

*COST Action IS1101 Climate Change and Migration:
Knowledge, Law and Policy, and Theory*
**“Combining quantitative and qualitative methods for a better understanding of the
climate change-migration nexus”**
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Paper Proposal

Title: ‘Border Conceptualisation in Environmental Migration: Anthropological questions, political concerns’

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Since the earliest colonization of nature when moving clusters of pioneering farmers responded to ecological pressures by further movement (Iloff 2007), the environment has framed African migration. Pre-colonial Burkinabé and Malian farmers alternated between their own cereals at home during the dry season and cocoa fields in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire (Konseiga 2007; De Haan et al 2002).

As climate change and post 9/11 global security concerns have mounted, environmental migrants have been drawn into the international discourse on securitization and migration management (Adamson 2006, Trombetta 2014, White 2010).

In attempting to situate the local conceptualization of borders within the framework of environmental change, this paper hopes to bring into view the high stakes involved in imposing global institutions of border securitization on a fluid notion of movement fostered by such historical negotiations of nature and space. What are the institutional limits on environmental migrants within the context of West Africa’s contiguous borders where traditional migration linked to climate has played a key role in conceptualizing borders on the local level? How does the externalization of European borders through agreements with West African governments reconfigure environmental migrants?

This paper will discuss the methodological challenges that will come from pitting the micro local understanding of borders against the macro institutions. It will discuss the potential theoretical collisions of anthropological discourses of notions of space, nature, and identity with policy literature on geo-political borders and the nation state. The limitations of quantitative studies in more complex and mixed motivations tied to cultural notions as well as the limitations of ethnographic studies in scaling up results to show more generalized tendencies. The argument will be made for a mixed methods approach that cover ethnographic case studies, policy literature, historical analogs, and individual surveys from a sampled population.