



The Anthropocene and islands: vulnerability, adaptation and resilience to natural hazards and climate change

Miquel Grimalt Gelabert, Anton Micallef, Joan Rossello Geli (Eds.)

Climate relocation of Indigenous peoples from island territories: issues related to the misunderstanding of their indigenoussness

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Abstract

While climate relocation is gaining recognition as an adaptation strategy in the international climate regime, specificities of Indigenous peoples' relocation requires analysis of the varying contexts in which it takes places. It is not just a question of understanding climate change impacts on island Indigenous territories: a functional strategic planning can only be achieved by understanding local dynamics and the asymmetrical relationship that communities have with their national governments. Including Indigenous claims is equally important. The example of Native communities living on barrier islands in Alaska shows that community members claim to remain a community and a cultural distinct entity – the importance of choosing where they move being an essential factor – and to freely decide their future. They refuse to allow their vulnerability to climate change to be used only as pretext to deny them any possibility of adaptation. A brief analysis of legal and institutional obstacles to the recognition of their indigenoussness in displacement then makes it possible to see how Native communities' climate relocation should be planned and implemented. The objective is to go beyond a static approach to Indigenous rights and identities, while considering the specificity of a collective approach. It also allows us to analyze how their demands are concretized on the national and international scene. While the Indigenous peoples do not remain passive, international organizations and NGOs are not passive either, at least not if we consider the relatively large number of instruments adopted in recent years to guide States' action. However, the main challenge remains to effectively integrate Indigenous specificities into the broader framework of climate relocation.

Keywords: Indigenous peoples, climate change, climate relocation, adaptation, self-determination.

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