

Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana

Unidad Cuajimalpa

Programa de actividades académicas para la realización del periodo sabático

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Periodo solicitado: 11 de julio de 2022 al 10 de julio de 2023 (12 meses)

Objetivos:

Avanzar en mis investigaciones acerca de la migración inducida por causas ambientales durante una estancia como profesor visitante en la Munk School de la Universidad de Toronto, en Toronto, Canadá.

Establecer redes académicas con Canadá para ponerlas al servicio de la UAM-Cuajimalpa en el tema señalado, en particular al servicio de mis colegas y de estudiantes de posgrado dedicados al estudio de la sustentabilidad, del análisis de redes socioambientales y de la ética de la migración. En efecto, he tenido el privilegio de hacer investigación transdisciplinaria con los doctores Rafael Calderón, Sazcha Marcelo Olivera y Maximiliano Martínez en los temas señalados y ahora deseo ayudar a consolidar nuestro trabajo, difundiéndolo, preparando publicaciones en revistas de prestigio e interviniendo en favor de sectores sociales afectados.

Proponer cómo los fondos climáticos internacionales pueden asignar ayuda para la adaptación a países con altas tasas de migración ambiental y vulnerabilidad socioeconómica.

Plan de trabajo:

El periodo sabático me permitirá avanzar en los proyectos de investigación que llevo a cabo en estos momentos. La Escuela Munk de Asuntos Globales y Políticas Públicas de la Universidad de Toronto es una institución importante en investigación interdisciplinaria en temas globales como lo es la migración inducida por causas ambientales. Establecida en 2010, la institución alberga centros académicos como

el *Centro Trudeau para la paz, los conflictos y la justicia* y el *Citizen Lab*. En esta universidad se imparten las Maestrías en Asuntos Globales y en Políticas Públicas y la Escuela Munk ha mostrado interés por mi línea de investigación que estudia la migración ambiental proveniente de Centroamérica. En particular he logrado mi aceptación en esa comunidad por la intervención de los profesores Jeffrey Reitz y Randall Hansen.

Algunas de mis preguntas de investigación son las siguientes: ¿Debería correlacionarse la ayuda para la adaptación con las tasas de emigración ambiental? ¿O es preferible distribuir la ayuda para la adaptación climática de acuerdo con el tamaño y la riqueza de las economías (dando prioridad a los países de bajos ingresos)? ¿Deberíamos combinar esos dos criterios?

Adicionalmente a la profundización en los temas de los artículos que he publicado acerca del istmo centroamericano, durante mi estancia deseo proponer, por la vía académica, que el gobierno federal de Canadá, las provincias de ese país o patrocinadores privados reconozcan la categoría jurídica del migrante ambiental y apoyen a las personas así reconocidas. Una de las particularidades canadienses en materia de refugio y asilo es precisamente la intervención de los tres actores mencionados. Tratándose de un país con un desempeño climático negativo, en parte por su clima extremo y por su abundancia de combustibles fósiles a los que no es fácil renunciar, Canadá podría compensar parcialmente a la comunidad internacional siendo un Estado pionero en la recepción de desplazados por huracanes y sequías, en particular provenientes de América Latina. Como investigador, deseo contribuir a impulsar esta idea.

Ciudad de México, noviembre de 2021

A continuación anexo el proyecto presentado en Canadá.

Environmentally Induced Migration from Central America to North America: Climate Funds and Rates of Migration

Research Project for a Sabbatical Stay at the Munk School, University of Toronto
August 1, 2022 – July 10, 2023

By Bernardo Bolaños Guerra, Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Law at the Metropolitan Autonomous University, Cuajimalpa, Mexico City

Abstract

A decade ago, scientists claimed that Central America was not an area particularly threatened by climate change, as it would not suffer from severe droughts, nor from the worst hurricanes. Instead, more specific and recent models suggest that the region is and will be significantly affected by climate disasters. We will review studies that assess the impact of environmental factors on migration from Central America to Mexico, the United States and Canada. We will also consider current international policies of adaptation aid. Finally that will allow us to propose how international climate funds may assign adaptation aid to countries with high rates of environmental migration and socioeconomic vulnerability.

Keywords: environmental migration, Central America, climate funds, adaptation to climate change.

Background

The Regional Conference on Migration for Central and North America (RCM) has addressed the unequal distribution of funding between countries, as well as the issue of displaced people in the 11 member countries (Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, The Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States). Surprisingly, in 2018 North America had a greater number of displaced people (1.2 million) than Central America, which only reached 95,470 that year.

Central America is a region with several low income countries, like Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala, and counts with middle income ones like Panama and Costa Rica. It has also very important rainforests and beautiful coastal zones. Between 2000 and 2009, there were 39 hurricanes in the Caribbean, compared to only 15 during the 1980s and 9 during the 1990s (UNEP and ECLAC, 2010).

Specific and recent models suggest that the temperate ecosystems of Central America will be significantly affected by climate change. For instance, the pine forests will disappear and the cloud forests will be reduced between 45% and 75% (Dirzo and Bonilla, 2013, p.30).

The region of Copán, in Honduras, was the origin of thousands of migrants who massively moved to Mexico in caravans in 2019. Copán is part of the dry Central American corridor, a tropical dry forest region on the Pacific side of Central America. It goes from Chiapas, Mexico, to the western part of Costa Rica and western provinces of Panama. The Dry Corridor is characterized by its irregular rainfall. During years of the phenomenon called El Niño, for example, precipitation drops by 30% -

40%. Particularly vulnerable to drought or extreme precipitation are the following countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

The transformation of ecosystems by the increase in temperature is another great challenge for rural Central American communities outside the Dry Corridor. In particular, coffee plantations are moving to higher and higher areas to escape the rust plague. And those that abandon the production of gourmet varieties of coffee must introduce tropical crops such as banana or accept genetically modified seeds (less appreciated by the international market). Both options represent adaptation challenges with considerable social impact. Some waves of migration to North America are directly associated with episodes of rust plague.

Half of the 1.9 million small producers of basic grain crops in Central America live in the Dry Corridor region. Some international organizations are encouraging farmers in the area to incorporate forestry techniques (planting avocado and peach trees), that could reduce soil erosion and provide food in difficult times.

The Adaptation Fund was established in 2001 to finance concrete adaptation projects and programs in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Its main donor is Germany. Canada, through the government of Québec, contributed 2,240,000 to this Fund in 2019, compared to no contribution at all from the US.¹ This fund has assigned 5.5 millions to Nicaragua, 6 millions to Belize, 10 millions to Honduras, 5.43 millions to Guatemala, and 10 millions each to Panama and Costa Rica.

Concerning aid funds, Guatemala has received 4 million dollars from the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund. This Fund is inactive today. Founded in 2007, it was an international cooperation mechanism committed to the eradication of poverty and inequality and to accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals worldwide. 51% of Guatemalan population is poor and 15% live in extreme poverty. The infant malnutrition rate there is 43%. Most of the indigenous populations are grouped in rural regions. Projected climate variability will worsen a range of issues including health, food security, ecosystems, and water availability.

Panama is a successful country. It has large water resources, that is, a considerable amount of renewable freshwater per capita. However, the Panamanian government claims it is vulnerable to climate change impacts. The country experiences extreme weather events including intense rainfalls, floods, even some droughts in the “Arco Seco” region, as well as El Niño-La Niña events.

In Nicaragua, President Daniel Ortega has committed abuses against critics and opponents. He has dismantled institutional checks on his power. In July 2018, the Netherlands suspended an €18.4 million project (US\$21,200) in the health sector due to “grave human right violations committed by government officials and parapolice groups.” Shortly after, Luxembourg froze aid disbursements, underlining its “deep concern for the deterioration of the situation” in Nicaragua and calling for accountability.

Intellectual Merit and Innovation

¹ <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/about/partners-supporters/canada-government-of-quebec/>

Environmental migration is a complex phenomenon that has to be addressed from a transdisciplinary perspective (Poston, Dudley, et al., 2009; Millock, 2015). We will take into account migration rates by country and region, ethnographic work, IPCC climatological models, indexes of environmental vulnerability, official criteria for the allocation of green microcredits, and adaptation finance literature.

We start from the experience of Central American migrants displaced to North America, an issue that has hardened the relations between Mexico and the US, even when they are not a significant part of the refugees in Canada. We will discuss if adaptation aid, considered by the Paris Agreement of 2015, should be restricted to non democratic countries or should depend on the size of the economies being financed.

A number of previous works have outlined the relevance of studying environmental migration on a regional level (Cristani, Fornalé, and Lavenex, 2020) and the importance of the issue in Canada (Mezdour, Veronis, and McLeman, 2016; Veronis and McLeman, 2014, Murray 2010). This study seeks to analyze the ethics of financing environmental migration, building on previous existing work (Head, Klocker, and Aguirre-Bielschowsky, 2019; Traer, 2019).

Research Questions

Should adaptation aid be correlated to rates of environmental emigration? Or is it preferable to distribute climate adaptation aid according to the size of and wealth of the economies (giving priority to low income countries)? Should we combine those two criteria?

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