



Environmentally induced displacement: vulnerability and mobility in Southern Italy. The cases of Sarno and Cerzeto

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Abstract

Environmental degradation can have severe consequences on the availability of natural resources and can significantly affect security and increment vulnerability of human communities. It can also induce displacements in the aftermath of catastrophes and disasters. Since globalisation has been characterised by an unequal economic development, so, environmental degradation, directly links with the economic growth and the industrialisation jeopardising the lives of the most vulnerable peoples. For this reason one can recognise that the degradation of the environment is socially and spatially constructed.

To support the thesis considering environmental degradation as a driver of mobility, we will provide an analysis of human displacements in Italy, in the two cases of Sarno (1998), and Cerzeto (2005), occurred in the aftermath of landslides. The decision to analyse this subject stands because there is a serious lack of either theoretical or empirical data on the relationship between environmental degradation, migration and related social vulnerability especially in the Global North, and specifically in Italy. This knowledge gap represents a collective attempt to ignore the importance of the problem both in socio-economic and juridical perspectives. The analysis performed in this paper aims at contributing to filling this gap by providing evidences of the environment-mobility nexus.

Keywords: environmentally-induced displaced, landslide, Sarno, Cerzeto, vulnerability, environmental degradation, environmental-mobility nexus.

Il degrado ambientale può avere conseguenze negative incidendo sulla disponibilità delle risorse naturali e mettendo a repentaglio la sicurezza e incrementare la vulnerabilità delle comunità umane talvolta soggette a spostamenti seguito a catastrofi o a disastri. Così come la globalizzazione è stata caratterizzata da un'iniqua crescita economica, così il degrado ambientale -essendo direttamente collegato alla crescita economica e all'industrializzazione-, mette in pericolo la vita delle persone più vulnerabili. Per questo, il

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degrado diviene un concetto costruito a livello sociale e spaziale che intreccia il rischio naturale a fattori prettamente antropici.

Per supportare le tesi che considerano il degrado ambientale come un vettore per la mobilità, in questo articolo forniremo un'analisi di due esempi di mobilità in Italia, successivi alle frane di Sarno (1997) e a Cavallerizzo di Cerzeto (2005). La decisione di analizzare questo oggetto di ricerca deriva dal fatto che sembra esserci una mancanza di dati empirici e teorici sulla relazione tra degrado ambientale, mobilità e vulnerabilità sociale nel Nord del Mondo, e specificamente in Italia. Questo vuoto teorico rappresenta un problema collettivo sia per ciò che riguarda una negazione dell'importanza del problema a livello economico, giuridico e sociale. L'analisi proposta cerca di contribuire a riempire parzialmente questo vuoto fornendo evidenze empiriche rispetto al nesso tra ambiente e mobilità.

Parole chiave: *profughi ambientali, frana, Sarno, Cerzeto, vulnerabilità, degrado ambientale, nesso tra mobilità e ambiente.*

1. Introduction

The human displacements caused by environmental degradation, generally called environmentally induced displacements, are not a new phenomenon: since the past, human communities moved in order to find places with better climatic or environmental conditions. Because of the increased frequency and intensity of disasters in the last century, it is not a coincidence that the first concern about migration induced by environmental degradation or resource depletion was articulated in the late '70s by a researcher of the Worldwatch Institute (Brown, 1977). Despite the evidence, environmental stressors do not equally create consequences on all individuals, households or communities, because those effects are linked with the level of adaptation, vulnerability and resilience and it appears very artificial to indicate a mono-causality for a such complex phenomenon. In this sense, migration can be considered as one of the communities' coping strategies to face the catastrophes. The central issue of the article deals with the applicability of conceptual categories (usually applied to describe Southern community displacements) for human communities in a Global North Country.

This 2013 study, has been conducted in order to acquire a comprehensive corpus of administrative and qualitative data (through survey interviews partially reported anonymously).