

creates a scarcity for selected elements of the population. The socio-economic category takes into account the circular relationship between poverty and the environment in which environmental conditions contribute to poverty, and poverty contributes to environmental degradation. This category is also sensitive to recognizing that many economic migrants, people who migrate for the prospect of a better lifestyle, while predominantly attracted by "pull" factors may also have some "push" factors related to a poor environmental surroundings, such as high urban pollution levels.

The forced resettlement of people, as a result of development projects, may in certain cases be seen as a human induced environmental movement (category 2 above), but it includes wider social-economic aspects. Resettlement may bring about environmental change such as wetlands being turned to agricultural use. But it might not as, for example, the dislocation of shantytown dwellers to make room for urban development. In the latter case, environmental conditions could improve. Moreover, resettlement projects may involve financial compensation, although whether the compensation granted is enough to truly compensate for the dislocation is debatable. Generally, caution is required when attaching an environmental causation to the resettlement of people. Nor should development projects and urban sprawl, whatever their environmental affects, be necessarily seen as imposing adverse conditions on the original residents. Many agricultural landowners are only too happy to see their land rezoned for commercial or residential development and actively seek such changes.

Policy Implications

There is merit in retaining the existing international definition of refugees. This definition recognizes the unique situation of individuals facing political persecution. There is also, however, merit in distinguishing amongst the types of environmental migrants and environmentally displaced persons. The typology has been constructed to aid in the understanding of the environmental causation or contribution to population migration. A concept of environmental refugees, but not one embodying the current legal definition of refugees, may be accommodated by requiring a proximate environmental cause and some form of coercion.

The paper suggests that two conditions need to be met to be granted environmental refugee status. First, a clearly identifiable proximate environmental factor, essentially environmental stress and not of a broader scarcity type of condition, would be required. A low standard of living does not make a person a