A mobilities perspective on migration in the context of environmental change

Hanne Wiegel1,2  |  Ingrid Boas1  |  Jeroen Warner2

1Environmental Policy Group, Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands
2Sociology of Development and Change Group, Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands

Correspondence
Ingrid Boas, Environmental Policy Group, Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands.
Email: ingrid.boas@wur.nl

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Abstract
Academic, political, and policy debates about the connection between environmental change and human migration have long focused on migration drivers and outcomes, resulting in a limited discussion between the discourses of “desolate climate refugees” and “environmental migrants as agents of adaptation.” These perspectives remain dominant, particularly in policy and media circles, despite academic critique and the recent emergence of more diverse approaches. In this intervention, we contribute to the recent turn in environmental migration research by seeking to better ground and pluralize our understanding of how environmental change and human mobility relate. We do so by offering a mobilities perspective that centers on the practices, motives, and experiences of mobility and immobility in the context of environmental change: When and why do people decide to move—or not to move—in response to environmental changes? How do they cope with migration pressures? Where do they move, under what conditions, and who can or must stay behind? This approach attends to the diverse aspirations and differential capabilities that underlie particular practices of movement or nonmovement, reflecting both individual characteristics as well as interconnections with uneven power relations across local, regional, and global scales. A mobilities approach offers a starting point for an expanded research agenda on environmental im/mobilities. This enables academic analysis and policy discussion of the human (im)mobility-environmental change nexus to become better attuned to the actual practice and heterogeneous needs of those affected.

This article is categorized under:
Climate and Development > Social Justice and the Politics of Development
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environmental change, discourse, immobility, migration, mobility
1 | INTRODUCTION

The dominant academic, political, and policy debates about the connection between environmental change and human migration have long focused on migration drivers and outcomes, rather than on the diverse practices and meanings attached to such movements. As demonstrated in previous review studies (see Bettini, 2013; Bettini & Gioli, 2016; Bettini, Nash, & Gioli, 2017), the focus of the debate has been characterized by a discursive divide between the so-called “alarmist”/pessimistic positions predicting masses of “climate refugees” uprooted by environmental changes in the future, posing risks to the security and stability of the international community (e.g., Myers, 2002; for a critique see Hartmann, 2010), versus more “optimistic” voices that consider local and regional migrations an important strategy to adapt to environmental changes (Foresight, 2011; R. McLeman & Smit, 2006). These debates are based on different presumptions as to who moves, from where people move, the numbers of migrations, the direction of movement, and the distances migrants cover.

In an effort to move beyond this discursive divide and the predominant focus on drivers and outcomes, there has been an academic turn aiming to pluralize and deepen our understanding of the ways in which environmental change and human migration relate (e.g., Arnall & Kothari, 2015; Farbotko, 2018; Klepp & Herbeck, 2016). Recent scholarship has offered more nuanced insights into the lived experiences of new or changing migration pressures under conditions of environmental change, highlighting also the dimensions of power and politics that shape these.

In this intervention, we offer an analytical perspective that supports these academic efforts by making the practices and experiences of mobility and immobility in the context of environmental change central to our understanding. To achieve that, we advocate a mobilities perspective, as developed by John Urry, Mimi Sheller, and colleagues (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006; Sheller, 2018; Urry, 2007). It concentrates on understanding movement itself: When and why do people decide to move—or not to move—in response to environmental changes, how do they cope with migration pressures, how and where do they move, under what conditions, and who can or must stay behind? Simultaneously, the mobilities approach considers daily practices within the wider context, embedded in uneven local, regional and global power relations that determine vulnerability to environmental changes as well as im/mobility options.

This perspective enables academic analyses and policy discussions of the environmental change-migration nexus to become better attuned to the actual practice and needs of those affected, capturing the diversity of vulnerabilities, the different segments of agency and capabilities, and the contextualized patterns of environmentally-related migration that the growing body of empirical work and critical approaches to the climate change-migration nexus show to exist (see for example, Arnall & Kothari, 2015; Baldwin, 2016; Boas, 2019; Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012; Klepp & Herbeck, 2016; Kothari & Arnall, 2019; Parsons, 2018).

The following section briefly outlines and discusses the dominant “climate refugees” and “migration-as-adaptation” discourses, their presuppositions and implications, as well as recent research that has aimed to move beyond this discursive binary. We then introduce the general principles of the mobilities perspective, followed by two sections on the relationality and the differentiality of mobilities and immobilities, embedding within the wider context of social, political, and economic inequalities. We end by elaborating on the implications of this mobilities perspective to environmentally induced migration research, indicating how the domain of environmental migration may be inspired by developments in other fields of research.

2 | DISCOURSES ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE-MIGRATION NEXUS

2.1 | The “Climate refugee” discourse

When the environmental change-human migration nexus entered academia in the 1980s-1990s (Klepp, 2017), the issue was highly problematized: environmental or climate refugees, as a result of their supposed failure to adapt in situ, were predicted in large numbers, potentially threatening for global peace (Myers, 2002). This discourse, which has been labeled “alarmist” by its critics (see for example, Bettini, 2013; Hartmann, 2010), was—and continues to be—used in debates on the security implications of climate change, assuming that climate change acts as a multiplier of instability and violence leading to “massive population displacements” (Gemenne, 2011, p. 225).

Scholars have highlighted some fundamental problems with the assumptions of this alarmist discourse, most importantly that it couples a strongly environmentally deterministic view with a victimization of all potential “climate refugees” (Bettini, 2013). Many have also critiqued the assumption of a simple monocausal link between climate change and flight, neglecting both individual agency and the wider social, political, economic, and cultural factors that influence migration decisions (Black et al., 2011; Foresight, 2011). Whole populations are projected as being determined to flee within or across boundaries when
faced with the detrimental effects of climate change. Meanwhile, this discourse neglects existing international, national, and local migration patterns, both temporal and permanent, which people in climate-vulnerable areas are already engaged in for securing their livelihoods. Instead, it simplistically assumes that displacements affect populations that now are stable and immobile (for a critique, see Arnall & Kothari, 2015; Klepp & Herbeck, 2016).

Despite this critique, however, the “climate refugee” discourse continues to be influential in both humanitarian and securitization narratives. For example, several scholars, politicians, and journalists have controversially attributed the Syrian civil war and subsequent 2015–2016 “European refugee crisis” to a preceding multi-year drought, which has contributed to a renewed popularity of the alarmist discourses linking climate change, refugees, and conflicts (for a critique, see Selby, Dahi, Fröhlich, & Hulme, 2017).

2.2 | The “Migration as adaptation” discourse

The late 2000s saw the rise of a radically different perspective to the climate change-migration nexus. Migration became increasingly recognized as having always been an important mechanism of human adaptation to changes in the (natural, socio-political, or economic) environment (Black et al., 2011; R. McLeman & Smit, 2006). Both moving outside of risk areas and utilizing remittances from emigrated family members for in situ resilience building are important processes in this perspective (R. McLeman & Smit, 2006; Sakdapolrak et al., 2016). As such, proactive and adaptive environmental migration does not presuppose defenseless fleeing, but controlled and responsible migration to safely decrease household or community vulnerabilities. Climate change responses are equated here with entrepreneurial migration, if necessary with the support of coordinating organizations or institutions (Bettini & Gioli, 2016; C. Methmann & Oels, 2015).

This perspective has enabled a less alarmist and more progressive view of communities affected by environmental change. It emphasizes their agency and indicates ways to achieve more transformative forms of resilience, including how political and societal circumstances shape or restrict these (Black et al., 2011; Sakdapolrak et al., 2016). Yet the assumptions of the migration-as-adaptation approach have also received critique. For example, a concern is that, while offering a more emancipatory understanding of migrants and their communities, such a conceptualization risks placing the responsibility to adapt with individual household or communities. As such, failure to adapt becomes tantamount to individual failure; as a result, issues of climate justice and unequal vulnerabilities across global, regional, and local scales risk being silenced (Bettini, 2017; Klepp & Herbeck, 2016). Despite these concerns, key international organizations, including the International Organisation of Migration and the Asian Development Bank increasingly consider proactive environmental migration as an important individual strategy for adaptation and vulnerability reduction (IOM, 2018).

2.3 | Pluralizing the debate

In the past decade, a number of alternative accounts developed which pluralize our understanding of the relationship between environmental change and human mobility. In particular, we can identify two growing strands of research that aim to sensitize the debate to hitherto underemphasized dimensions of the climate change-migration nexus: First, research centering on the political dimensions of the nexus and its embeddedness in uneven structural relations of power; and second, research focusing on grounded accounts and local experiences of environmental changes and migrations. Below, we will discuss both developments in turn.

Research on the political dimension of the climate change-migration nexus criticizes that the influence of climatic factors is often overstated, and instead argues that structures of economic and political power as well as hegemonic sociocultural norms are far more important in determining both affectedness by climate change and migration decisions (Zetter & Morrissey, 2014). In line with this, a growing body of literature also engages with the issues of racism (Baldwin, 2016), post-colonialism (Samaddar, 2017), and biopolitics (Turhan, Zografos, & Kallis, 2015), and emphasizes that the debates around environmental migration, as well as the political and governance responses they evoke, are shaped more by powerful political interests rather than by what is happening on the ground (Nicholson, 2014). Such accounts of the climate change-migration nexus, although not yet constituting a unified field of research, are important contributions to the politicization of this field, which scholars like Bettini (2017) and Klepp and Herbeck (2016) have been urging for.

The second development in the field of environmental migration studies is the growing body of empirical research, which demonstrates that reactions to environmental change-induced migration pressures on the ground are highly heterogeneous. It emphasizes how climate change-affected groups or individuals engage in long-established cyclic migration patterns, or instead diversify their environmental change-affected livelihoods in order not to move at all (see, for example, Adams, 2016;
Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012; Klepp, 2017). In a similar vein, several studies emphasize the importance of cultural and affective dimensions in environmental migration research, which gives insights into perceptions and responses to climate change effects in the seemingly mundane dimension of the everyday, where people make their (non-)migration decisions at the crossroads of motion and emotion (Kothari & Arnall, 2019; Parsons, 2018). In doing so, this strand of research furthers the efforts of the adaptation-as-migration approach to highlight the perspective of those affected and the diverse ways to cope with change (see, for example, Sakdapolrak et al., 2016). Thereby, this line of research also seeks to move beyond the more simplistic understanding of migration as a linear movement with clearly defined origin and destination which often dominates the climate change-migration debate.

These two recent strands of literature provide critical impulses for moving the debate around the climate change-migration nexus beyond the binary of the persisting dominant discourses (called for in Bettini et al., 2017). It allows to diversify our understanding of how people engage with new or changing environmentally induced migration pressures. In this intervention, we build on both lines of research by proposing a mobilities perspective as a systematic analytical approach to offer a grounded understanding of migration pressures and motives arising in the context of environmental and climatic changes, and how these are impacted by relations of (discursive and material) power on different scales.

In the next section, we will elaborate on the mobilities approach as a perspective to developing such a framework. We first outline the general assumptions of this approach before discussing in-depth the elements of relationality and differentiality in relation to human im/mobility, which we consider most useful in furthering our understanding of the environmental change-migration nexus.

3 | A MOBILITIES PERSPECTIVE TO ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION

While the term “mobility” is often taken to be a synonym for migration (see, for example, Adger, Safra de Campos, & Mortreux, 2018; Boas, 2019; Farbotko et al., 2018), we here refer to the mobilities approach as a distinct analytical perspective with theoretical and methodological implications (Hannam et al., 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). Recently, it has found increasing resonance in environmental and migration scholarship (Baldwin, Fröhlich, & Rothe, 2019; Boas, Kloppenburg, van Leeuwen, & Lamers, 2018; Gill, Caletrío, & Mason, 2011; Parsons, 2018; Schapendonk & Steel, 2014).

The mobilities approach has developed from active engagement with diverse long-standing bodies of research from various disciplines such as human geography, sociology, and science and technology studies (for an excellent overview of its theoretical antecedents, see Sheller & Urry, 2006). Its central tenet is the important role different forms of mobilities—of people, materials, knowledge, ideas, technologies, communications, risks, and so on—have in producing and reproducing social relations on local, regional, and global scales (Urry, 2007). It focuses on the “complex movements of people, objects, and information, and the power relations behind the governance of mobilities and immobilities” (Sheller, 2018, p. 3). In doing so, the mobilities approach challenges an understanding of social life as necessarily sedentary, and how movement is often analyzed and governed from a largely static perspective (Boas et al., 2018; Gill et al., 2011).

As such, we argue that the mobilities perspective is an analytical approach that can answer to the increasing calls for a diversified understanding of how people react to new or changing migration pressures under conditions of climate change (Arnall & Kothari, 2015; Farbotko, 2018; Klepp & Herbeck, 2016). In the following two sections, we focus on two aspects of the mobilities approach, relating specifically to human mobilities, which we consider particularly useful in thinking the environmental change-migration nexus further. The first is the relationality of im/mobilities and immobilities, describing how mobilities and immobilities are inseparably interconnected across scales, and thus need to be considered conjointly (Adey, 2006; Hannam et al., 2006). The second aspect is the differentiality of im/mobilities, or why people have uneven capabilities and aspirations for im/mobility practices, grounded in both personal and structural factors (de Haas, 2014; Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004; Sheller, 2018). Attending to these two elements, we argue, broadens our understanding of the diverse patterns of environmentally induced migration pressures and im/mobility decision-making, and helps to develop a deeper understanding of how these relations reflect and reproduce uneven relations of power across different scales.

3.1 | Relational im/mobilities as response to environmental change

The focus of the environmental change-migration nexus lies almost exclusively with those who are (expected to become) mobile, centering on whether this mobility should be regarded as a threat or an opportunity, and for whom. The question of why and how people are not migrating in the context of increasing migration pressures by environmental change has received so far only little attention in the academic literature (Adams, 2016; Farbotko, 2018; Klepp, 2017). Thereby, as Zickgraf (2018,
p. 72) writes, “[t]he inability to migrate, failed migration or a lack of migration aspirations are excluded from our narratives.” Meanwhile, through family linkages as well as within individual life trajectories, environmentally induced migration is always closely connected to immobility, to dwelling, and geographical stability. Indeed, “immobility is inextricably, albeit often invisibly, linked to our understandings of human mobility. […] Migration and nonmigration can thus be seen as two sides of the same coin” (Zickgraf, 2018, p. 71).

Drawing on scholars like Adey (2006), we therefore want to emphasize here the relationality of mobilities and immobilities. An example is the relative mobility of migrants crossing long distances, which does not just involve movement but also moments of rest and temporary stationing in cities along the way. Their trajectory often is not unilinear, but might be redirected by new contacts or information received there during these moments of relative immobility (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014). Similarly, relative immobilities might consist of diverse local mobility patterns rather than absolute stillness, which remains unrecognized when only focusing on the distance covered.

Gill et al. (2011) highlight how this perspective is particularly useful to study responses to diverse environmental change-induced migration pressures. It “attends to the ways in which […] persons are repetitively mobile, gradually mobile, seasonally mobile and locally mobile” (Gill et al., 2011, p. 305)—and thus also nonmobile at times—rather than focusing exclusively on exceptional life events of long-distance migration. The mobilities approach also allows for studying how new environmental change-related im/mobilities intersect with previously established patterns of relative mobility and relative immobility, such as traditional seasonal migration patterns in which part of the household (often men) moves while another remains at home (Farbotko & Lazarus, 2012; Klepp & Herbeck, 2016). Furthermore, it attends to how mobilities are configured by immobile infrastructures and institutions (Adey, 2006; Hannam et al., 2006), such as the availability of transport infrastructures or state borders shaping how and to where people move and on what networks they need to rely in order to reach an intended destination.

Summing up this first point, we argue that mobilities and immobilities, including those arising in the context of environmental change, need to be considered as relational. In the words of Sheller (2018, p. 1), this means understanding them to be “always connected, relational, and co-dependent, such that we should always think of them together, not as binary opposites but as dynamic constellations of multiple scales, simultaneous practices, and relational meanings.” Delving into relational im/mobilities, as we shall do in the next section, also zooms into the motives for (not) moving.

### 3.2 The differentiality of relational im/mobilities: Uneven capabilities and diverse aspirations

The diverse responses to migration pressures induced by environmental change show that im/mobilities are not only relational, but also differential (Cresswell, 2010; Sheller, 2018). This means that im/mobilities are highly diverse and uneven in terms of people’s abilities and aspirations to move or not to move, “when, how, and under what circumstances” this takes place (Sheller, 2018, p. 51, original emphasis), and how it is experienced. These asymmetries reflect and reinforce factors such as uneven personal and network resources as well as different levels of external control “that make it impossible for some people to make certain moves, while it is easy for others; and that enable some to stay still and prosper, while others must move” (Rogaly, 2015, p. 541; see also de Haas, 2014; Richardson & Jensen, 2008; Sheller & Urry, 2006).

This differential character of im/mobilities, we claim, has not been properly conceptualized in the scholarship on environmental migration. In the past few years, this domain has focused disproportionately on what can be considered “precarious im/mobilities,” particularly in the Global South, with funding from the Global North. In their review of the geographies of research in this field, Piguet, Kaenzig, and Guélat (2018) relate this imbalance in research foci to a “post-colonial imagination—which sees the archetypal victim of climate change as a poor peasant from the South” (Piguet et al., 2018, p. 359). As discussed above, this tendency has been recognized and critiqued in its racial, biopolitical, and postcolonial structures (Baldwin, 2016; Samaddar, 2017; Turhan et al., 2015). Yet the continuing influence particularly of the “desolate climate refugees” discourse in prominent media and political circles, in spite of all criticism, is a manifestation of this imbalance.

This is problematic for two reasons: First, it naturalizes the “precariousness” of mobilities in the Global South by foreclosing inquiry into their relationality, on a global scale, to the more privileged mobilities of people and goods. This enables a politics of scale (Lebel, 2006), a naturalized scale framing in which privileged Northern actors can successfully point the finger elsewhere—at migrants as “the problem” while ignoring they are part and parcel of the domination structures and processes that keep others in a precarious position.

Furthermore, this imbalance in focus also neglects the differential im/mobilities within communities in both more and less affluent regions. An illustrative example from the Global North in this context are the uneven effects of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA: due to various factors, including an insufficient evacuation system, those already vulnerable...
and without access to private vehicles were trapped in the city, and were thus disproportionately affected by the hurricane (see, for example, Hannam et al., 2006).

### 3.2.1 Motility: Uneven capacities to (not) move

To analyze these differential im/mobilities, Kaufmann et al. (2004) have developed the concept of motility, or the potential for mobility. They consider motility to be comprised of three elements: access (options and conditions), competence (physical ability, acquired skills as well as organizational capacity), and appropriation, that is, how agents “interpret and act upon perceived or real access and skills” (Kaufmann et al., 2004, p. 750). Analyzing the potential for mobility helps us to gain a deeper understanding of im/mobility decision-making on the individual level beyond the study of im/mobility practices, as it better reflects the individual's embeddedness in structural inequalities. These are determined by the wider social, political, economic, and cultural relations spanning different scales, ranging from the global political economy to sociocultural norms that impact relationships within the household (Cresswell, 2010; Rogaly, 2015; Zetter & Morrissey, 2014).

We argue that this focus on capabilities for mobility is highly relevant for studying the nexus of environmentally induced migration pressures and im/mobilities. It allows to understand who has the means to become mobile as a means to cope with migration pressures, under what circumstances and how this is experienced. For example, the UK's Foresight Report of 2011 introduces the concept of “trapped populations” to describe those most vulnerable to environmental changes but lacking the means to move away (Foresight, 2011), that is, having low levels of motility. The above-mentioned case of Hurricane Katrina illustrates this well: Through the lens of this approach, both material and immaterial factors such as the lack of access to private or social relations' cars for evacuation, the evacuation policies not taking into account the needs of the less affluent, as well as wider sociopolitical stratifications along “racial, ethnic, class and gender lines” (Adey, 2016, p. 42) contributed to structurally low capabilities for emergency mobility for the vulnerable, “trapping” whole communities in the city with deadly consequences.

### 3.2.2 Diverse aspirations about movement

However, empirical research points not only to people's inability (or low motility), but also to their lack of interest in becoming mobile (Adams, 2016; Farbotko et al., 2018; Klepp & Herbeck, 2016; Zickgraf, 2018). While it is a well-established theme in the displacement and resettlement literature (see, for example, Cernea, 1997), this disinterest or reluctance to move has rarely been conceptualized in the literature on environmental change-induced migration. A noteworthy exception is Adams' (2016) work on migration decisions of Peruvian villagers experiencing intense droughts. She distinguishes a range of factors, such as positive or negative attachment to the current place, resources and fear of/disinterest in alternative places, to explain why some villagers prefer to emigrate while others decide to remain in place despite environmental change-induced challenges to their livelihoods. Farbotko (2018) found similar factors leading to “voluntary immobility” among Tuvaluans.

In order to develop a grounded understanding of the diverse ways in which people cope with migration pressures induced by environmental change, we therefore need to attend not only to people’s capacities for im/mobilities, but also to their desires to engage in particular im/mobility practices. Borrowing from De Haas’ conceptualization of migration (2014), we can define these desires as “aspirations,” or as “a function of people's general [intrinsic or utilitarian] life aspirations” and their perceived options im/mobility practices (de Haas, 2014, p. 23), both strongly influenced by their levels of motility. While acknowledging their interconnectedness, the analytical distinction between aspirations and capabilities for both mobility and immobility allows to understand why for example immobility for some might be a choice, whereas for others it might be an undesired necessity, and vice versa (Gill et al., 2011; Kaufmann et al., 2004).

In conclusion, what we have defined in the beginning of this section as uneven im/mobilities, we can now consider to be a reflection of the unevenly distributed levels of motility people have to fulfill their im/mobility aspirations. Understanding the im/mobility practices people engage in under conditions of environmental change thus implies detailed attention to individual aspirations and capabilities, and how these are nested in wider power relations across local (e.g., inequalities in the household or community), national and regional (e.g., migration regimes), and global scales (e.g., global capital flows) (Cresswell, 2010; Hannam et al., 2006; Richardson & Jensen, 2008). In considering this embeddedness of heterogeneous local im/mobility practices, the mobilities approach contrasts with the “desolate climate refugee” and the “environmental migrant as agent of adaptation” discourses that consider human mobility under conditions of climate change in relative isolation from the wider politics of climate change and human migration.
CONCLUSION

We have argued here that the mobilities approach can generate grounded insights into the highly diverse real-life impacts of environmental change-induced migration pressures, thereby furthering the recent developments in the field of environmental migration studies. The mobilities approach calls attention not only to one-off long-distance movements, but also to more varied forms of local, seasonal, or gradual mobilities, all intertwined with temporary immobilities. By overcoming the limited focus on those (expected to become) mobile in the context of environmental change, such an understanding of im/mobilities opens up a broader perspective on the environmental change-im/mobilities nexus than allowed for by the persisting discourses of the “desolate climate refugee” and the “environmental migrant as agent of adaptation”.

In particular, the mobilities perspective emphasizes a relational understanding of differential im/mobilities. This implies zooming in on the interrelatedness of mobilities and immobilities, both within individual trajectories and across households, communities, and larger scales, and why this interrelatedness is inherently political. In that context, the concept of motility offers insights into how im/mobility practices are not only based on individual characteristics and resources, but are also embedded in power relations spanning simultaneously local, regional, and global scales, creating and reinforcing differential im/mobility capabilities.

Incorporating the recognition of the effects of uneven power structures in our framework resonates particularly with recent calls by critical environmental migration scholars for greater climate and mobility justice (Bettini et al., 2017; Klepp & Herbeck, 2016; Sheller, 2018). These claim that anthropogenic climate change needs to be considered as an inherently political phenomenon, given that those most affected by the uneven impacts of CO2 emissions are not the emitters themselves. Yet, as the mobilities approach highlights, the political nature of climate change is not only reflected in this asymmetry of effects, but also in the unequal capabilities people have in coping with environmentally induced migration pressures. Foregrounding the differential capabilities for fulfilling im/mobility aspirations is thus crucial for understanding how mobilities and immobilities relate and intersect with the wider politics of environmental change, and how unjust relations might be overcome.

We consider the mobilities approach as an analytical starting point for an expanded research agenda on environmental im/mobilities. An epistemological base for the study of the environmental change-im/mobilities nexus, as outlined above, must be to consider “slowness alongside acceleration, blockages, stoppage, and friction as much as liquidity and circulation, and coerced movement as much as freedom of movement” (Sheller, 2018, p. 3). Such a lens, we propose, can inspire new empirical research, innovative research foci and mobile methodologies. Examples of potential future explorations are the tracing of mobilities, including moments of forced or voluntary stillness, or the intersection of corporeal im/mobilities with the mobilities of discourses and knowledge (e.g., Boas, 2019; Schapendonk & Steel, 2014). This, together with an increasing engagement with discussions relevant to the climate change-migration nexus in the literatures on broader migration and refugee studies, human geography, and anthropology, can provide the grounded insights necessary for informing sound analysis of what it means to move or not move in the context of environmental change. This can help to more strongly attune debates within academic, political, and policy domains to the daily practices and heterogeneous needs of those affected.

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ENDNOTE

1 We acknowledge there are different categorizations of the discourses used in the debate (e.g., Ransan-Cooper, Farbotko, McNamara, Thornton, & Chevalier, 2015), yet we described the “climate refugee” versus “migration-as-adaptation” archetypes as the most common characterizations (Bettini et al., 2017; Klepp, 2017). We also acknowledge that several of the aforementioned publications contain more nuances than these archetypes, some of which will pick up in the remainder of this article.

ORCID

Hanne Wiegel https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1587-7721
Ingrid Boas https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7842-5883
