

# Book Reviews

Mayer, Benoît. 2016. *The Concept of Climate Migration: Advocacy and Its Prospects*. Cheltenham, UK, and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

*Reviewed by Saleh Ahmed*  
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The interface between climate and society demonstrates the increasing complexity of human dimensions of global environmental change. Despite some levels of disagreements on anthropogenic causes of climate change, people around the world are facing various climate stresses, such as sea level rise, increased intensity and frequency of tropical cyclones, droughts, rainfall variability. People in vulnerable geographical regions are generally most exposed to adverse climate impacts. Many of them are forced to take the decision to leave their places of residence and migrate somewhere else as their responses to climate change impacts. Often this process of mobility is difficult because of tremendous social, economic, political, cultural, and emotional costs.

Climate migration thus requires social, political, and economic responses to ensure justice and the rights of displaced populations. Mayer's *The Concept of Climate Migration: Advocacy and Its Prospects* is a timely intellectual contribution to the discussion of climate migration. The author provides interdisciplinary insights into the prospects of various political narratives on climate migration and the possibility for renewed global governance on this issue.

Even though climate-induced migration is not an entirely new phenomenon in many parts of the world, major gaps remain in knowledge, policy, and governance. This book provides what it refers to as "narratives—different framings for governance on climate migration—and assesses their prospects and relevance. Mayer argues that although such narratives might influence global governance, those narratives might not necessarily achieve intended targets. Despite the urgency, climate migration is likely to lead to repressive policies against migration. In some parts of the Global North, many people and politicians perceive climate-induced migration from climate-affected regions as a national security threat.

Mayer stresses the importance of analyzing climate migration not in isolation but rather in broader social, political, and environmental contexts, since this is a complex issue and systems-level thinking is necessary to address the level of complexity. An interdisciplinary and integrated perspective can potentially help readers to understand and consider local and regional contexts, including the interactions, synergies, and tradeoffs among sub-components at multiple levels. In addition, the adverse consequences of climate change are

often augmented by existing structural challenges such as poverty and marginalization. Therefore, in most cases poor and marginalized people are the major victims of climate change and subsequent migration. Mayer asks whether and how the political momentum created by climate migration can spur progressive change in global governance to support those in various challenging situations.

Based on these arguments, Mayer organizes the book in five major sections. Chapter 1 provides a thorough discussion of climate migration, highlighting the ways climate migration and global governance are closely interlinked. He argues that there is a lack of international cooperation for realizing the economic and social rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations who are exposed to adverse climate change impacts. Mayer also points out the disproportionate and unfulfilled responsibility of greenhouse gas emitters to the global community. The subsequent chapters each highlight the prospects of one of specific narratives Mayer has identified related to climate migration: the humanitarian narrative, the migration narrative, the responsibility narrative, and pragmatic narratives.

In Chapter 2, *the humanitarian narrative* is framed by arguments related to human rights, global justice, and the limits of humanitarian reason. Mayer stresses the importance of not imposing further (humanitarian) obligations on states whose response capacities to climate migration are already compromised because of impending adverse climate impacts. In the following chapter, *the migration narrative* suggests that forced human mobility under climate change circumstances should be perceived as a social phenomenon, and the vulnerability of migrants should be addressed through adequate measures of social protection and the rights of migrants. But the rise of political narratives against refugee protection more generally raises the question of how much can be accomplished at the national or international level. Mayer therefore rightly highlights the importance of global governance and international cooperation at both a national and cross-national scale. Chapter 3, which talks about *the responsibility narrative*, is framed with the classic example of who is most responsible for the rapid change in global climate systems, since now it is widely accepted that not all people, societies, or countries are equally responsible for the anthropogenic causes of climate change. In most cases, impacted people, who bear the largest burden of climate change impacts and themselves are climate migrants in most cases, are least responsible for any climate-related impacts. In this chapter, Mayer asks how these aspects of responsibility should translate to the sharing of responsibility for climate migrants on the ground.

The final chapter, *the pragmatic narratives*, suggests that both human rights protection and climate change responsibility can be realized through an alternative construction of states' interests under complex and dynamic world system. Global governance is a complex process. Many factors, including interdependence, interrelations, and mutual interests, can influence the overall outcomes. There is no straightforward global governance framework that can address climate challenges in a more coherent manner. At the end, Mayer also

echoes a similar sentiment, saying, “the conclusions remain abstract in nature” (p. 301).

*The Concept of Climate Migration: Advocacy and Its Prospects* provides a rich synthetic analysis from multiple disciplines, ranging from international law and international relations to some elements of argument studies and psychology. Interdisciplinary perspectives presented here provide diverse political arguments about the concept of climate migration and help readers to understand the complexity of global governance on climate migration issues. Even though readers might not always get straightforward answers or directions, Mayer gives a useful overview of one of the most pressing challenges of our time—climate migration—an issue that demands nuanced understanding and requires coordinated efforts for possible solutions. The book sheds light on broader questions about the evolving role of global governance in the twenty-first century, and should be of interest to academics and policymakers whose research includes climate change, climate migration, international relations, and global governance.

Brooks, Stephen, and Andrea Olive, eds. 2018. *Transboundary Environmental Governance Across the World's Longest Border*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Reviewed by Andrew B. Kirkpatrick  
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Canada and the United States have only been on the same page in terms of environmental policy for fifteen months out of the last decade-plus: a brief window from October 2015 to January 2017 when the Obama and Trudeau governments were both committed to combating shared environmental threats. Before that window, the United States was interested, but Canada under Harper was not; since the Trump Administration took office, the positions have flipped. Yet, as the authors of *Transboundary Environmental Governance across the World's Longest Border* make clear, this situation has not stopped progress on shared transboundary issues. From migratory species to watersheds to airborne pollutants, and from the Pacific to the Great Lakes, the two states are working together, frequently at subnational and local levels.

Once one gets west of the Great Lakes, the United States-Canada border is fairly arbitrary, cutting across numerous watersheds and ecological regions. By necessity, this means the two states must cooperate, and they have, on canals, hydroelectric projects, emissions of air pollutants and water pollutants, and distribution of river water. But the arbitrariness of the border also means that neither the United States nor Canada has the upper hand; other than issues involving mining in Yukon near rivers that feed into Alaska, there is no permanent upstream/downstream dynamic. Both sides are reliant on the other for resources at various times.

This book, with contributions from a range of authors from across North America and both the academic and policy worlds, seeks to look at the international border holistically, and examine all issues facing it. Contributors were asked to assess the Canada–United States relationship in their issue areas (Great Lakes fisheries, prairie rivers, etc.) along with the environmental impact of existing regimes and institutions and the chances for reform or improvement. There has been a renewed focus on transboundary environmental governance in North America in recent years, and a corresponding increase in literature, though most of it has been focused on a single topic: only water, or climate change, or the Great Lakes. The book starts in the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence region, then moves west before concluding with chapters on energy governance and climate change policy from sea to sea.

One key point the book highlights is the sheer complexity of the transboundary relationship, which goes back to at least 1909. Today, negotiations may take place between the two federal governments, between US states and Canadian provinces, within river boards made up of local stakeholders, between the federal governments, subnational units, and Indigenous groups, or a variety of other combinations. Agreements have been made between states and provinces that may not be strictly constitutional but are followed nevertheless. The authors also make an important point that doesn't always come out in discussions of other riparian negotiations: water quantity in many of these watersheds is as important as, if not more so than, water quality.

Two subjects are omnipresent throughout the chapters: The International Joint Commission (IJC), founded in 1909 by the Boundary Waters Treaty, is the oldest and still the most important body in this issue area. Though a plethora of new treaties and organizations have risen up since the 1960s, the IJC still has at least some hand in every issue discussed in the book. The other subject is the specter of climate change and what it will do to these carefully negotiated regimes. The area between eastern Montana, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and North Dakota (discussed in chapter 5) may be most affected; the rivers there are already fully allocated and overstressed during times of drought, and if the climate gets hotter and drier, as predicted, there will not be enough water to go around. There's a refreshing willingness to go beyond current headlines and flashpoints (the Keystone XL pipeline gets only two short mentions), and over the course of the book, nearly every major environmental problem of the last seventy-five years is mentioned: water/air pollution, dams, acid rain, climate change, and invasive species (the sea lamprey was the impetus for the creation of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission in the 1950s), among others.

It would have been better if the book contained more maps (though the one by Donald K. Alper on mining and water relations in the Pacific West is a welcome exception); the detailed descriptions of various rivers, lakes, and fisheries that straddle the United States and Canada would be strengthened by some visual supplements. And much more time in the chapters is spent on

explaining the “what” of cross-border environmental relations than the “why,” though the facts and descriptions in and of themselves are valuable. Some issues are barely mentioned, such as the disputed Beaufort Sea territory between Alaska and the Yukon, or the differing stances on the Northwest Passage once it becomes ice-free in the near future, or shared fishing stocks in the Pacific and Atlantic.

Still, *Transboundary Environmental Governance* is useful for scholars, as well as undergraduates or graduates studying comparative environmental politics. The culture of cooperation that has developed between the two countries on this issue isn't immediately recognizable if one only looks at Washington-to-Ottawa contacts. The authors' deeper dive is of much use to the rest of us.

Moore, Scott M. 2018. *Subnational Hydropolitics: Conflict, Cooperation, and Institution-Building in Shared River Basins*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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For a long time, the literature on water politics has focused on the possibility of water wars between countries. Scott Moore calls attention to the fact that no such major war has yet happened, and that most international conflicts over water have been resolved diplomatically, thanks to several international organizations that have facilitated formal cooperation agreements between countries. Curiously, despite the work of these organizations, conflicts over water persist, most of them within national borders. These subnational water conflicts are not only common but often entrenched and hard to solve. Subnational jurisdictions find numerous ways to secure their own interests and often find it hard to build cooperative agreements with their own central governments and other water-sharing neighbors. The book investigates core features of these subnational water conflicts, and the author underlines three variables that explain why some conflicts are harder to solve than others: decentralization, sectional identity, and political opportunity structure.

According to Moore, the more decentralized a country's political system, the more likely are conflicts over water. Sectional identity refers to the grievances that exist between different social groups (urban vs rural, racial divides, religious cleavages, etc.), and Moore argues that the stronger the grievances, the more likely water conflicts are to persist over time. Another factor that matters is how easy it is for civil society groups to enter and participate in political processes. If the political opportunity structure is open, nongovernmental organizations can join negotiations, and their participation leads to more cooperative agreements. If the political opportunity structure is closed, civil society participation is limited

and conflicts over water become more entrenched. To better understand how these variables operate in the dynamics of water conflict, Moore presents case studies analyzing water management institutions in the United States, India, China, and France.

The case of the Colorado River basin in the United States is an iconic example of interstate water conflict, most of it fueled by sectional identity politics (farmers vs. urban users, upstream vs. downstream users, etc.) These conflicts started to ameliorate after Native American groups began to take advantage of the open political opportunity structure and campaigned for more holistic water management practices. Moore compares these conflicts with more cooperative US institutions, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Delaware River Basin Commission. He concludes that political actors in these cases have succeeded in establishing robust institutions due to the commitment and continued participation of third parties.

The Krishna River basin in India is also characterized by interstate conflict over water. Indian states are divided along ethnolinguistic borders, which fosters even more conflictual sectional identity cleavages between upstream and downstream users. India's political opportunity structure is rather closed, making it hard for third parties to build cooperative efforts among states involved. In the short term, a successful case of cooperation occurred in the Damodar Valley, where the central government initially played a role fostering the creation of a collaborative water management institution, but this initiative eventually withered due to the lack of civil society participation, indicating that the political opportunity structure there is rather closed.

An internal contradiction in the book is the connection Moore tries to draw between conflict outcomes and the extent of centralized political systems. He argues that decentralization leads to more conflicts. But most of the case studies presented do not support this claim. The cases in the United States and India (federal countries with decentralized political systems) feature both conflict and cooperation over water resources, which are explained by a mixture of sectional identity and political opportunity structure. These cases show that decentralization can feature both cooperative and conflictual outcomes. Moore argues that "without a significant degree of decentralization, there is little incentive or ability for subnational leaders to engage in water conflict" (6). But he later shows that local leaders in highly centralized political systems such as in China still have incentives to pursue their own interests and to disobey central orders: "Local officials frequently warp or ignore central policy directives, while neighboring subnational jurisdictions engage in competition for water and disputes over the construction of water infrastructure" (158). He argues that a centralized system such as China's is still highly conflictual. The only case that supports his argument is France, which involves a centralized system with cooperative outcomes. He argues that conflictual and/or cooperative outcomes in all cases across these four countries can be explained by a combination of sectional identity and political opportunity structure. This explanation is

convincing, but the connection with the extent of political system centralization seems weak.

The book nonetheless makes important contributions to the field of environmental governance. It debunks the idea that conflict is caused by geographical or physical characteristics such as up- or downstream positions, water scarcity, pollution, and flooding, arguing instead that “these physical factors represent simply a set of initial conditions” (206). Water conflicts are driven by a combination of ideational factors and political institutions, an insight that certainly deserves further consideration by scholars in the field.