

WORLD CONGRESS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

## Thematic Assembly minutes

### Climate Refugees and Institutional Racism: No Border Networks and Transnational Solidarity

14 October 2023, h.09.30-11.30 - University of Milan, aula 208

Chaired by **John Sinha** (UK Climate Movement XR), Panel: **Meret** (Climate Strike Switzerland), **Elena Giacomelli** (Università Bologna), **Khalid Abaker** (Sudan Refugees), **Morana Miljanovic** (Louise Michel crew), **Dave Salvadori** (Sant'Ambrogio FC)

Complex subject with many different perspectives, question for building climate justice movement to understand who are our allies and enemies (eg. fossil capitalism & its ideologies), UK and Italy are pushing for fortress Europe and climate denial. Within the movement there can be confusion talking about climate refugees (eg. COP15 mobilisation day for climate refugees was cancelled the argument being that this would privilege one type of refugees over the other, but it is important to talk about since: who will pay the highest price for the destruction of the planet). There is a longstanding link eg. Climate and Anti Racism Camp in 2008 in Hamburg

**Meret:** as privileged person from Switzerland important to take part of the discussion, in Switzerland 3 years ago an event showed how the police and state acts very different on climate and refugee movement but also how the two movements got closer: in summer 2020 occupation of federal palace by Climate Strike CH, police did not intervene, at around the same time a protest by refugees and PoCs were faced by police violence and water cannons, Climate Strike went there to „protect“, which of course should not be necessary  
also as privileged people it is important to talk about how you can support without falling into white savourism

**Morana:** Louise Michelle is an explicit project fighting racism & capitalism, sailing for solidarity against the European border regime, pink ship (banksy), international crew, people on the move and root causes: we start sailing as reaction to EU states to stop supporting people on the move and actively collaborating with militia in Libya actively preventing people from crossing border with support of the EU, people escaping from Libya escaping via sea is the only route, but many of them started as internally displaced people first, even though there are various reasons, results are over 20.000 dead people in the mediterranean and people turning back to the desert camps

fortress Europe: got rich luting and working class has still not reconstruted solidarity and is standing with the rich, challenge the notion of climate refugees and refugees in general, there is no climate justice without class war

**Elena:** before working on migration as social worker eg. In Lampedusa, representation and narrative on climate change and migration, and the term climate refugee

crucial factor in perception of climate induced migration: 30 years first „wave“ of migration talking about this does not recognise that there is a structural reason behind it, passport index website shows how powerful the passport is proper word to describe phenomena are important, recently used climate induced migration used in alarmist ways, it does not include a deeper socioligal anyliss of the systematic problems behind, concepts that are missing: climate justice and --- justice

panicocene: deeper analys is missing

climate induced migration is framed as a threat, linked with security and risk issues, rather than with efforts to reduce the problems

nexus between climate ciris and migrations is narrated as masses of people coming from GS to GN which is a distorted perception of reality, Climate Change is used to reproduce migration as an security issue

pathologisation of the issue, the racialised figure of the environmental migrant; pictures are always people in nature eg. Islands of Tobago

Climate Refugee: just includes people who cross borders, tendency to constructe the climate refugee as a racialized other; „refugee“ was constructed and is abused in Europe, talking about millions of people

finding new words, finding new ways of collaboration between academia, activism and

**Khalid:** political activist from Sudan, living in Italy for 7 years as migrant, witnessed situation of seeking migration, took initiative to write personal history in a book, called after the migration center in Milan?: during the writing one of the most important topics was: human life, to help each other, war in Sudan, witnessed in Dafour destruction of everything, 400.000 persons killed, war of 15 of April for six months this year,

if we talk about migration rights we have to talk about Libya; talking about the war in Sudan to give idea what is happening there and on the climate change challenge to the World Congress, in Karthoum, every year there is a flood, 25.000 person have been... in the nieghouring countries, one of most difficult times was in 2020, measures to control war are making in a back way, we have to safe life of the human being, this is the most important thing; water in the rain season and the war, this year

in Italy they are talking about the number of refugees coming to the country, but they are not talking about the reasons, if we would support the democratic process in Africa we would not have these wars

proposals **John**:

working group for climate refugees and no borders taking to work on a draft for resolution

organise a joint day of action, UK 14th of November action in front of home office London against horrible and racist interior minister, wanting to concentrate refugees in Rwanda, same people are outspoken climate deniers which is not a coincidence but part of an ideology that puts profits of fossil companies first and believes that human lives can be ranked in the order of class, race, gender and so on...

how does it work, sailing the mediterranean, mediterranean; sea rescue, is there a network of organisations? Are there measures within the capitalist system we could use for those issues?

**Morana**: Louise Michel is one of the NGOs sailing the mediterranean, they coordinate in many ways with others, logistically, sometimes also politically, there are very different views and views: 2 groups: humanitarian and political; situation is changing politically all the time, it is also a media struggle, some NGOs are small some are big, some NGOs have actually sailing ships – connecting to climate struggle, many issues of white saviourism, white supremacy, Louise Michel tries to learn on how to act differently; the situation is politically instrumentalized a lot, mediterranean because of its global location has been politicized: european citizens are paying for Frontex and operations to stop people crossing the mediterranean; we do have power, we could do so much more than solidarity, civil disobedience, mayors standing against central governments and open cities, mass mobilisation,...

**Elena**: EU and their countries are paying other countries to protect EU borders, in a criminal way, eg. Italy and Libya, Tunisia, Turkey,

**Morana**: ship, training, money to intercept people and pull them back to Libya, to prevent people to pass to international waters (sea rescue cannot go to Libyan water), „Libyan coast guards“ are actually funded by EU, in 2022 alone: 22.000+ (Libya) 38.000+ (Tunisia) have been forced back often facing torture, rape,... people are trying several times,

**John**: severe rainstorm last month in Libya, caused a dam to overflow, leading to the death of 20.000 people, an example of multiple converging crisis: Libya as war zone country without functioning government (Europe and the west has been trying to destroy), government was warned about the major situation and necessity to evacuate

but the regime ordered people to stay in their homes, dams weren't maintained properly

? how to change the wording/public opinion on climate refugees, game to sensitise people

? How to harm Frontex from inside Europe

**Khalid:** people are leaving from Africa because a lot of different reasons, one most important is war, secondly natural disasters, how can we judge the ones coming to Europe, the reason I wrote about the human life: eg. A family of 4 persons after the war they are supporting each other to buy the ticket for 1 person and the others stay at home because they cannot afford it

so most important support is: supporting democracy in Africa, with this we can solve the conflicts in Africa and the people of coming to Europe, we should not talk about things that are happening later on but about the reasons why people are leaving their place in the first hand

**Elena:** refugees, asylum-seekers are terms that are misused, so we use displaced people??

refugee also implies that the person is already in the country where they want to claim asylum, so blocking people in Libya has changed the meaning of this word;

huge network abolish frontex including activists around Europe, Northern Africa and other parts of the world; flows of money show the international cooperations to block people from entering

**Morana:** exterminate all the roots „it is a courage to call things by their name and to act on it“, there is lack of information, fearbased narratives and campaigns in Europe, it is not just racism but also colonialist; it is not only about fighting misinformation, its about the discourse, media, the way we as people who are in Europe (eg. Also white feminism), eg. When you talk about working class struggles, do you talk about people in western africa, reasons why people leave, a lot of them don't

? if you talk about ecologically displaced then there rest the economic migrants, that are seen as with less right to leave: maybe use colonially displaced? Should we really continue to talk about climate refugees? ?climate refugees – would it be useful to build a better infrastructure as safety system, G7 states should have paid money?

**Morana:** refugee is a technical point who have a certain status, we choose to talk about people on the move; climate has always played a role in human migration, it is entangled with other issues but we should not ignore what human-induced climate change does, but it is linked to other issues, we need to talk about colonialism, eg, money being invested at the moment with the consequence of further deterioration of

the livelihoods eg. EACOP; ongoing processes of destruction; lets be careful about the narrative to just put some money somewhere,

**Meret:** there are so many aspects why people are being on the move, latest IPCC reports also looks at the impacts of CC on mental health, not only look at physical aspects, but also CC can have such impacts mentally that people decide to get on the move

**Khalid:** summit to pay money to african union to stop migration, this money is going the wrong direction, supporting dictator governments, eg. Sudan: in 2014 there was a summit with lots of money being paid, this is right now used for militarization and war, millions of people on the move now

**Elena:** climate refugee is a useless category, it is not legally binding and it's reducing complexity of why people are on the move: but when you talk about climate crisis and migration: how can we unify forces in a more useful way

nation state is a point that unites both struggles as cause of worst consequences: people on the move struggle, are forced to be in this terrible journey, defying the borders imposed to them by the border regime, the climate change also shows that nation state is terrible and unuseful

**John:** as a slogan for the movement fighting capitalism it can be useful tool in order to capture peoples attention and start the discussion, but as an academic word it is problematic (the right it much better at simplifying)

?strategies outside of changing the debate, role of civil disobedience, eg. Role of italian mayor,

? > reading recommendation: white skin, black fuel, data: missing migrant project

**Morana:** talking is one way of acting, civil disobedience, there is incredible things that individuals and collectives can do, eg. Not about white people talkiing about black people but: Little collectives in the South of Italy supporting people in silence, opening spaces for exchange, work,; long list of possibilities to get engaged eg. Abolish Frontex, writing to parliamentarians,...

**Elena:** bridge to the no border movements, in the Italy there are hotspots, finding a way to talk with each other, include each other

**Meret:** regarding the bridge between movement: having a physical room where this exchange can happen, eg. In Bern trying to have people in the same house from different movements

**John:** if we want to do something we should commit to something and not only leave this as an interesting seminar;

in London 4th of november protest against rewriting attempt of refugee convention by interior minister, in the UK they have closed down all the routes to arrive so that people can claim refugee status – proposal to have international day of action

Working group with guiding principles for the movement – or rather a working group for organising concrete actions

