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Migration, Mobilities, and Changing Political Landscapes

Authoritarian Politics, Climate Migration, and Policy Gaps: Pathways Toward Rights-Based Solutions

Authors: Farrukh A. Chishtie, Mojan Farshchi, Hannah Forsythe, & Aysan Dehghani

As climate-induced displacement intensifies, immigration policies in Canada, the United States, the European Union, and Australia remain inadequate, shaped by securitized, exclusionary, and increasingly authoritarian political landscapes. This presentation offers a comparative policy analysis, utilizing Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and the Mobilities Paradigm to explore how immigration frameworks interact with political ideologies, migrants, legal structures, and environmental transformations.

Authoritarian-leaning governments have weaponized migration policies to justify border militarization, restrict asylum rights, and reinforce nationalist agendas, disproportionately impacting climate-displaced populations. Rather than recognizing climate displacement as a legitimate reality requiring protection, states reinforce exclusionary mechanisms. While climate change itself is a powerful, non-human actor influencing migration, its role is often obscured by ideological resistance and entrenched economic interests. The failure to recognize complicity through support of the fossil fuel industry and act, along with integrating climate-related risks into legal and policy frameworks exacerbates immobility, forcing affected populations into precarious conditions and irregular migration pathways.

Climate migration governance is at a crossroads: will states reinforce exclusionary systems or develop adaptive frameworks that recognize climate-displaced populations, and what can we do about it? Our research highlights actionable policy recommendations, including the recognition of climate-induced displacement within existing human rights frameworks, the development of robust international cooperation mechanisms, and the integration of climate justice, human and non-human rights into migration governance, and ensuring that mobility pathways are accessible and equitable. We advocate for a paradigm shift away from exclusionary, state-centric approaches toward equitable, climate-resilient mobility pathways. Addressing these policy gaps to counteract exclusionary migration governance requires political will, transnational collaboration, and proactive public engagement to counteract rising authoritarianism in migration governance. Overall, our talk outlines concrete steps for scholars, policymakers, and activists to advance transformative, rights-based solutions in climate migration policy.