



Call for papers *“Regional Conference on New Regional Formations: Rapid environmental change and migration in coastal areas”*

Venue: November, 17th and 18th 2015, Accra (Ghana), University of Legon

The workshop discusses the **dimensions and dynamics of the nexus between coastal environmental change and migration and mobility in Western Africa**, with a special focus on Ghana. Western Africa has high population and migratory dynamics and at the same time experiences various forms of anthropogenic environmental change (e.g. it is especially prone to the projected effects of climate change). Its longstanding history of mobility and migration is pivotal for understanding present adaptative capacities in response to short- and long-term environmental changes.

The workshop is organised around **six topics**:

- (1) **Regional Environmental Change** and its geomorphic representation. Today, a wide array of remote sensing techniques and field-based geospatial methodologies allow to identify and to trace changes in coastal morphology over the last decades and longer. This session highlights the outcomes of changes with respect to the natural environment of the Gulf of Guinea. Of particular interest are GIS data presenting coastal changes based on historical aerial photographs, satellite images, the application of drones and other photographic evidence, as well as the outcomes of sedimentological studies that implement investigations on changes in meteorological and hydrological conditions and its effects on the coastline.
- (2) **Risk Cultures**, perceptions and narratives: Established institutions as well as non-institutional settings are governed by cultural codes, narratives and symbols that find expression via art, music and religious performances. The perception of risks or of what might constitute risks by individuals and groups might influence migration decision making and thus is crucial for understanding the overall cultural setting in which migration and mobility occur. This session invites papers that address the cultural dimension and representation of environmental change and migration. It welcomes a focus on contributions that interpret institutions and social motives as culturally structured and flexible.
- (3) **Migration**, mobility, translocality and diaspora: Migration and mobility are a historical and vital part of Western African societies. Even if internal migration and interregional migration within the ECOWAS is a dominant feature regarding population dynamics, migration trajectories increasingly follow international pathways and connect communities to the global diaspora. These linkages with local, regional and global migratory circuits interfere with questions of environmental change and development. This session has a special interest in identifying (im)mobility patterns in relation to environmental change and invites contributions on the persistence or change of migrant trajectories over time.

(4) **Economic household strategies and resource management:** This session sheds light on the different economic household strategies as related to environmental events. It focusses on adaptation strategies, on migration decisions as well as on resource management. It highlights the management of common pool resources and investigates risk behavior of individuals in face of changing environmental conditions. It also asks in which respect migration decisions might be affected by such risk behavior or by other preferences, such as patience and trust.

(5) **Policies and politics** of vulnerability and resilience: Global climate change is expected to fundamentally increase societal risks and the need of sound strategies to adapt to those changes. The interest of this session is to investigate processes of political decision-making in the context of regional environmental change by taking into account heterogeneous actors and institutions: traditional governmental authorities from different levels such as diaspora communities, local grass root organizations, influential informal institutions, and international corporations or donor countries in the OECD-world.

(6) **Public Health and environmental change:** Climate change induced natural disasters can entail health hazards and act as a driver for mobility, but also impacts on sedentary populations. Climate change related hazards can have a direct effect on human health (e.g. drowning, or spread of vector-borne diseases), but also indirectly when water and food security are jeopardized (diarrhea, cholera, poisoning). This is exacerbated where basic sanitation systems are deficient. This session highlights the impact of health issues on livelihoods and coping strategies, contingent on the vulnerability, resilience of individuals, their households and communities.

The aim of the workshop is to discuss ongoing changes as well as to present the outcomes of research on migration and environmental change with a regional perspective and to discuss policy options. The workshop is organized by the “New Regional Formations” Research Group based in Germany in collaboration with the Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana and brings together scientists and actors from governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

We invite abstracts (500 words) to be submitted no later than May, 30th 2015 to the organizers:

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Information on acceptance will be given by June, 30th, 2015. We expect the delivery of draft contributions by October, 20th 2015. A publication of the results of the conference is planned with an international publisher.