news making;</li> <li>A rather unspecific way to signify a bundle of new influences on the journalists' work;</li> <li>The marginalisation of the important.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Rejection of sensationalism;</li> <li>Perception of infotainment a form of social criticism;</li> <li>Perception of news as fact-finding: objectivity and completeness;</li> <li>Perception of news as Creative invention.</li> <li>Writing is inventing meaning.</li> </ul>

Table 1. Features of infotainment and journalism

A further correlated trend is "the marginalisation of the important" in infotainment, which following Michael Tracey, may be described as a greater and unpredicted interest in what is transitory, unimportant and irrelevant.<sup>18</sup> It may be regarded as the consequence of the readers' reduced curiosity and capacity of autonomous reasoning, which, in turn, prevents them from distinguishing information from advertising.<sup>19</sup> As Marr powerfully maintains: "The idea of news has altered. It stopped being essentially information and became something designed to produce – at all costs, always – an emotional reaction, the more extreme the better".<sup>20</sup>

As a result, the traditional inverted-pyramid technique, which is one of the "cornerstones" of journalism, left the floor to a more narrative-oriented style. The inverted-pyramid technique consists of presenting the most important or relevant issues immediately at the beginning of a news report, hence leaving details and context to later sections. It originated in the USA in the late XIX century, when news was spread through the telegraph. Since the telegraph was not a reliable means of communication

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Ibid.; Bird, *The Audience in Everyday Life*; Michael Medved, "Television News: Information or Infotainment?", *USA Today*, 12.8 (2000), 58-59; Musa, "News as Infotainment".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Thussu, News as Entertainment; John Langer, Tabloid TV, Popular Journalism and the "Other News" (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> See Francesca Vigo, Stories that Matter: A Socio-semiotic Approach to Contemporary Narratives of Migration (Napoli: Iniziative Editoriali Loffredo, 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Michael Tracey, *The Decline and Fall of Public Service Broadcasting* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1998), 264.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> John B. Arden, America's Meltdown: The Lowest-common Denominator Society (Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2003).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Andrew Marr, *My Trade: A Short History of British Journalism* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2004), 381.

given the various technical problems it had to overcome, it was more successful and advisable to start from the core of the news and leave the less significant items in the 'risky zone'. As João Canavilhas recounts, this strategy was "later to be labelled the 'inverted pyramid' technique by Edwin L. Shuman in his book *Practical Journalism*".<sup>21</sup> It was extremely effective but, in the long run it turned news writing into a routine, in which creativity was no longer at play and therefore, as DeSilva notes, by the 2000s the inverted pyramid was no longer a successful technique in news writing since it allowed for no happy ending perhaps as a result of infotainment.<sup>22</sup>

The inception of infotainment has also been related by numerous scholars to the altered approach to news organisations, which was first developed in the 1980s.<sup>23</sup> The birth of commercial television turned news-making into a commodity and transformed all the procedures that ruled it. The consideration of the news as a product to be sold entailed the targeting of a financial aim, which was accomplished mainly when sales were fully satisfactory and to a much lesser degree when the piece of news was delivered. Hence, the news had to amuse and not to inform. From this perspective, the growth of infotainment is coherent. News managers wished to offer the audience something to enjoy effortlessly, rather than tiring them with more serious matters. It "diverts the attention of the masses from 'real' political issues, narcotizing them through soft stones and spectacle".<sup>24</sup> A balance between interest, earnings and 'information' was the goal of news organizations which moved towards a more narrative style of news writing. As Conley and Lamble claim, "[w]ith the broadcast media having captured much of the day's breaking news, newspapers are more likely to encourage reporters to write in narrative, storytelling formats than once was the case".<sup>25</sup>

Yet the change in the way newspapers were written and structured also occurred due to the growth of technology first, and the online versions of newspapers, later.<sup>26</sup> In the 1980s, editors started using electronically-aided techniques of newspaper writing and publishing. This allowed them to reduce the time of printing and made it possible to wait until late for more news to be ready. News texts were digitalised, but initially maintained a 'traditional' form, irrespective of the new digital tools. Between the 1990s and the new century, a larger number of readers started gaining access to the world wide web and the number of online versions of newspapers grew remarkably. In the beginning, however, journalists could not rely on advanced technological equipment on the readers' part, hence the way texts were constructed did not exploit the digital potential and cared only for the readers' easy access. In regard to textual construction, it led to online versions that mainly resembled the print versions.<sup>27</sup> In this surprisingly conservative process, the 'inverted pyramid' technique continued to be used. However, news reporters started noting its limitations and called for the emergence of new writing strategies or genres.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> João Canavilhas, "Web Journalism: From the Inverted Pyramid to the Tumbled Pyramid", *BOCC* (2007), 1-17, ISSN: 1646-3137, www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/canavilhas-joao-inverted-pyramid.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Bruce DeSilva, "Endings", in Mark Kramer and Wendy Call, eds., *Telling True Stories* (New York: Plume, 2007), 116-124.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> John Zaller, "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen", *Political Communication*, 20.2 (2003), 109-130; Edwin C. Baker, *Media, Markets, and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2002); Baker, *Media Concentration and Democracy: Why Ownership Matters* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2007); Bonnie Anderson, *News Flash: Journalism, Infotainment and the Bottom-Line Business of Broadcast News* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2004); Leonard Downie and Robert Kaiser, *The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril* (New York: Knopf, 2002); Todd Gitlin, *Media Unlimited: How the Torrents of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> David Conley and Stephen Lamble, The Daily Miracle (Melbourne: Oxford U.P., 2006).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Concha Edo, *Del papel a la pantalla: la prensa en Internet* (Sevilha: Comunicación Social Ediciones y Publicaciones, 2002); Canavilhas, "Web Journalism".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Edo, *Del papel a la pantalla*.

Most of the debate on online newspapers has focused on the neglected potentialities of hypertexts, which are not exploited by journalists.<sup>28</sup> Among the possible developments that reporters called for was the employment of what Canavilhas called 'the tumbled pyramid', in which layers of meanings are still present but the structure allows readers to follow each layer independently.<sup>29</sup> The suggestion of this modified pyramid model stemmed from a number of research projects investigating the readers' responses to hypertexts. The main claim was that hypertexts offer infinite combinations of meaning-making, which would make articles far more informed than traditional texts.<sup>30</sup> Yet, hypertexts have not spread in news writing since the effort they require on behalf of the readers, who are so deeply accustomed to linear reading, is to dislike this kind of reading.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, the interest in a more narrative style in journalism has increased over the past years.<sup>32</sup> The world wide web and its 24-hour activity have forced journalists towards more flexible strategies of news writing.<sup>33</sup> In this context, a more narrative style has been embraced in order to face the superdiversity of new media,<sup>34</sup> considering that "narrative is the dominant mode of communication in social life".<sup>35</sup> The choice of a more narrative style may also be due to the fact that it attracts those readers who have opted for different new media as sources of information: "Anecdotally, we're finding that excellence in narrative not only brings people back to newspapers but makes them loyal readers and encourages them to trust the writer".<sup>36</sup> In regard to narrative and the dichotomy between 'soft' and 'hard' news, traditional definitions of journalism claimed that the former is more likely to include a narrative style, whereas the latter does not: "Soft news stories appear to be more obviously structured as narratives, with many of the features of fictional narratives".<sup>37</sup> Yet as Bell reminded us as early as 1991 journalists do tell stories: "journalists do not write articles. They write stories. A story has structure, direction, point, viewpoint".<sup>38</sup> Stretching his claim further, Johnston maintains that all news can be defined as 'narrative', including that constructed according to the inverted pyramid paradigm.<sup>39</sup> The difference between the two styles lies in the organization of the content: traditional narrative displays a beginning, middle and end order of events, whereas the inverted pyramid suggests we place the end at the beginning, which entails a different development of the text.<sup>40</sup> Johnston wisely argues

<sup>38</sup> Allan Bell, *The Language of News Media* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> DeSilva, "Endings".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Francis Pisani, "¿Y ahora qué?", in Salvador Camarena et al., eds., *Explorando el ciberperiodismo iberoamericano* (México: C.E.C.S.A., 2002); Ramón Salaverria, *Redacción Periodística en Internet* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 2005); Yin Leng Theng et al., "HyperAT: HCI and Web Authoring", in Harold Thimbleby et al., eds., *People and Computers XII* (London: Springer, 1997), 359-378.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Canavilhas, "Web Journalism".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Theng, "HyperAT"; Salaverria, "De la pirámide invertida al hipertexto: hacia nuevos estándares de redacción para los periódicos digitales", Novática, 142 (1999): 12-15; Angelika Storrer, "Coherence in Text and Hypertext", *Document Design*, 3.2 (2002); Pisani, "¿Y ahora qué?".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Vin Ray, "News Storytelling in a Digital Landscape", in Karen Fowler-Watt and Stuart Allan, eds., *Journalism: New Challenges* (Bournemouth: Centre for Journalism and Communication Research, Bournemouth University, 2013), 435-443.
 <sup>33</sup> Brian McNair, "Journalism in the 21st Century – Evolution, Not Extinction", *Journalism*, 10 (2009), 347-349.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Sue Joseph, "Telling True Stories in Australia", *Journalism Practice*, 4 (2010), 82-96; Sonja Merljak Zdovc, "More Stories, More Readers? Feature Writing in Slovene Newspapers", *Journalism Practice*, 3 (2009), 319-334; Erik Neveu, "Revisiting Narrative Journalism as One of the Futures of Journalism", *Journalism Studies*, 15 (2014), 533-542.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> For an up-to-date review of research on narrative journalism see Kobie van Kirken and José Sanders, "Framing Narrative Journalism as a New Genre: A Case Study of the Netherlands", *Journalism*, 18.10 (2017), 1364-1380.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Birks cit. in Liza Weisstuch, "Talking Stories, Nieman Hosts 'Narrative Journalism' Luminaries at Conference", *Harvard University Gazette* (3 December 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Helen Fulton, "Print News as Narrative", in Fulton, ed., Narrative and Media (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2005), 226.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Jane Johnston, "Turning the Inverted Pyramid Upside Down: How Australian Print Media is Learning to Love the Narrative", *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 18 (2007), 1-15, http://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss18/2.

that given the various layers of meaning, the inverted pyramid focuses on one single layer while other styles, including the narrative one, might involve more.<sup>41</sup>

As scholars in Critical Discourse Analysis have demonstrated, the power that the news media have on society is mainly exercised through discourse.<sup>42</sup> More specifically, as social constructionists suggest, human beings interpret reality to generate meaning.<sup>43</sup> Interpreting reality and creating meaning are connected to assessing narratives against consistency and fidelity. "Narratives, or storytelling, contribute to the construction of reality because if the construction of reality occurs through interactions and if interactions can take the form of storytelling, then storytelling contributes to the construction of reality!".<sup>44</sup> Narratives are firmly linked to reality and reality construction. Narratives are then part of the meaning-making process and in modern times, this occurs through the news media, which play a role in the construction of reality because they reach a considerable number of people. It is understood that the more people the news media reach, the greater the influence on their thoughts and behaviours. Hence, if the news media greatly influence the construction of reality and people's minds, then controlling them is equal to ruling reality. Interest in the media and on how they affect society is not new. Indeed, as early as 1968, Gerbner was already proposing his cultivation theory to understand the effects of television on audiences and maintained that exposure to television deeply influences the viewers' perception of reality.<sup>45</sup> Later, Schudson claimed that news media seem to play a strategic role in the development of a modern society and for this reason it is vital to reflect upon how the media, narratives and power mutually influence one another.<sup>46</sup> "Media analysts from the functionalist perspective have emphasized the maintenance roles the media perform in society. ... the media are seen to disseminate information, educate the public, and entertain audiences".<sup>47</sup>

Focussing specifically on "the conditions under which it is possible for the media to cultivate an ideal identity for the spectator as a citizen of the world" and reflecting upon a possible ethical role of the media, Chouliaraki claims that media force the audience to reflect upon what occurs in the distance, most frequently other people's suffering, and this generates tension since spectators realise they cannot act on the others' pain as it would be ethically correct.<sup>48</sup> The way news discourse is constructed stems also from this tension, it aims at making the "spectacle of suffering … ethically acceptable for the spectator" and manages to help the audience construct a new behaviour that shapes it as distant spectators and makes their position ethically more acceptable.<sup>49</sup>

For this reason, if narratives shape discourse, interpretation and attitudes, and the media disseminate these narratives globally, then 'holding' the media equals influencing the masses.<sup>50</sup> If this is the case, in discussing how journalism has altered and acknowledging the existence of a hybrid mode

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Johnston, "Turning the Inverted Pyramid Upside Down".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Michi Messer et al., eds., *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Berlin: Springer, 2012); Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Analysis: Introducing Qualitative Methods* (London: Sage, 2009); Wodak and Paul Jones, *Identity, Belonging and Migration* (Liverpool: Liverpool U.P., 2008); Wodak and Teun A. van Dijk, eds., *Racism at the Top: Parliamentary Discourses on Ethnic Issues in Six European Countries* (Klagenfurt: Drava Verlag, 2000); Martin Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2001); van Dijk, *Discourse and Power* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008); Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, Second Edition (London: Longman, 2001).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Walter Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Walter Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987); Vigo, *Stories that Matter*, 122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> George Gerbner, "Toward 'Cultural Indicators': The Analysis of Mass Mediated Message Systems", AV Communication Review, 7.2 (1969), 137-148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Michael Schudson, The Power of Media (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1996).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Musa, "News as Infotainment", 131.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: Sage, 2006), 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

of news construction, it might be worth considering that some changes in news writing might have been caused by requirements other than those strictly related to the dissemination of information or the change in technology.

#### 3. News Writing and Migration: An Investigation

Migration as a topic has recently gained greater exposure in the British and Italian news media. Yet strangely enough, the causes of migration, such as those connected to climate change and the environment, are not offered the same coverage.<sup>51</sup> Scholars have defined people who are forced to move because of natural disasters deriving from climate change as 'environmental refugees/migrants' or 'climate-induced refugees/migrants', "people who have to leave their habitats (and home territory) immediately or in the near future because of sudden or gradual alterations in their natural environment related to at least one of three impacts of climate change: sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and drought and water scarcity."<sup>52</sup> Very little is known about environmental and climate-induced migrants and the relationship between climate change and migration is often misunderstood, due to contradicting research and evidence.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, empirical research suggests that environmental migration is mostly internal, some takes place between neighbouring countries, and just a little occurs over long distances. Hence, even though great numerical evidence is often quoted by scientists and news reporters,<sup>54</sup>climate change and the environment are still not classified as "a source of persecution, a dimension that is crucial to the definition of a refugee in the 1951 Refugee Convention. At present, there is no explicit mention of climate change being a contributory factor, thus, there appears to be no coherent legal or policy response to these victims of climate change".55

The greatest challenge to the acknowledgement of environmental factors and climate change affecting migration is that "Environmental migration is understood as a multicausal phenomenon, yet one in which environmental drivers play a significant and increasingly determinative role".<sup>56</sup> Yet, as Vertovec proposes, the summary term 'super-diversity' may be used to address the changing nature of global migration affected by a multiplication of significant variables; new variables that show it is not enough to see 'diversity' only in terms of ethnicity, as is regularly the case in social science and in the wider public sphere.<sup>57</sup> He also maintains that, in order to understand and address the complex nature of contemporary, migration-driven diversity more fully, additional variables need to be better recognized and they must include those related to climate. These entail the increasing need to investigate adaptive capacity in relation to the strength of response strategies. Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, environmental migrants and climate-induced migrants may react differently to their changed life

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Nina Venkataraman, "What's Not in a Frame? Analysis of Media Representations of the Environmental Refugee", in Melanie Schröter and Charlotte Taylor, eds., *Exploring Silence and Absence in Discourse: Empirical Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 241-279.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Frank Biermann and Ingrid Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World: Toward a Global Governance System to Protect Climate Refugees", *Global Environmental Politics*, 10.1 (2010), 67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Richard Black et al., "Migration and Climate Change: Toward an Integrated Assessment of Sensitivity", in Thomas Faist and Jeanette Schade, eds., *Disentangling Migration and Climate Change: Methodologies, Political Discourses, and Human Rights* (Berlin: Springer Black, 2013), 29-53.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Christian Aid, "Human Tide: The Real Migration Crisis", Report (London, 2007), https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-08/human-tide-the-real-migration-crisis-may-2007.pdf; Lester R. Brown, "Troubling New Flows of Environmental Refugees" (Earth Policy Institute, Rutgers University, 2004), http://www.earthpolicy.org/plan\_b\_updates/2004/update33.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Venkataraman, "What's Not in a Frame?", 244.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> International Organization for Migration, "World Migration Report 2010 – The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change 2011" (Geneva: IOM, 2010).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Steven Vertovec, "Super-diversity and its Implications", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30.6 (2007), 1024-1054.

condition, which includes the awareness of experiencing a non-temporary situation. Adger *et al.* suggest focusing on a vulnerability-led approach rather than on an impacts-led approach, which means concentrating not on the dangers but on the underlying institutional and cultural factors "that determine how people respond to and cope with climate hazards".<sup>58</sup> The environmental refugees response to their newly acquired condition, which is not only that of being a migrant but also that of being a new, static member of a new society, cannot be separated from those of the people/society they go to live with.

The presence of news reports on the issue, when present, arguably satisfies a different function from the informative one.<sup>59</sup> As Brants suggested, the entertainment formats are increasingly acquiring importance as first-hand sources of information, and this has triggered a decrease in the quality of news since the rules of entertainment do not comply with the rules of news construction. New media coverage of the phenomenon is of a more sensationalist nature, placing migrants within a 'culture of alarm', triggering feelings of anxiety, vulnerability and alarm.<sup>60</sup> News reports, TV reports, etc., present 'predictable' narratives, which depict of environmental-migrants as helpless, needy and passive. Climate-induced migrants strongly contrast this description of themselves and demand their active role to be acknowledged.<sup>61</sup> Their awareness makes them plan their new life carefully to avoid being victims, since as Lewis claims, "If migration is undertaken willingly it can be an effective strategy .... It is essential that migration strategies are planned".<sup>62</sup> Yet, what the media offer is a repetitive pattern of "hegemonic negative labels and collocations".<sup>63</sup> Sensationalism and familiarity, which are the main frame of climate migration-related discourse fail to inform.<sup>64</sup> Besides, if we consider the powerful role the news media play in society with reference to attitude-building, it is easy to realize how harmful these narratives, 'silences' and omissions can be.<sup>65</sup>

# 4. Climate-migration Images in News Reports: An In-field Research on the Perception of Infotainment

The present investigation is part of a wider project with a twofold goal. On the one hand, it aims to disclose the way the news media deal with news topics such as migration, on the other, it intends to demonstrate how the quality of news construction is changing by relying on pre-existing narratives and patterns. In previous studies, I have dealt with narratives and discourse analysis,<sup>66</sup> while here I propose a multimodal analysis of news images by drawing on the main findings in the field of Multimodal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> W Neil Adger et al., "New Indicators of Vulnerability and Adaptive Capacity", Technical Report 7 (Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, 2004), 1-122, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Katherine E. Russo, "Floating Signifiers, Transnational Affect Flows", in Andrew Baldwin and Giovanni Bettini, eds., *Life Adrift Climate Change, Migration, Critique* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017), 196.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Carol Farbotko, "Wishful Sinking: Disappearing Islands, Climate Refugees and Cosmopolitan Experimentation", *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 51.1 (2010), 47-60; Russo, "Floating Signifiers"; Bettini, "Climate Barbarians at the Gate? A Critique of Apocalyptic Narratives on Climate Refugees", *Geoforum*, 45 (2013), 63-72; Vigo, *Stories that Matter*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Tanja Dreher and Michelle Voyer "Climate Refugees or Migrants? Contesting Media Frames on Climate Justice in the Pacific", *Environmental Communication*, 9.1 (2014), 58-76.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Bridget Lewis, "Neighbourliness and Australia's Contribution to Regional Migration Strategies for Climate Displacement in the Pacific", *QUT Law Review*, 15.2 (2015), 86-87.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Maria Grazia Sindoni, "'The Semantics of Migration'. Translation as Transduction: Remaking Meanings Across Modes", *Hermes – Journal of Language and Communication in Business*, 55 (2016), 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Familiarity refers to the function repetition plays in constructing narratives, i.e. that of making some images or language patterns familiar. As Martin and White explain this construct is a discursive framework of empathy and connection. See J. R. Martin and P. R. R. White, *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005).

<sup>65</sup> Brants, "Who's Afraid of Infotainment?".

<sup>66</sup> Vigo, Stories that Matter.

Discourse and, more specifically, on Zelizer's work on the role of images in newspaper articles.<sup>67</sup> As is widely known, images are a fundamental element in newspaper text construction, yet they are not easy to define and it is not simple to describe their role. Images are also important for the construction of the spectators' stances and attitudes with regard to the other's pain. Images succeed in creating a sort of emotional connection among the spectators and may trigger ethical behaviours since they turn spectators from mere witnesses to co-actors.<sup>68</sup> In order to analyse the images, I apply Bednarek and Caple's taxonomy "balance framework" (Table 2 and Fig. 1, adapted from Bednarek and Caple),69 which pays specific attention to entertainment by highlighting the aesthetic level of news images. Claiming that compositional rules are a key feature of every image in the press and that they very frequently obey aesthetic rules, Bednarek and Caple present the following key terminology, shown in Table 2.

Term	Explanation
Image Frame	For the purposes of the analyses presented here the image frame is the boundary of the image that the reader is working with. This means that the initial capturing of the event by the photographer and subsequent editing process is subsumed in this definition, since semioticians generally do not have access to the capturing and editing process but analyse what is finally presented as a photograph in the newspaper.
Elements	The elements of a photograph are the people (represented participants), places (circumstances) and activities depicted within the image frame and through their interactions with each other.
Visual Unit of Information (VUI)	The combination of these elements makes up the visual unit of information depicted in the image frame (e.g. an image of a man walking his dog in the park would be made up of one VUI; whereas an image of a man walking his dog in the park while six boys are playing soccer in the background would be made up of two VUIs). Generally, press photographs have only one VUI within an image, as they tend to single out one aspect of an event to represent the entire event (see Painter et al. 2011 on composition in children's picture books).

Table 2. Key terminology for discussing composition, adapted from Bednarek and Caple (2012)

According to Bednarek and Caple's taxonomy (Fig. 1),<sup>70</sup> images in newspaper articles can be analysed by means of a gradual series of dyadic choices. The first option concerns the characters in the picture and specifically whether they are shown as single (isolating) or whole (iterating). As for the isolating order, it can be further specified according to whether the participant occupies the centre or is placed along an axis and then according to whether s/he is with other participants or not. When more than one character is present, the focus is on how they interact, on whether the relationship is dividing or serializing. The former may develop into a matching, mirroring and facing relationship, the latter into a scattered one. This would mean that there is no hierarchy, and no one dominates the floor.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1996); Bednarek and Caple, News Discourse; Caple, Photojournalism: A Social Semiotic Approach (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Barbie Zelizer, About to Die: How News Images Move the Public (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Chouliaraki, Spectatorship, 27. 69 Bednarek and Caple, News Discourse, 164.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 1. Adapted from Bednarek and Caple's taxonomy

The images for this study were manually selected from *The Guardian* and *La Repubblica*, a British and an Italian newspaper respectively, by using 'climate-induced migration'/'migrazione climatica', 'environmental refugees'/'rifugiati ambientali' and 'climate-change migration'/'migrazione e cambiamento climatico' as search words to collect news reports which contained an image in 2015. The corpus consisted of 93 British reports and 54 Italian reports; the number divide is not significant given the nature and the spread of the two newspapers. Nearly all of the reports included an image, therefore the image collections comprise 80 and 50 images from the British and Italian newspapers respectively. Surprisingly enough, a first analysis revealed that more than half of the images were not directly connected to the article nor were they specifically picturing something related to climate change and migration. Most of them played a different role however, neither the informative nor the reinforcing one. They were instances of Bednarek and Caple's 'iconic image' (i.e., an image that satisfies a mere communicative function and is not an illustration).<sup>71</sup>

The following four pictures chosen as examples are instances of 'typical' and frequent images:

- Picture 1, The Korail area of Dhaka, photograph by Poppy McPherson, from "Dhaka: The City Where Climate Refugees Are Already a Reality", *The Guardian* (1/12/2015);
- Picture 2, Funafuti, the main island of the nation state of Tuvalu in the South Pacific, photograph by AP/Alastair Grant, from "Help Small Island States Win their Battle Against Climate Change", *The Guardian* (29/08/2014);
- Picture 3, "Rifugiati ambientali nel MONDO: Vittime ignorate del liberismo selvaggio", by anonymous photoreporter, *Cambiailmondo.org* (3/01/2013);
- Picture 4, "I rifugiati ambientali: la situazione nel mondo", by anonymous photoreporter, *La Repubblica* (14/09/2016).

Out of 130 total images, in fact, 60% display people in devastated nature scenes mostly related to 'water' or drought, 20% show aerial pictures, 15% present graphs or diagrams, and the remaining 5%

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 116.

picture animal migration. Despite their being part of articles dealing with taxing topics, they are all very balanced texts, attractive and attention catching.<sup>72</sup>



Fig. 2. Photograph from "Rifugiati ambientali nel MONDO: Vittime ignorate del liberismo selvaggio", *Cambiailmondo.org* (3/01/2013)

Picture 1 is an instance of scattered iterating. The characters are scattered in the picture, which may also be regarded as a quotation of the poster of 2012 disaster movie directed by Juan Antonio Bayona *The Impossible*:



Fig. 3. Still from Juan Antonio Bayona, The Impossible (Spain, 2012)

As Bednarek and Caple note, this could enhance the attractive power of the image for its winking force, which allows the reader, being able to make the connection between the two images, to feel

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> With reference to the soft-hard news opposition, climate-induced migration related news should be considered an example of hard news, due to the complexity of the topics, the same the way they are presented makes them more similar to soft news. This might lead us to think that the difference between soft and hard news is no longer at play as far as this semantic domain is concerned. For the aesthetic quality and the value of composition of press photograph as opposed to the preference for action, it would be worthy referring to Bednarek and Caple discussing Schirato and Webb. (See Bednarek and Caple, *News Discourse*, 175).

smart.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the image is well constructed: shutter speed, lighting, colour saturation, brightness etc. were masterfully employed. The gaze of the represented participants is exploited to attract the reader. It conveys a sense of sadness which is balanced by some happier details, like the boys playing and chatting. The article which contains this picture reports on the frequent series of storms that affected the area destroying crops, roads and, at times, houses. No figures or other details are provided. It is a non-specific story which could have occurred in any place. Normally, reports on negative environmental events are considered hard news and are equipped with pictures accordingly. In the case of the photograph by McPherson, however, even though the topic could be apt for hard news, the way it is dealt with and the added picture turn it into soft news.

Picture 2 is also geared towards infotainment. It is part of a report which concerns the Maldives and how they are sinking. It provides figures but does not report on the immediate risks and it relies on laypeople talking about the issue with no specific knowledge of special information. The general tone is catastrophic, but the reader is never sure about the whys and wherefores. The reader learns about the people's lives there and worries, also from the way the environmental situation is described. It is an aerial shot from a plane to show what would no longer be there soon. The image is beautiful, all the components are balanced and the unusual and slightly faulty angle makes it attractive. The picture is iterating, serialising, and matching; it is a landscape picture with no participants, which follows the linear patterning. This visual text is construed to convey an aesthetically powerful image irrespective of the bitterness of the topic.

Picture 3 (Fig. 2) is part of an Italian article on environmental refugees in the world. The picture describes a possible migration but it is not linked to the article, it does not help the reader's understanding, nor adds new information. According to the "balance framework", the image is iterating, serializing and matching. From a technical point of view speaking, it is not as good as the others: the colour saturation and brightness are not satisfactory, nor is the general structure. The faceless, compassionless people, which are depicted, are a mere line in the water and convey a deep sense of recklessness in opposition to what the article informs us about.

Finally, Picture 4 is an instance of a smaller group of images related to climate-induced migration. It displays a bar chart which provides some numerical evidence of environmental migration. The graph is clear, the colours are bright, and the absence of participants means it cannot be analysed using the "balance framework". Yet, as I mentioned at the beginning of this article, omissions and absence are as meaningful as other elements of the text. In this case, a newspaper article presenting such a chart as an image acquires reliability, all the same, the choice of a graph and the consequent absence of an image make the article more attractive as a whole, especially since the chart added to the article has no connection at all with the article itself.<sup>74</sup> The topic of the article, in fact, is climate change and the risks connected to it. There is no mention to figures or numbers in general.

The analysis of the four images chosen as input for the questionnaire seems to corroborate the claim that newspaper articles on climate-induced migration are mainly constructed using narratives of entertainment as the attention to aesthetic-compositional rules, the replication of a few plots and the inconsistency between images and texts have shown. The repetition of very few types of images related to a large number of articles also confirms the repetition of the same discourses, rather than a focus on new information: environmental migrants are represented according to the same stereotype, that of helpless victims for whom there is no safety. Readers are entertained by pictures that are 'familiar' and by topics that are never difficult to follow nor surprising.

Yet, to verify the original claim that news construction increasingly draws on entertainment techniques as far as climate-induced migration is concerned, a questionnaire was administered to a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> See previous note about the aesthetic quality and value of composition of press photographs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> David Machin and Andrea Mayr, How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis (London: Sage, 2012).

sample of 50 people of mixed age and education. Some were employed, others were not. The questionnaire aimed to assess the attitude readers have towards climate-induced migration and how they choose the articles they read. Besides the usual question concerning personal details (name and gender excluded) and reading habits, the questionnaire was made up of five questions and a task.

People were asked to:

- provide a definition or explanation of migration (question 1);
- provide a description of migrants (question 2);
- say whether they read newspapers (online versions included) and what sections they are normally interested in (question 3);
- look at the image and describe it in terms of attractiveness (question 4);
- look at the image and say what they expected from the article (question 5);
- read the article and say what it was about and whether it fulfilled the expectations triggered by the image (task).

The analysed sample was made up of 50 people even though the total number of respondents was larger. For convenience sake, all the respondents were Italian and thus, the article they had to read was in Italian. The questionnaire was administered online and by word of mouth thanks to the kind help of friends and relatives. As expected, online answers outnumbered the others. For this reason, to normalize the sample number, only 50 questionnaires were analysed.

As for the first question, 70% of respondents defined migration as an escape from danger, risk and war, while 20% linked it to climate, but as a consequence of natural disasters not as an outcome of ongoing phenomena such as global warming or the rise in sea levels. The remaining answers were either some political comments or some attempt to define migration in relation to unspecified financial problems.



Fig. 4. Graphic showing the statistics for question 1

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As for the description of migrants, more than 75% used terms relating to poverty, pain, suffering, hunger, help, family difficulties, violence, and danger. Violence and danger were seldom used to refer to the migrants but to 'the others' whom the migrants might affect. 20% of respondents described migrants as needy, poor, lonely and desperate. The remainder mentioned a will to improve on behalf of the migrants and also their good attitude and strong will.



Fig. 5. Graphic showing the statistics for question 2

All the respondents were also newspaper readers; however, I would add, 'quick' readers for the attitude they disclosed. 45% maintained they read the home affairs sections best, then those related to show business and in the end something from the international pages. They also claimed that they selected the articles according to the presence/absence of images. 30% reported they looked at the images and at the newspaper as a whole, then focused on some articles often guided by the images. 25% said they read the home affairs section first, then the local news and eventually the sections on culture or show business. They considered images significant especially as far as the culture and show business sections were concerned.



Fig. 6. Graphic showing the statistics for question 3

For the fourth question, two of the four images chosen as samples were used, namely Picture 1 and Picture 2. The sample was split into two halves, therefore 25 people were given the first picture and 25 the second one. As for Picture 1, 2, 75% described it as sad, well-structured and clear; most focused on the boy's eyes and gaze. They tried to go beyond the picture and construct a story, nearly all of them spoke about poverty and sadness and of a helpless condition. They did not mention climate problems or emergency, they did not wonder about the cause of the situation but described the situation as necessary and 'assumed'. 20% tried to place the image in a real geographical area and tried to link it to some known situation of poverty and desperation. They considered the image to be well constructed and shot (among the comments are: "it is bright", "it is clear", "you must look at it"). As far as Picture 2 is concerned, 40% complained it was shot from too far away where little could be seen. They reported on the colours and the curiosity it triggered for its shape. 30% said they were curious about the place and wanted to read the article to understand. They believed it was part of a tourist ad. The answer to what they expected from the articles according to the image, 80% of both subgroups did not refer to climate-induced migration nor to climate problems in general. As for Picture 1, 75% expected (and wanted) to read stories about poverty and desperation. They seemed ready to learn more about abandoned children left to cope on their own, about violence, but mostly about poverty. They were sure the article was about Asia, "the poor areas", as one respondent added. 15% expected to read about some natural disasters related to the sea or to water in general. They were eager to find some interviews with those people, especially the children, and were ready to read about desperation and hopelessness. The remaining readers referred inattentively to loneliness, deaths, and danger. The respondents who had to predict the content of the article related to Picture 2, mainly expected to find details and information concerning a place to visit. Only 5% mentioned climate problems relating to water. In both cases, no one mentioned migration or climate-induced migration or environmental refugees. For the last task they were asked to read the article connected to the picture they had commented.

The outcomes of the last questions proved to be more interesting. In both cases, the respondents were disappointed over the absence of "normal people's voices and stories" and very surprised to learn that climate-induced migration was such a big issue. They were also puzzled that it affects the whole world. As for the article relating to Picture 2, the readers/respondents found it disturbing to have such a beautiful image for such a challenging topic. They were very happy to learn directly from the actors involved but found the article boring when it shifted to a more informed and detailed level reporting

figures and international plans. Most of the respondents quit reading once the level of writing became more demanding.

The questionnaire was purposefully kept short; however, its outcomes are productive and a good starting point for further research. From the respondents' answers, it seems clear that climate-induced migration is not a well-known topic, at least as far as Italian general knowledge is concerned. It is also evident that the discourses constructed about migration or about natural disasters (not immediately linked to migration in Italy) are discourses of pain and desperation, which leave no relief or help in constructing a different attitude towards the actors involved. As for the way the news is constructed and information is conveyed, the in-field research seems to confirm that readers are more likely to choose reader-friendly articles with familiar images.

#### 5. Conclusions

This investigation started from the awareness of the power of media in our society and the claim that 'traditional' news construction is changing to become either a kind of mixed genre, which combines information and entertainment, following what journalism and media studies highlighted with reference to the change in news management especially or simply more narrative oriented. Strictly related to this claim was the idea that images are key features of news construction as well as of a more ethical approach to the others' suffering on behalf of the audience, and that they obey aesthetic rules more than informative ones, thus corroborating the insight that the way information is provided pursues a more attractive and aesthetic function than informative one. This shift occurring in news construction is more important when it concerns fundamental topics such as climate-induced migration.

Drawing upon multimodal analysis frameworks, an investigation was carried out to assess the role of images in newspaper articles dealing with climate and migration, with a specific focus on the way they are constructed and on the role they play as far as the topic is concerned. An additional aim was also to verify what kinds of stories are told as far as climate-induced migration is concerned.

For the purpose of this investigation, two collections of images were created from two well-known newspapers, *The Guardian* and *La Repubblica*, an English and an Italian newspaper, to carry out a contrastive analysis. The images were analysed according to the "balance framework" proposed by Bednarek and Caple with the aim of verifying their compositional rules and their accomplishment of aesthetic requirements irrespective of the topic they were called to represent. To further understand what role images play in the articles with specific reference to expectation-building, a small in-field research was carried out through a questionnaire. This part of the research was not of a contrastive nature.

The results confirmed that the images that complete the articles are constructed to satisfy aesthetic values irrespective of the topic. Their high aesthetic quality makes them attractive and attention-catching, thus fulfilling a different need, more related to the commercial level of news construction. With specific reference to the content, the images do not seem to be part of the article specifically. They are not illustrations nor do they seem useful in helping comprehension.<sup>75</sup> They are iconic images that stand on their own and make readers create expectations. As far as climate-induced migration is concerned, the images do not seem to help in disseminating information on the issue. They perpetuate the general trend that places migration and migrants in discourses of desperation, alarmism and loneliness. The attitude is shared by the two analysed cultures.

As for the change in news construction concerning climate-induced migration, the investigation was not meant to provide general results but specific corroboration of some insights that were, in fact,

<sup>75</sup> Kress and van Leeuwen, Reading Images.

confirmed. Looking at how the images are constructed, their relationship (or non-relationship) with the articles and the respondents' reactions to them and to the articles, it is possible to say that infotainment, or a practice of mixed news construction, is at play in media discourse as well as a more narrative style of writing as far as climate-induced migration-related issues are concerned. For the key role the media play in society, and for their power in influencing people's knowledge and attitudes, it is extremely important to go on studying how the news is being constructed and, more importantly, what kind of stories are being told.

This investigation, which is part of a larger project, was meant as a kind of pilot study to assess some initial insights and the feasibility of the research itself. Among the results are the hints it has provided for further research, which will be followed and pursued since migration and climate-induced migration are key topics. They affect our times and, more importantly, they affect peoples in our time. Hence, the news media cannot exempt themselves from conveying the situation as a whole, plus they cannot place the related discourse in one frame only since there is never only one story. **Cinzia Bevitori** is Associate Professor at the Department of Interpreting and Translation (DIT) and teaches English language and linguistics in the degree course of International and Diplomatic Sciences of the University of Bologna at Forlì. Her main research interests involve corpus research methodologies, corpus-assisted (critical) discourse studies, diachronic variation and language change, within the framework of systemic functional linguistics and appraisal, particularly in institutional, political and media discourse. Her publications include a number of articles on representations of climate change, environmental discourse, discourses of in/security and, more recently, (im)migration and global justice.

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### The Representation of "Exceptional Migrants" in Media Discourse: The Case of Climate-induced Migration

Edited by Katherine E. Russo and Ruth Wodak

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